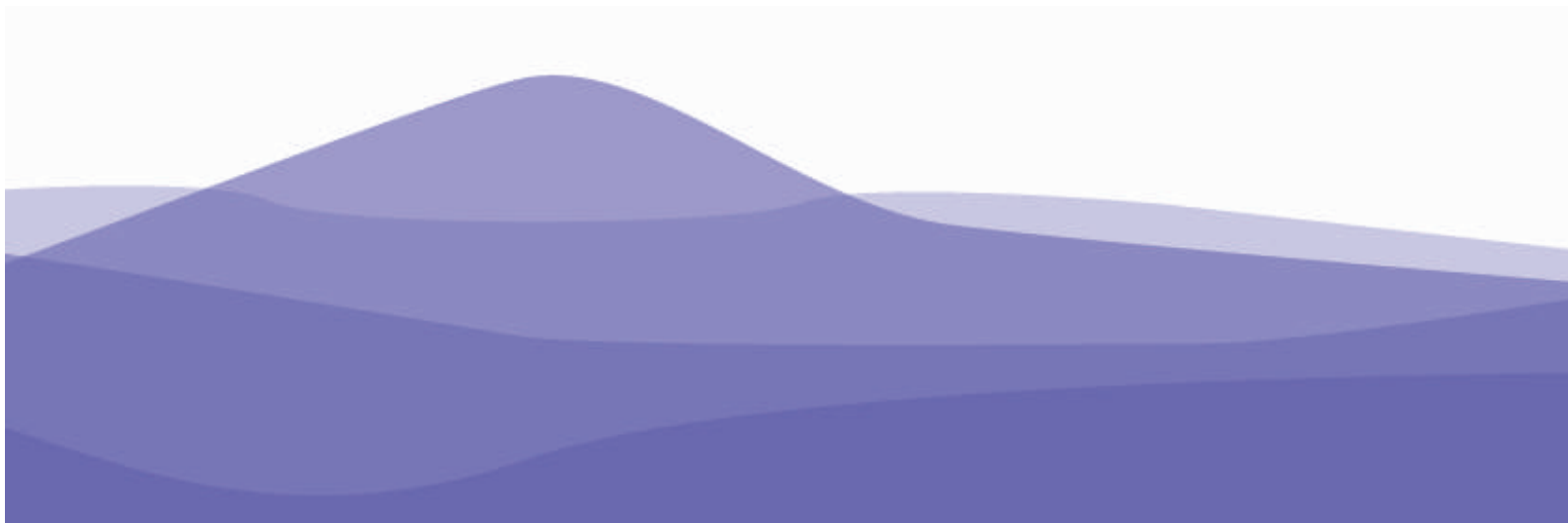


The Bible **EXHIBITION**

EXPLORING THE WORLD'S BEST-SELLING BOOK

Expanded Information from
The Bible Exhibition



BIBLE EXHIBITION

Thank you for taking the time to visit the Bible Exhibition. We hope that you enjoyed the experience.

The purpose of the Bible Exhibition is to display some of the background, history, content, character and purpose of the Bible.

In the Bible that we are all able to read, God seeks to communicate to all of us. He has something important which He wants us all to know and experience. In particular He wants us to come to know Him personally, as One who is able to deliver us and to bless us forever.

This booklet has been prepared to remind you of the contents of the Bible Exhibition, and to expand upon some of that content. We hope that you find it helpful.

“God ... has in these last days spoken unto us by His Son”
[Hebrews 1:1-2]



If you would like to know more, please visit our website:

www.bibleexhibition.net or www.God-is.net

If you would like to have a Bible for yourself, please use the contact details on the reverse of this booklet.

BIBLE EXHIBITION

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Introduction: Australia and the Bible

“Righteousness exalts a nation” Proverbs 14:34

The first Bible to arrive permanently on the shores of Australia came with the First Fleet in 1788. The colony’s first Chaplain, Richard Johnson, used this Bible on 3 February 1788, when standing under a tree with a motley crowd of colonists around him, he read the following from the Bible:

“What shall I render unto the Lord for all His benefits towards me?” [Psalm 116:12]

Well might Johnson use those words! Captain Arthur Phillip and his party had just completed something that had never been done before – sailed eleven tiny sailing ships, carrying almost 1500 people, livestock and stores sufficient to establish the colony and feed the residents for two years, across some 25,000 kilometres of wild ocean, in 252 days, to a land only visited once before, and had done so with the loss of no ships and only minimal human casualties. At least Johnson was prepared to acknowledge that it was God who had enabled and preserved them during this epic voyage.

However, we might wonder – did Johnson direct the thoughts of his audience to the following words of the Psalm, the writer’s response to his own question, “*I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the Lord. I will pay my vows unto the Lord now in the presence of all His people*” [Psalm 116:13-14]. If he did so, he would have challenged the gathered settlers that they too should acknowledge that God had blessed them, and that they were indebted to Him, and that God was looking for a response of faith from them. In these words they would have found the key to a successful future nation, and a successful individual life for all people. We will never know what he said!

Nonetheless, it was a promising start! The following years, as the colony was established, were difficult, but the presence of Johnson and his assistants and successors continued to emphasise the importance of moral and spiritual uprightness for these transported criminals, their equally depraved guards, and the free settlers who followed them. The early



Taking the Gospel to the Outback.

years of Australian history saw the arrival of fiery preachers such as Samuel Marsden (though a deeply conflicted individual), and more benevolent genuine missionaries, who reached out with kindness to the wider troubled community. Disappointingly, Johnson, Marsden and others found little spiritual response in the convicts, or the soldiers or the Aboriginals contacted, but ultimately churches were constructed, first in Sydney, and then, in the “building boom” at the time of Lachlan Macquarie’s governorship, in other developing population centres. Convicts, including those with Tickets of Leave, were required to attend weekly services.

The society which progressively developed in Australia would consider itself to be a “God-fearing” society and a “Christian” society, with a strong adherence to Bible-based moral and ethical

principles. Nevertheless, there were many occasions in the early history when actions were taken, often in the name of and with the support of “religion” which were very far from Biblical in origin. The treatment of convicts in some places was oppressive and sadistic, and the dealings with the native peoples of the continent produced a significant destruction of that people and their culture.

But historically the Bible has occupied a central role in Australian society at all levels. However, few Bibles have been printed in this country, even to the present time, although it was as early as 1864 that a translation into an Aboriginal language was first made available! In fact, Australians have been involved in significant translation work, covering not only local languages but those spoken in a number of independent nations of the Pacific region of the world.



In 1817 Governor Lachlan Macquarie, troubled by the scarcity of Bibles in the fledgling colony, commenced the Bible Society of Australia, now the oldest continually operating organisation in the country. Dedicated to the translation, publication and distribution of the Bible, it produced its first translation, into a Maori language, in 1827, distributed New Testaments to every school child in 1887, and provided Bibles to all servicemen and servicewomen in both World Wars. Throughout its long history it has distributed countless Bibles in many languages into every corner of the world.

Similarly, the Gideons, a non-denominational organisation of business and professional people, introduced into Australia in 1956, has subsequently distributed some 16,000,000 Bibles and 56,000 New Testaments into hotels and motels, hospitals, prisons and correctional centres, medical waiting rooms and domestic violence shelters for the purpose of allowing individuals to read and appreciate the Bible for themselves.

Australia became a single nation in 1901, a resolution which acknowledged that they moved “*humbly relying on the blessing of Almighty God*”.

Australia has traditionally been a nation which enjoyed civil freedoms and human rights, societal characteristics which we greatly value. We embrace and consider normal and reasonable the importance of personal dignity, freedom, respect, tolerance, compassion, justice, equality, peace and many more. What many of us fail to recognise is that, historically, these qualities remain firmly grounded in the ethical and moral principles taught by the Bible. But it must be recognized that these freedoms have had some constructive and some destructive outcomes!

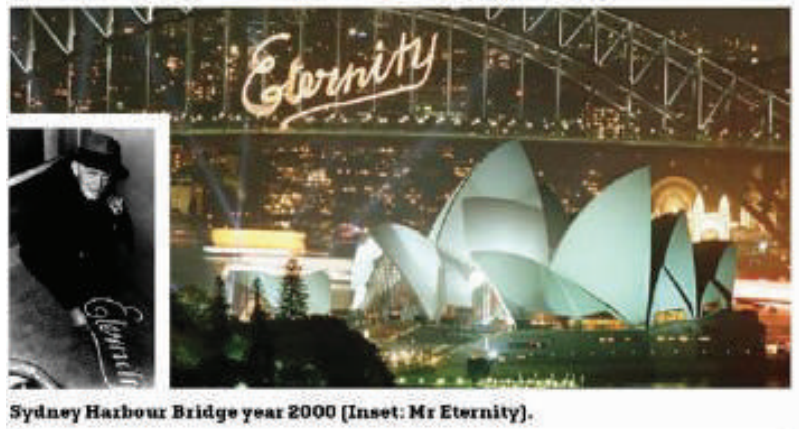
Among the constructive outcomes has been a freedom to publicly distribute, preach and teach the truth of the Bible. Jesus taught His disciples of their great responsibility,

“Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature” [Mark 16:15].

And throughout the short course of Australian history that work has been faithfully carried on. Christians have gone out with the message of the Bible, a message which the God of the Bible wants

all to hear and receive. So, by horseback, by aircraft, by motor vehicle, by post, by radio, by printed literature, by roadside displays, in formal meetings and face-to-face contacts, by personal conversation and bold public pronouncements – in all sorts of ways, the Bible and its message of salvation for humanity has been spread to the population, so that the all the population can hear it.

Many Australians will recall the display of the word “Eternity” on the Sydney Harbour Bridge during New Year celebrations on 1 January 2000. Less Australians will realise that this display replicated the individual witness of a man named Arthur Stace, who wrote this word in copper-plate text with chalk some half a million times on the pavements of inner Sydney from 1930 to



Sydney Harbour Bridge year 2000 (Inset: Mr Eternity).

the 1950s. Stace, a veteran soldier, depleted by alcoholism and homelessness, became a Christian when he learned of Jesus, and dedicated himself to this simple task – reminding the passer-by, even fleetingly, that life was short, and the challenge of eternity must necessarily follow for all.

Very few would be aware of Frank Jenner, an ex-sailor, who similarly devoted his life to making a simple witness of the effectiveness of the Bible. Working the streets of Sydney, particularly

amongst the many servicemen present from all nations during World War 2, Jenner determined to directly ask at least ten people each day the following challenging question: “*If you were to die today, where would you spend eternity? Heaven or Hell?*” Throughout subsequent decades, the lasting impact of Jenner’s question on many lives, continued to be revealed with many permanently changed by addressing his question and ensuring that it would be “Heaven” for them, by accepting Jesus as Saviour. Dear reader – what would your answer be if you faced Jenner’s question today?



Frank Jenner

And still the impact of the Bible continues, and its influence is spread – and that summarises the role of this Bible Exhibition !

The Origins of the Bible

Many readers might wonder where the Bible came from, why it contains what it does, and why it appears as it does. Let us try to simply explain its origins.

The Bible was Written by Men ...

The English word "bible" is derived directly from the Latin word *biblia*, which in turn was sourced in the Greek *ta biblia*, meaning simply "the books". It was prepared over a period of history covering some 1600 years, and contributed to by over 40 individuals. It is divided into two parts – the Old Testament, written in the ancient Hebrew and Aramaic languages, before



the coming of Jesus; and the New Testament, written in Koine Greek over a few decades in the first century AD [Anno Domini, After Christ]. Koine Greek was a derivative of Classical Greek, meaning "common Greek", and spoken by the common people throughout the Mediterranean area, which had been "Hellenised" by the conquest of Alexander the Great (356-323 BC [Before Christ]).

The Old Testament (OT) presents, in the main, a record of God's dealings with the favoured nation of Israel, and is made up of 39 separate books. The New Testament (NT) records the coming of Jesus and the development and teaching of the Christian faith to all nations; it has 27 separate books.

... but its Source was from God

The words of the Bible are the words of God Himself. In the NT, speaking about the OT, it says "*God spoke in times past unto the fathers by the prophets*" (Hebrews 1:1); a "prophet" was a foreteller, or one who showed and made known the thoughts of another, in this case, God.

The Bible says "*all scripture is given by inspiration of God*" (2 Timothy 3:16); that means that the "scripture", in this case, the OT, was "breathed by God". When we read the OT we will often observe statements like "*and the Lord spoke to*", or "*the word of the Lord that came to*". What an astonishing thing – when we read the words of the Bible, we are reading the words which God has said!

How it Became a Single Volume

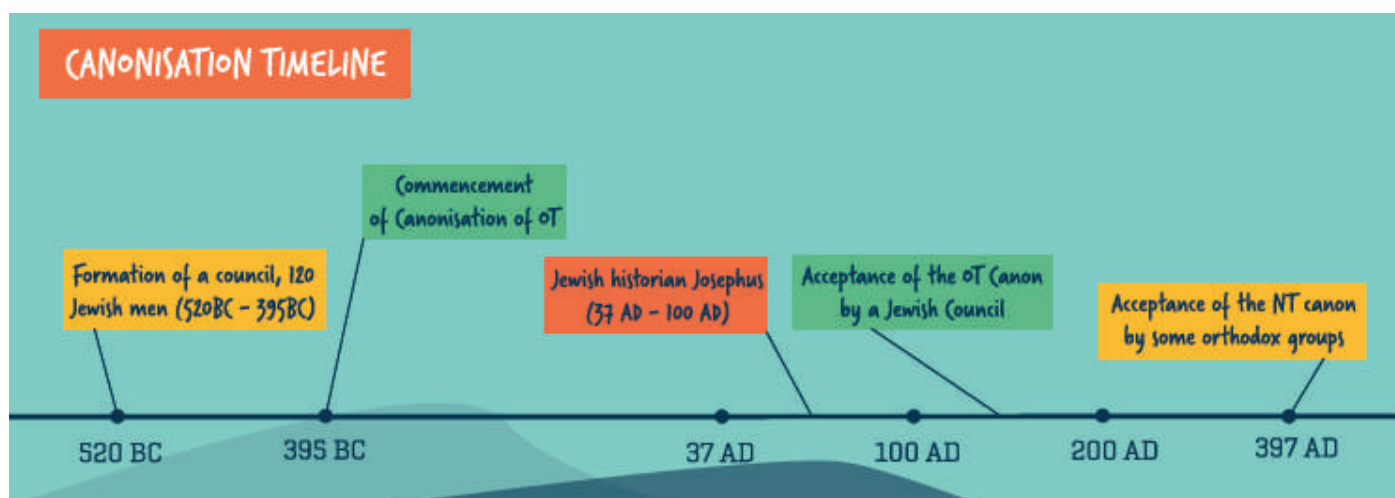
When the books of the OT were prepared they were handwritten in individual scrolls, which were separately used. To preserve and propagate the content, scribes continually produced handwritten copies.

The NT emerged similarly. Many of these books took the form of letters to individuals and groups, often widely scattered geographically.

In the first century BC, Jewish elders, in consultation, finally completed a long process to put together a single "volume", which became the Hebrew Bible (the Tanakh), the precursor to the OT. It consisted of the Torah (the five books of Moses), the Prophets (Joshua, Judges, Samuel, Kings,

Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, the twelve minor prophets all in one book], and the Writings [the remainder].

The NT was added through the agency of early church fathers, and after considerable debate, the books we now have were incorporated, following a major gathering, at the Council of Laodicea in 360 AD.



How were its Contents Decided?

The key thing considered by the ancient scholars was whether they could be satisfied that the individuals who wrote the books were indeed “inspired” by God.

This process became known as “canonisation”. This derives from a Greek word meaning “a measuring stick”. The Bible canon is now closed, as the revelation of God has been forever completed.

Why are there an OT and a NT?

The word “testament” means a covenant or a formal agreement. The relationship between God and humanity has been based on many covenants. The OT describes a number of covenants, the most notable the Law [that is, the Ten Commandments], which prescribed God’s expectations of the nation of Israel, and, indirectly, every man. The NT sets out a “*new covenant*”, which promises “*forgiveness of sins*” based only on the death of Jesus on the cross on behalf of all sinners.

Who has the Original Texts?

The books written by Moses, Paul and all the other writers have long since been lost. Many early writings would have been prepared on papyrus, a paper-like product produced in ancient Egypt from aquatic reeds. Papyrus, while readily available, was very fragile. Later in history a material called vellum was used, essentially the skin of a young calf, dried and stored flat. We are now dependent upon copies of these originals, painstakingly prepared by hand by scribes. The manuscripts available today are the product of many rounds of copying.

Many such manuscripts in the original languages do remain, some of which have been discovered by archaeologists in quite modern times. These have all contributed to some extent to the Bible we possess today. Here are a few examples:

- Silver Scrolls – discovered in 1979, they are considered the oldest surviving Bible fragment, inscribed on two silver amulets, and containing the priestly blessing of Numbers 6:24-26, written in ancient Hebrew text.

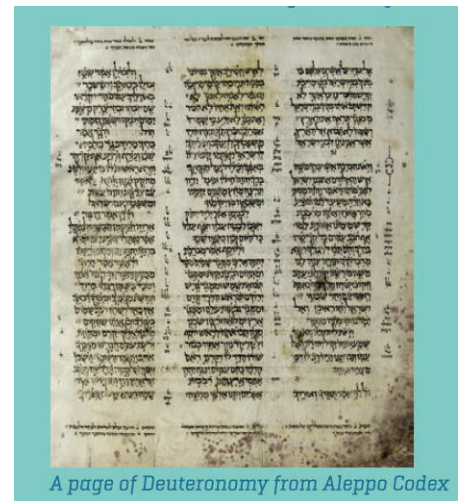


- Dead Sea Scrolls – perhaps the greatest manuscript discovery of all times, they (also called the Qumran Scrolls) were uncovered in a group of caves in the Judean desert near the Dead Sea. Recovered from 1946 to 2017, they consist of some 981 individual manuscripts. Ages range from the 8th century BC to the 11th century AD, and include multiple copies and fragments of most OT books, variously in the Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek languages, as well as other items of sacred literature.

- Codex Sinaiticus – discovered in a monastery in the Sinai Peninsula in the 19th century AD, and dating from the 4th century AD. The Codex is one of the oldest Greek manuscripts of the full Bible, although some short sections are missing.
- Codex Vaticanus – in the possession of the Vatican Library, it is also considered one of the oldest surviving copies of the Bible in Greek, although small sections are again missing. It dates from the 4th century AD
- Codex Alexandrinus – discovered in the Egyptian city of Alexandria, it is believed to date from the 5th century AD, and contains the whole Bible in Greek, although yet again a few short sections are missing.
- Aleppo Codex – the oldest copy of the Hebrew Bible, dating from 930AD, it surfaced in the 15th century, but has since lost a 200 page section. It is, however, a very authoritative text.
- Leningrad Codex – the oldest complete copy of the Hebrew Bible, and dating from around 1010AD.

These manuscripts have variously been used in the preparation of Bibles currently available in the modern world.

Particular mention needs to be made of a manuscript known as the *Textus Receptus* (Latin “received text”, known as TR), widely used in the preparation of European language translations during the time of the Reformation. No single manuscript has made a more significant contribution, nor attracted as much controversy and debate, as the TR.



A page of Deuteronomy from Aleppo Codex

Essentially the TR is the first Greek manuscript of the Bible ever printed [as opposed to hand copied], and distributed in a printed form. It was prepared by a Dutch scholar, Desiderius Erasmus, and first printed in 1516. He employed as his base material several available Greek manuscripts, which derived from the 12th century, and the Latin Vulgate. Wildly popular amongst scholars, the TR was printed in a number of editions, and built upon by many scholars, becoming the dominant Greek text for the next two or three centuries of active Bible Translation into European languages.

It is important to note that while some variations occur from ancient manuscript to manuscript these variations are insignificant in proportion to the whole, and that no major Bible principle is altered in substance by them.

What if I cannot speak Hebrew or Greek!

The fact that the Bible was written in the languages of the day, and not able to be read by many, has been long recognised as a limitation. From very early times, scholars have engaged themselves in the work of translation into other tongues, and this work continues to the present day.

While myriads of individual translations have occurred throughout the course of history, too numerous to be mentioned, it is important to note a few significant examples:

- Aramaic Targums - when the Jewish tribe, Judah, was taken captive into Babylon, in the 7th century BC, many adopted Aramaic, the local language. Translations of the books of Moses were made into this language.
- Septuagint - in the 3rd century BC, at the request of the academic Egyptian king, Ptolemy II, Jewish scholars prepared a Greek translation of the Jewish sacred writings, which is known as the Septuagint. While not a particularly accurate translation, it was the Septuagint which was widely used in Israel in the time of Jesus, and from which Jesus Himself often made quotations.
- Vulgate - was completed by Jerome in about 405AD as a full translation of the Bible into Latin, and became established as the universal Bible used in the western world until the Reformation.
- Luther - the questioning by John Wycliffe, Jan Hus, Martin Luther and others in Europe of the practices of the Church and the exclusion of the "common man" from access to the Bible, promoted a number of translations into languages other than Latin. Luther translated the Bible into German, completing the task in 1534.
- English translations - many of these were also prepared during the Reformation, and will be dealt with a little later in this booklet.

In summary, by 2016, the full Bible had been translated into 636 languages, and parts of the Bible had been translated into no less than 3223 languages. The Bible remains the most prolifically distributed book ever printed!

The Preparation of Bible Translations

Preparing an accurate translation into another language is a highly specialised and difficult task. It requires an expert linguistic and working knowledge of both languages. Several techniques are utilised:

- Literal – languages never totally correspond, but literal translations attempt to achieve a “word for word” equivalence to the extent possible. The usefulness of such translations is high for scholars, but the readability is usually quite poor.
- Formal Equivalence – essentially prepared “word for word”, but this technique places an emphasis upon the fidelity of the language and structure but attempts to incorporate variations in style of language and idioms, and to incorporate rhetorical devices, to assist the readability.
- Dynamic Equivalence – essentially prepared “sense for sense”, it seeks to maximise the readability with a rendering which is more natural in the target language. Arguably it sacrifices accuracy to maximise the reader’s comfort with the language.
- Paraphrase – takes the ideas presented in the original and restates them, as understood, in the target language. There is little adherence to linguistic integrity.

Key English Translations

Translations of portions of the Bible into the English language first occurred in the 7th century AD (by Venerable Bede) and continued throughout the remainder of the Medieval Period of history.

It was the stirrings of the Reformation which really generated an interest in preparing English translations. Prior to that, the Bible used was overwhelmingly the Vulgate, as already mentioned, a Latin translation from the 4th century AD. Being Latin, its usage was confined to the educated Church officials, and the Church insisted that it must always remain the sole interpreter of the sacred texts for the people.

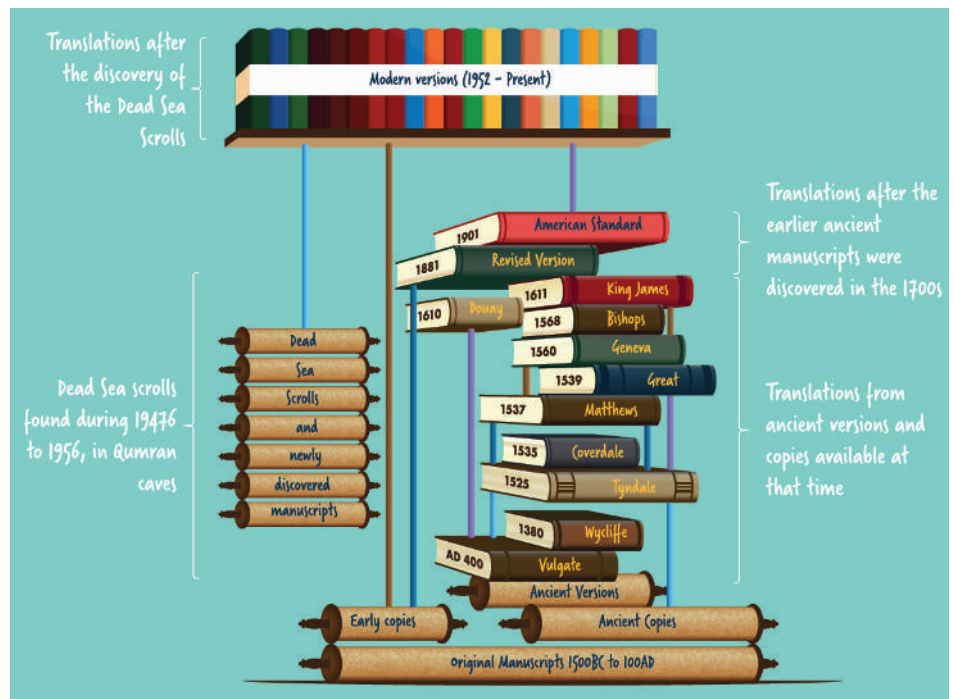
The Reformation marked a new beginning! John Wycliffe in England, Jan Hus in Bohemia, Martin Luther in Germany, and others, themselves church men, started to read their Bibles with an open mind, questioning as a result the teaching, practices and authority of the established Church, and commencing a movement which came to be known as “Protestantism”. The limitations of access to the Bible to everyone other than the educated resulted in a series of English translations; a selection of the most significant of these is described briefly below:

- John Wycliffe – one of the earliest Reformers, Wycliffe, an Oxford academic, prepared a translation into Middle English, using the Latin Vulgate as a source. Prepared in the 1380s AD, prior to the invention of the printing press, it was handwritten.
- William Tyndale – arguably the man to whom modern Christians owe the greatest debt of gratitude, Tyndale, a key Reformer, persecuted and driven from England as an exile, considered a heretic by the established Church, prepared the first ever printed copy of the New Testament in



the common English vernacular in 1525. He used in the main the *Textus Receptus* of Erasmus. His driving ambition was “if God spare my life, before very long, I shall cause a plough boy to know the scriptures better than you do”. His NT was wildly popular, smuggled into England, though searched out and burned by King Henry VIII’s Church officials. While working on his translation of the OT, Tyndale was betrayed, arrested and imprisoned, and strangled and burned at the stake in 1536. However, the flood of enthusiasm created by his work for free access to the truth of the Bible by English citizens could never again be stopped!

- Coverdale Bible – despite Tyndale’s martyrdom, the work continued in the hands of Miles Coverdale and John Rogers. The first printed complete English Bible appeared as a result of their work, based as it was upon the work of Tyndale and Luther, in 1535, and has become known as the Coverdale Bible.
- Matthew-Tyndale Bible – John Rogers continued to develop the product, now making use of both Hebrew and Greek texts. Using the pseudonym “Thomas Matthew” for protection, he printed the Matthew-Tyndale Bible, a synthesis of Tyndale, Coverdale and his own work. Rogers was burned at the stake in 1555.
- The Great Bible – the disagreements between Henry VIII and the Church resulted in the reduction of persecution of Reformists, and the Archbishop of Canterbury, Thomas Cranmer, hired Coverdale to produce a new translation. Known as The Great Bible (because of its physical size) it was the first English Bible authorized for public use, and was distributed to churches throughout England
- The Geneva Bible – the death of Henry VIII and succession of Queen Mary, brought renewed persecution, and many of the English Reformist scholars moved into exile in Geneva. Coverdale, Foxe, Calvin, Knox and others prepared and printed The Geneva Bible in 1560, the first to included numbered verses. It became wildly popular in the English-speaking world, a popularity which continued for many years.



- Douay/Rheims Bible – in the 1580s AD the Roman Catholic Church abandoned its traditional attachment to the Latin Vulgate translation, and prepared this English translation.
- The Bishops Bible – the established church in England, sensing that the Geneva Bible’s popularity posed a threat to its authority, prepared their own updated translation in 1568, which became known as the Bishop’s Bible, for use in churches in England. Many, however, continued to use the Geneva Bible.

- The King James Bible - in 1603 Queen Elizabeth I of England died, and was succeeded by King James VI of Scotland (James I). Faced with contrary submissions from the Church and the Puritans [a section of the Church seeking changes to some of its practices], James commissioned the preparation of a new translation, to address the objections of the parties [and his own political objections] to both the Geneva Bible and the Bishop's Bible. Prepared by a large team of academics, led by the Archbishop of Canterbury, basing their work upon Tyndale, the *Textus Receptus*, and other sources, the effort resulted in the release of the first edition of the King James Bible [Authorised Version, as it became known] in 1611. It has remained the benchmark of all subsequent translations, and its popularity has prevailed into the modern era.
- Revised Version - was published in 1885 as a revision of the King James Bible, using significant manuscripts uncovered and made available since the 17th century
- American Standard Version - the English RV was taken and adapted in the United States and issued in 1901 as the ASV.
- English Standard Version [ESV] - a translation which claims to be "essentially literal", building upon the strengths of the Tyndale Bible, the KJV, the RV and others, uses credible manuscripts in the original languages and replaces outmoded language and words. It was printed in 2005.

What is the Apocrypha

Bible students will occasionally see references to the Apocrypha.

The Apocrypha [meaning "hidden"] is a group of fourteen books mainly written during the historical period between the OT and the NT. They have never been widely accepted as a legitimate part of the canonised text of the Bible. However, many Bible editions have chosen to include them, including the Septuagint, the Vulgate, the first edition of the King James Bible, and others.

The Consistency of OT and NT

One of the outstanding features of the Bible, and a feature which underscores the fact that the Bible is sourced from God, is the consistency of the Old Testament, all written before the birth of Jesus, and the New Testament, all written after the birth of Jesus. While we cannot here fully explore these wonders, just consider the following examples:

- Principles established in the OT are seen in application in the spiritual practices taught in the NT, in perfect consistency;
- Jesus, in his earthly life, often quoted from the OT. He clearly considered it a document with perfect integrity;
- The writers of NT books also make liberal mention of the OT. They considered it applicable to life's circumstances, as it remains right to the present day;
- Prophetic statements, in all their details, concerning the Saviour whom God had long promised to send in the OT, known to be written many centuries before His coming, have been fulfilled with accuracy in the life of Jesus.

God knows all about the future!

The God of the Bible

The source of the Bible is God, and the Bible records the words of God. And we cannot avoid God, nor can we ignore Him – for He is always present, and He knows everything about us. However, by looking carefully at the Bible we can know and understand a little about God. But we might well ask – why does it matter? Consider the following:

- We will meet God one day, because He is eternal.
- We will give an account of our lives to God because He is our creator.
- Today He can save us from death and judgement if we trust Him, because He is God.
- But how can we trust Him, if we don't know anything about Him?

So who is God?

The first thing we all need to understand is that God cannot be seen visibly [the Bible says “*No-one has seen God at any time*” John1:18], except, for example, by observing the things that He does. We can see Him in evidence in the beautiful creation around us, and it is from the observation of the creation that we start to understand some of His personal attributes:

“... for the invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things which are made, even His eternal power and Godhead [divinity].”
[Romans 1:20]

So, God, who can't personally be seen by our eyes, has made Himself visible (“*clearly seen*”), in this example in creation, in particular His everlasting strength and His unchanging divine person [that is, that He is truly God]. We can summarise here a few more ways in which God is seen by observing the things which He does:

- Nature – wonders of creation which we see;
- Providence – provision of creation's needs, which we observe;
- Preservation – daily care for humanity, which we all experience;
- Miracles – supernatural actions, which God has done throughout history;
- Direct Communication – spoken word, which we can hear and understand;
- In person – in His Own Son, Jesus, who has come from heaven to show us what God is like;
- In the Bible, which we can all read, understand and trust.

But, what is God like?

God is NOT HUMAN, nor was he ever CREATED, but He does have characteristics and attributes. To help us with these difficult ideas, the Bible sometimes uses illustrations using things which we can readily understand. Here are just a few examples of many:

- The “*finger of God*” to teach us that He touches;
- The “*hand of God*” to teach us that He does things;
- The “*arm of God*” to teach us that He is strong;
- The “*eye of God*” to teach us that He looks at things;
- The “*face of God*” to teach us that He responds to us by turning towards us.

If we study God in much more detail, we learn from the Bible that God has other attributes, which include:

- Personality – such as he knows everything [omniscience]
- Sensibility – such as holiness, justice, love, goodness, truth
- Will – such as freedom and all power [omnipotence]
- Constitution – such as simplicity, unity, infinity, eternity, never changing [immutability], present everywhere and always [omnipresent], sovereignty

Perhaps you will need to think about some of these attributes as you try to appreciate what God is like.

But, if that is what God is like, what is He made up of then? The Bible makes three simple statements on this subject:

- “*God IS light*” (1 John 1:5) – He is the source of all light, and His light exposes every secret;
- “*God IS love*” (1 John 4:16) – He is the source of love, and all His actions express His love;
- “*God IS a Spirit*” (John 4:24) – He is NOT created matter.

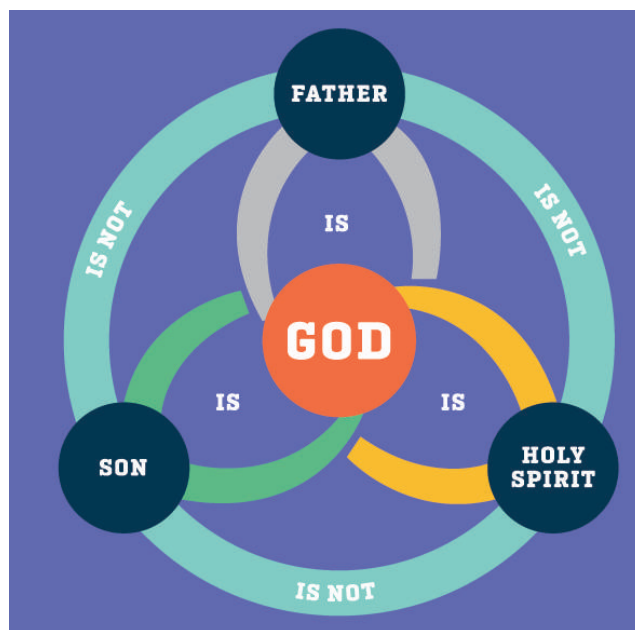
As a person, the Bible teaches us that God is a TRINITY, although the Bible never once uses the word “trinity”. A “trinity”, is derived from the Latin word “*trinus*” meaning “threefold”, and means “a single group of three things”. We speak about God as a trinity, meaning He is a “a single God made up of three distinct persons”. This is a very difficult concept to grasp, but let us try!

The Bible says “*there is ONE God*” (1 Timothy 2:5). But, the Bible also records God, speaking to Himself, saying “*let US make man in OUR image*”: [Gen 1:26]. The very first mention of God in the Bible is in its very first verse, which says “*In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth*” [Genesis 1:1].

But, the interesting thing is that the noun “God” is neither singular, nor dual, it is plural, but the verb “created” is singular! So ... it was more than two persons, working in complete unison and harmony, which created all that is around us!

From the NT we learn that, though there is ONE GOD, this God is made up of three individual persons – God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. Each is fully God in His essence, and all three work together in perfect unity and purpose, but each fulfils different roles. We say that they are “co-equal, co-substantial and co-eternal”. EACH possesses in full and equal measure ALL the attributes of God!

“The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit, be with you all” [2 Corinthians 13:14]



We know God the Son as Jesus. This is a very great mystery! God the Son, completely God in every way and possessing all the many attributes of God, has been revealed visibly as a real man. For example, if God created all that we see, then God the Son must also be the creator! And that is exactly what the NT teaches, so *“for by Him [that is Jesus, the Son of God] were all things created that are in heaven, and that are on the earth, visible and invisible ... all things were created by Him, and for Him, and he is before all things, and by Him all things consist”* [Colossians 1:16-17]. And yet He became a real man, just like us!

The fact that God is the creator raises another important point about God which we need to always bear in mind. People sometimes ask: “Where did God come from? Who made God?” God certainly IS the creator, so He COULD NOT Himself be created at all! We have observed already that one of the attributes of God is “eternity”, meaning He had no beginning and will have no end! In fact, God is constrained by nothing – all the things which constrain humanity, like time, space and matter, impose no restraint upon God at all. He is independent of all these things! God is absolutely “infinite”!

So, why was the Son of God made a man like us? He came to show us exactly what God is like:

“No man has seen God at any time; the only-begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him” [John 1:18]

Jesus was truly a man, but he was a man that *“declared [told out]”* God absolutely in every way! And even though He was a real man, He never ceased to be fully God! One man – but with two distinct natures, one divine and one human – and both completely perfect!

But why should the Son of God become man?

The Bible teaches us that *“The Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world”* [1 John 4:14]. What a wonderful thing! If He was ONLY a man, exactly like us, with all our failures, He could never be our Saviour! But, unless He BECAME man Himself and so was able to die on our behalf, He also could never be our Saviour!

ROLES WITHIN THE GODHEAD		
GOD THE FATHER	GOD THE SON	GOD THE HOLY SPIRIT
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creator - Genesis 1:26 • Supplier of life - Acts 17:28 • Father of the Lord Jesus Christ - Romans 1:7 • Father of Christian believers - Galatians 3:26 • Operational power giver - 1 Corinthians 12:6 • Carer for Creation - James 1:17 • Forgiver of sins - Isaiah 43:25 • Possessor of heaven and earth - Genesis 14:19 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creator - John 1:1 • Administrator of God's programmes - 1 Corinthians 12:5 • Mediator between God and men - 1 Timothy 2:5 • Saviour - Matthew 1:21 • Forgiver of sins - Mark 2:5 • Judge - Acts 17:31 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creator - Genesis 1:2 • Distributor of spiritual gifts - 1 Corinthians 12:4 • Regenerator - Titus 3:5 • Convicts of sin - John 16:8 • Inspired the Word of God - 2 Peter 1:21 • Spiritual fruit-producer - Galatians 5:22

The Themes, Purposes and Contents of the Bible

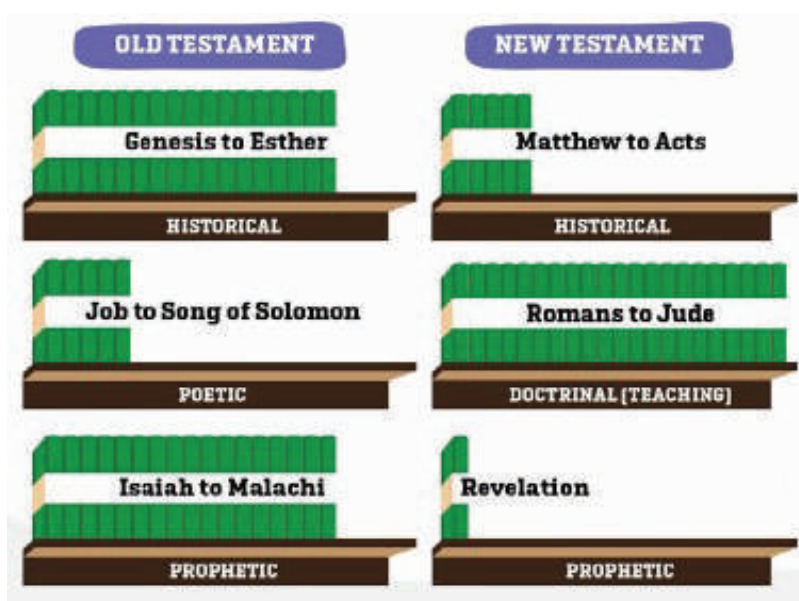
Those who are not familiar with the Bible could be expected to ask “*What is in the Bible? And what is it all about? And why was it written?*” While these are somewhat complex questions to answer, let us try to do so!

The Bible shows us who God is, and what His many attributes are, as we have already seen. The Bible shows us what God expects from us. It shows us what God has done for us, and what He continues to do for us. It is not a textbook of religion, but it does show us how God desires that we conduct our lives. So ... it is important for us!

The message of the Bible is complete in itself. Every part contributes to its essential unity, and all its parts are interdependent. None of it can be rightly ignored, rejected or questioned! While the word “bible” merely means “book”, the title “The Bible” distinguishes a supreme and incomparable book, surpassing all other books for authority, antiquity, literary value, and popularity, yet its unique supremacy lies in the fact that it discloses the TRUTH concerning God, the holy nature of God, the essential sinfulness of man, and the perfect action that God has done to redeem man from the outcome of his failure. Given that this redemptive action was carried out by Jesus, there is one compelling theme which pervades ALL the contents of the Bible – the person of Jesus! Jesus Himself said –

“Search the scriptures [that is, the Bible] ... for they are they which testify of me” (John 5:39)

The Bible contains sixty-six individual books, each dating from a different time of history and penned by a different inspired writer. Thirty-nine of these books are in the Old Testament (OT), and twenty-seven are found in the New Testament (NT). Each contributes in its own way to the revelation of Jesus and His redeeming work. The OT predicts and prepares for His coming, and in the NT the Gospels display His coming, the Acts describe the propagation of His teaching, the epistles explain and teach it and the Revelation brings it all to a glorious conclusion.



The character of each of the various books of the Bible is unique, but we can classify them simply as follows:

So when we read the Bible – whether it be the history, poetry, teaching or prophecy we are looking carefully to see what it teaches us of Jesus. Sometimes it teaches us by illustration, other times by type, then by prediction and finally, directly – all of it reveals Him! And the most important message for us to get is that He, by His death on the Cross has provided redemption, a gracious gift that releases us from the penalty of our sins, if we are prepared to simply accept it by faith for ourselves. We will explore this theme very soon now.

Christ the Sum and Substance of the Bible Revelation

OLD TESTAMENT			Revelation of Christ as			NEW TESTAMENT			Revelation of Christ as									
Pentateuch	Genesis	The Seed of the woman	Poetry	Job	The Redeemer for patient souls	Gospels	Matthew	Christ coming to seek and to save	Mark	Luke	John							
	Exodus	The Passover Lamb		Psalms	The All in All for ardent souls		Leviticus		The Atoning Sacrifice			Ecclesiastes	The Goal for seeking souls	Song of Solomon	The Centre for all loving souls			
History	Numbers	The Smitten Rock	Major Prophets	Isaiah	The Coming Prince of Peace	History	Acts	Christ risen with His finished Work	Epistles to Churches and Christians	Romans	Christ waiting at God's right hand							
	Deuteronomy	The Prophet yet to come		Jeremiah			Lamentations			1 Corinthians		2 Corinthians	Galatians	Ephesians	Philippians	Colossians	2 Thessalonians	1 & 2 Timothy
History	Joshua	The Captain over the Lord's host	Minor Prophets	Hosea	The Coming Prince of Peace	Prophecy	Revelation	Christ returning to reign										
	Judges	The Great Deliverer		Amos			Obadiah			Jonah		Micah	Nahum	Habakkuk	Zephaniah	Haggai	Zechariah	Malachi
	Ruth	The Celestial Kinsman																

The Uniqueness of the Bible

Given that the Bible comes from a God who is absolutely separate and unique, we would not be surprised that the contents of the Bible are also unique in their substance and character. The Bible speaks of things which no other book envisages, and it speaks of them in a way which demonstrates that this book could never be a product of the human mind. Here are some simple observations:

1. The Bible is uniquely God's message to the human race, and He is a God who is "*merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth*" [Exodus 34:6];
2. The Bible uniquely presents ONE GOD only, "*there is one God*" [1 Timothy 2:5];
3. The Bible uniquely reveals that this ONE GOD subsists in three persons, as we have seen;
4. The Bible uniquely presents the fact of creation "*the worlds were framed by the word of God*" [Heb 11:3];
5. The Bible uniquely demonstrates that man has rebelled and is characterised by sin, "*all have sinned*" [Romans 3:23];
6. The Bible uniquely presents the fact that sin has been permanently dealt with by the death of a sinless victim, Jesus, "*Christ died for our sins*" [1 Corinthians 15:3];
7. The Bible uniquely presents a Saviour for mankind who is not a deceased historical figure, but eternally alive, "*whom God raised up*" [Acts 2:24];
8. The Bible uniquely details issues which are eternal in character and beyond the scope of the human mind, "*touching the Almighty, we cannot find Him out*" [Job 37:23];
9. The Bible uniquely establishes a mode of moral and ethical behaviour, which is absolute in its definition, and which man naturally fails to meet;
10. The Bible, although written by many, is uniquely homogeneous, uninterrupted, harmonious and orderly;
11. The Bible uniquely makes divine predictions of future events, many of which have already been accurately fulfilled;
12. The Bible uniquely uses allegories, presenting fundamental principles in the form of historical illustrations;
13. The Bible is uniquely a work of paramount literary merit, to a measure beyond the abilities of men;
14. The Bible uniquely explains matters of science, but does so with precision and finality;
15. The Bible uniquely reveals the purpose and action of God in the establishment of human government over mankind; and,
16. The Bible remains uniquely relevant, current and refreshing, irrespective of the course of human history.



The perfections that are exhibited by the Bible merely serve to reflect the perfections of the God who gave the Bible. Of its considerable content, however, we will limit our presentation to one major, and most significant message, that which God calls "*the gospel*". We will look at this important subject shortly.

The Redemptive Themes of the Bible

“Redemption” is a key Bible theme which describes something that has always been the intention of God. It was by means of redemption that God always planned to liberate humanity bound by sin and bring it into greater blessings than Adam ever knew, through the death of the Lord Jesus. Given the importance of redemption, we will explore it a little further.

What is redemption?

You might already be familiar with the idea of redemption. You will be aware of the idea of paying a ransom for the release of a kidnap victim. In the Bible, ‘redemption’ means “to buy out”, so it describes a process where a slave or a captive was purchased by the payment of a ransom, so that he could be released. Another scenario is where a property which was lost due to poverty could be recovered by its owner on the payment of its ransom price.

In the OT redemption was illustrated

God first of all chose a man [Abraham], then a nation [Israel], and then a king [David], preserving a sacred thread of redemption which would ensure the arrival in the future of the promised Messiah.

Many years ago, God made a choice to favour the descendants of Abraham, a nation we know as Israel. Around 1500BC, the nation of Israel was kept in slavery in Egypt. God intervened on their behalf, and after a series of plagues on Egypt, which failed to influence the Egyptians’ thinking regarding release of the Israelite people, God pronounced a sentence of death on all the first-born. Israel was protected because every family sacrificed a perfect lamb in obedience to God’s command. When the firstborn of the Egyptians died, the fearful Egyptians immediately expelled the Israelites.

The price paid for Israel’s release from captivity was the life-blood of an innocent, perfect victim, the “*spotless lamb*”. God showed His power on their behalf to bring them out of Egypt. The nation very soon acknowledged that God had “*led forth the people which ...[He] redeemed*” [Exodus 15:13].

This OT illustration highlights some important principles of redemption. People who are in bondage, and unable to be freed, are released, BUT only when the ransom price that is demanded is paid. However, the ransom was not paid by themselves but by another who paid it on their behalf. This substitute himself must be absolutely free and innocent, and capable of paying the ransom price.

In the OT redemption was promised ...

God had graciously chosen the man Abraham as head of a special nation of people which He later redeemed. Then, about 500 years later, God made another important choice – a king for the nation of Israel, whose name was David. God promised that the nation of Israel would eventually receive a deliverer, who would redeem them and make them the head of the nations of the world. He would be from the nation of Israel [so a descendant of Abraham] and He would occupy the throne of Israel as a King [so a descendant of David].

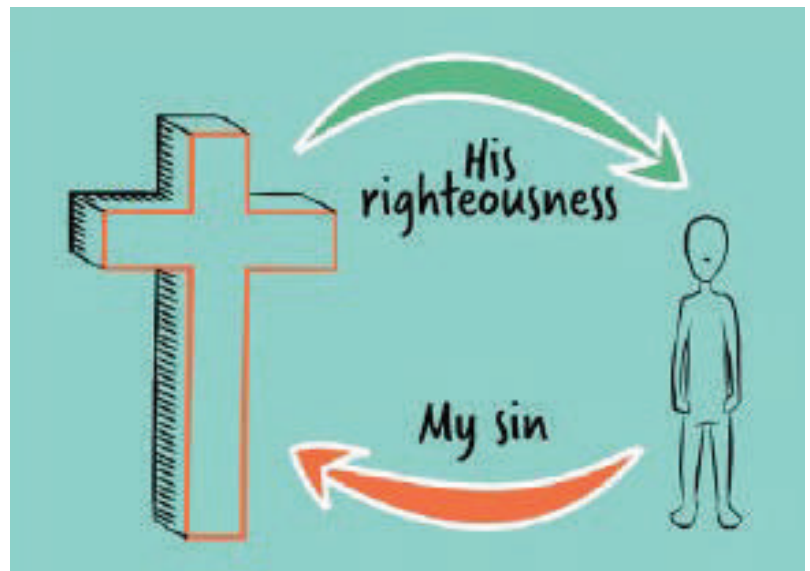
... and in the NT it was fulfilled with the death of Jesus.

When Jesus was born, He was identified as “*Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham*” [Matthew 1:1]. He fulfils all the requirements of genealogy and personal purity, and came to redeem

those who are in bondage to sinfulness – both Israel and all the world! Given that the penalty for sin is spiritual and physical death [*“the wages of sin is death”* - Romans 6:23], He willingly died so that sin’s captives might be released from that dreaded penalty, through eternal life and resurrection. So, in the NT we learn that the Christian is *“not REDEEMED with corruptible things as silver and gold ... but with the precious BLOOD OF CHRIST [Jesus] as of a LAMB WITHOUT BLEMISH”* [1 Peter 1:18-19]. Peter makes the application clear – the Christian is redeemed and the price paid for his release from the bondage of sin is the blood of Jesus. Jesus is like the lamb in Egypt; a lamb which is absolutely perfect!

Why is redemption important to us?

The Bible teaches that whoever commits sin *“is the SERVANT [SLAVE] of sin”* [John 8:34]. Given that ALL of us commit sin, then ALL of us are in bondage to sin – something that is entirely beyond our own control, and we NEED to be released from it before we die. The Bible also teaches us that *“Christ Jesus ... gave Himself a RANSOM for all”* [1 Timothy 2:5-6]. So ... God, knowing that we were in bondage and that we could not help ourselves, has intervened on our behalf, and Jesus has paid the price to release us all! He paid that ransom by “giving Himself”. That is, He gave His life for us when He died on the Cross and so accepted death, the penalty of sin, on our behalf. Thus, it can be said by those who have benefitted from His payment, that *“we have REDEMPTION THROUGH HIS BLOOD, the forgiveness of sins”* [Ephesians 1:7]. Elsewhere, the Bible teaches that *“we are BOUGHT WITH A PRICE”* [1 Corinthians 6:20].



Redemption not only looks back to the death of Jesus, where He paid our ransom, and enabled us to be freed from sin, it also looks forward to the prospect that the redeemed people will be eternally released from the influence of sin at all. That will be true freedom!

But redemption goes even further! The Bible teaches us that all the rest of the natural creation is badly influenced by the effects of man’s sin – it is ALL subject to the *“bondage of corruption”* [Romans 8:21]. It *“groans and travails in pain”*! And now, the creation waits with anticipation for the day when it will be released, the day the Lord Jesus comes and establishes Himself as the eternal King! Will you be ready? [Read Romans 8:19-22]

So ... the availability of redemption poses an important challenge for each of us. We ALL need to be redeemed, for we are ALL in bondage to sin. Jesus died to pay the ransom for our release, but that will not benefit us unless we genuinely accept His action for ourselves as individuals. God has given us the solution BUT we must accept it by faith. So, the Bible wants us to understand that *“by grace [that is, God gives it] are you saved, through faith [we accept it by personal belief and trust]”*

[Ephesians 2:8]. Have you, dear reader, accepted the price that Jesus paid for your release from sin? This is the message of the Gospel. We will consider this next.

The Unique Gospel Message of the Bible

Readers of the NT in English translations will not fail to observe the mention the word “*gospel*” – it is, after all, found in the title of the first books of the NT. But what does the word “*gospel*” mean? A dictionary will show that the meaning is simply “good news”. What good news? The good news of the Bible is that God has provided a full deliverance for men from their sin and guilt before Him, through the death, burial and resurrection of His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, and that now He is inviting all men everywhere to acknowledge their need of Him, and receive by faith the salvation He has graciously provided for them:

“... the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye received, and wherein ye stand ... how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the scriptures” [1 Corinthians 15:1-4 excerpt].

Expressed another way:

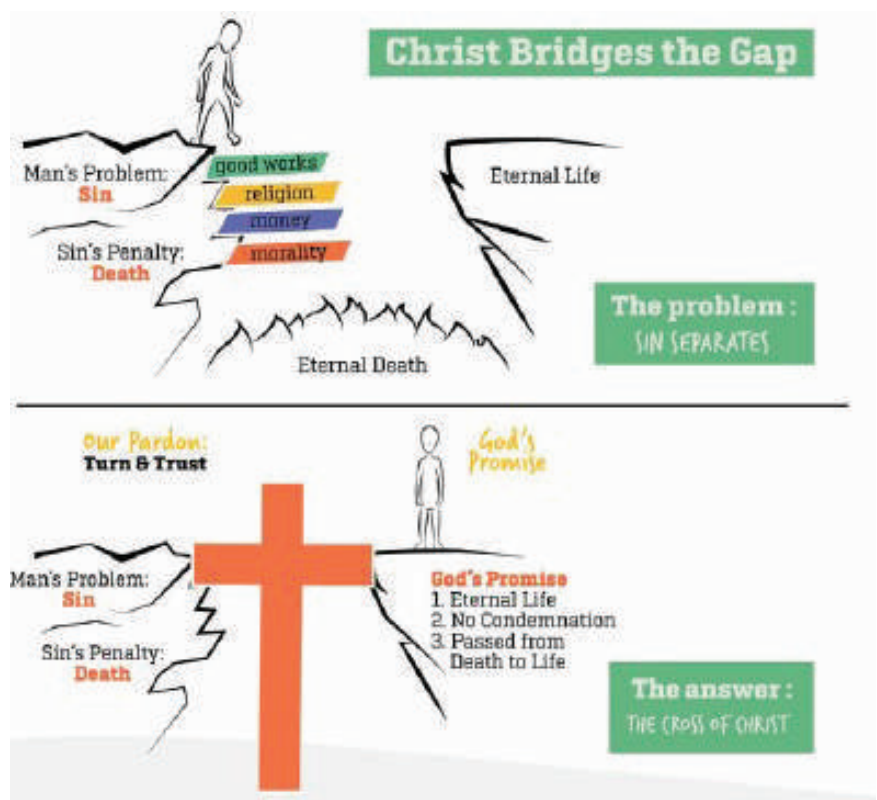
“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life” [John 3:16]

Through the gospel, God forgives sins, saves perishing souls from eternal judgement, and freely bestows upon them eternal life, and an everlasting home in heaven. He displays His mercy towards the repentant sinner, He exercises His grace in the gift of salvation, and He displays His love towards the undeserving. Through salvation and the “new birth”: He produces a population suited to heaven, calls them His children, and embraces them with constant care and blessing. They can never be lost, and, even though their natural lives may be characterised by difficulty

and end with physical death, they can never be robbed of the permanent enjoyment of life in heaven with the Lord Jesus. All this is possible as a result of the death of Jesus on the Cross, and his resurrection and exaltation. What a God is the God of the Bible!

Here are some Bible verses that summarise some of the significant points of the Gospel.

- *“Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death*

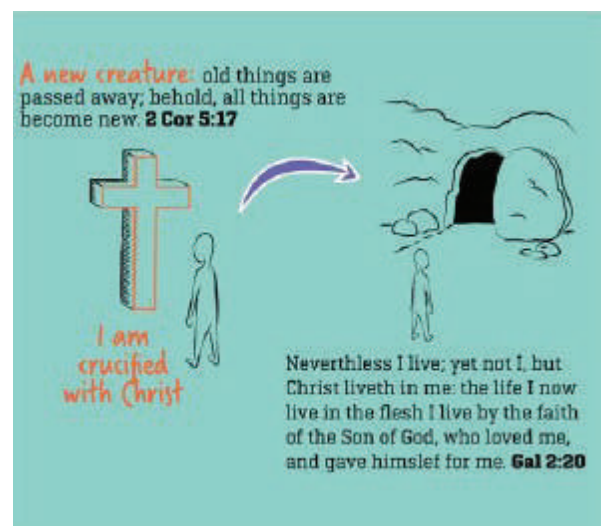


passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.” [Romans 5:12].

- *“For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.”* [Romans 3:23].
- *“But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid His face from you, that He will not hear.”* [Isaiah 59:2].
- *“For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.”* [Romans 5:6].
- *“God commends His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.”* [Romans 5:8].
- *“Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.”* [John 3:3].
- *“For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”* [John 3:16].
- *“He that believes on Him is not condemned: but he that believes not is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.”* [John 3:18].
- *“Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.”* [Acts 4:12].

Dear reader, please take a moment to reflect upon these verses. Remember the words come from God, and remain absolutely true and able to be relied upon by all of us. If the message of God, which we know as the “gospel”, is ever going to be a benefit to each one of us, we need to individually accept it for ourselves.

In the gospel is an immeasurable depth of Bible truth. The Christian gospel incorporates some vital principles which are fundamental to its message, but absolutely unique in their concepts. Let us explore a few of these, and see where they find their application in the gospel message we can receive today:



Bible Principle

Meaning

Gospel Application

Love your enemies



Jesus taught this radical concept, foreign to the normal ideas of men. For men, love is always conditional, but never so with God.

We, as sinners, were enemies of God, but *"when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son"* (Romans 5:10). God loved us without condition, and freely gave us what we didn't deserve, *"but God commends His love toward us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us"* (Romans 5:8).

Justified by faith



"Justification" describes the judicial act of pronouncing someone righteous, and not guilty. "Faith" is a firm persuasion, a conviction held, the act of believing and relying upon the truth of what God has said.

Salvation can ONLY be gained through the faith of the heart. It is perfect, and never depends upon what we have done, just upon our full acceptance of the perfect and completed work that Jesus did for us. When we believe, God pronounces us justified, and cleared of all guilt. We can't save ourselves. Only God can forgive and save - *"therefore being justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ"* (Romans 5:1).

A ransom for all



A ransom is the price which is demanded for the release of someone who is bound or enslaved. [Redemption.]

By His death, the Lord Jesus paid the price that was demanded from us, releasing us from the bondage into which sin had brought us. Knowing we had no ability to pay, God caused His Son to be responsible for discharging our debt. While religion may teach that it is our own efforts which bring us release, the Bible teaches that it ENTIRELY depends upon what Jesus Christ did for us, *"for there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself a ransom for all"* (1 Timothy 2:5-6).

By grace you are saved



Grace describes the action of God to freely give blessing to us which we, as sinners, did not deserve.

Salvation, through the work of the Lord Jesus on the Cross, is freely given, though we did not deserve such a favour, nor could we do anything at all to merit it or pay for it. It is a free gift! *"For by grace are you saved, though faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God, not of works lest any man should boast"* (Ephesians 2:8-9).

Resurrection



"Resurrection" simply means "raising up, causing to stand", and is used in the Bible to describe the action of bringing someone who is dead back to life.

The resurrection of the Lord Jesus is fundamental to the gospel. Because He was raised, we can now depend upon Him in faith with perfect confidence that He will always be able to deliver what He has promised. So our faith is directed, not to a religious figurehead who is now dead, but to One who is forever alive, *"God, that raised Him up from the dead, and gave Him glory; that your faith and hope might be in God"* (1 Peter 1:21).

God does not discriminate



God's actions are always right, just and without bias, prejudice or discrimination. He is perfectly even-handed, irrespective of who we are, or what we have done.

The Bible describes God as being "no respecter of persons". He offers salvation to ALL, and He is prepared to receive ALL on the same basis - faith in the death of Jesus, *"the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ, unto all and upon all that believe: for there is no difference: for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God"*. (Romans 3:22-23), *"Come unto Me, all you that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest"* (Matthew 11:28).

New birth



"New birth" describes the action which God takes to give a soul new life through faith in Jesus.

Salvation does not involve the reforming of what we were as sinners, but the giving of new life altogether. Thus, *"if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold all things are become new"* (2 Corinthians 5:17). In John 3, Nicodemus, the Jewish teacher, struggled to understand how a grown man could ever be reborn. Jesus said to him clearly, *"you must be born again"* (John 3:7). How? *"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life"* (John 3:16).

The Wonders of the Bible

Human scholars have always attempted to question and undermine the Bible. Their attitude to it reflects their natural desire to exclude God from their lives, and to thus remove themselves from their essential accountability to Him. Their efforts are sadly futile!

The Bible is not a science textbook, but the God of the Bible most certainly understands the rules of science, because He established all those natural systems and processes which the rules of science attempt to explain. In fact, He fully knows even those things which are still a mystery to human scholars. All that we observe is divinely controlled by Him. The Bible says of Jesus “*upholding all things by the word of His power*” (Heb 1:3).

It is difficult for us to really grasp the wisdom and knowledge of God. The Bible says:

“For My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts” [Isa 55:8-9]

Job was a great man who lived many centuries ago. God challenged Job’s thinking by questioning him about his understanding of the wonders of the creation. He wanted Job, and all of us, to understand that He was the only source of all creation, and that he was completely in control of all of its natural processes. If you are interested in reading this, you will find it in the Bible at Job chapters 38 and 39.

Modern men have extended their depth of understanding of the universe in which they live. And it is no surprise that what they discover is absolutely consistent with what God has said, and what God has done. Let us look at a few examples, of many:

1. Energy cannot be created or destroyed: The Law of the Conservation of Energy is one of the most basic tenets of the physical sciences. It captures the fact that, in a closed system, energy can never be created or destroyed, but merely transformed from one form to another. The total energy present in the universe has never altered since the completion of that great expression of God’s power in the creation. But where did it come from? The Bible says “*In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth*” [Genesis 1:1]

30 Cubits

50 Cubits

300 Cubits

Gen 6:15: “**And this is how you shall make it: the length of the ark shall be three hundred cubits, its width fifty cubits, and its height thirty cubits.**”

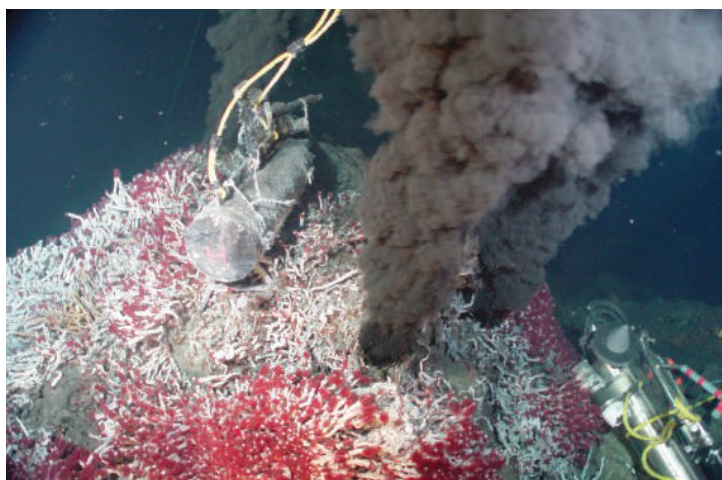
Stability Analysis of Noah’s Ark

W = weight of the ark acting through centre of gravity G
B = buoyant force acting through the centre of gravity of water displaced
M = metacentre, where line of action B intersects central axis, above G

The Ark ratio/ dimensions [6:1] are the same as used by cargo ships today. Was Noah just lucky with his dimensions, or is this further evidence of the divine authorship of the Bible?

The diagram shows a 3D perspective of Noah's Ark with dimensions: height 30 cubits, width 50 cubits, and length 300 cubits. A stability analysis diagram shows the Ark tilted at a 31-degree angle. The center of gravity G is at the bottom, and the metacentre M is above it. The buoyant force B acts through the center of gravity of the displaced water, intersecting the central axis at M. The weight W acts through G. The distance between G and M is 25/3 cubits, and the distance between M and the center of buoyancy B is 50/3 cubits. The center of buoyancy B is 15 cubits from the bottom edge and 50/3 cubits from the side edge. The center of gravity G is 10 cubits from the bottom edge and 50/3 cubits from the side edge. The distance between G and B is 5 cubits. The distance between M and B is 50/3 cubits. The distance between M and G is 25/3 cubits. The angle of tilt is 31 degrees.

2. The Bible states the optimum dimensions of a ship: In Genesis 6, God observed humanity and concluded that because of their uncontrolled wickedness, He must destroy them in judgement. He determined to send a mighty flood, though there had probably never been rain before; He instructed the faithful man Noah to build a large boat, even though there had probably never been a boat before! Helpfully, God provided the exact dimensions "*The length of the ark shall be three hundred cubits, the breadth of it fifty cubits, and the height of it thirty cubits*" (Genesis 6:15). Thus Noah built it, a task which occupied some 120 years. Modern analysis of the dimensions have shown that, dependent upon its precise shape, the dimensions of the ark of Noah were optimally matched to provide the best combination of stability, strength and passenger comfort. In fact its proportions are not dissimilar to that used for the construction of large ocean-going freighters in our present day. God even knew how to build the very best boat!
3. The earth sits upon nothing: In mediaeval times, humanity constructed many theories about the support of the earth on which they lived, and what it might rest upon. At least 3000 years ago, Job understood enough of creation to say "*He [that is, God] stretched out the north over the empty place, and hangs the earth upon nothing*" (Job 26:7). The resolution of this dilemma was not finalised scientifically until around 1500 AD.
4. Man is made of dust: All matter, including living matter is made up of a combination of natural elements. The well-known elements, such as carbon, oxygen, hydrogen, etc., which are prevalent in the rocks and soil of the earth are also used to construct the tissue and organs of all living things, including human beings. Reporting on the work of creation, the Bible records that "*the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground*" (Gen 2:7).
5. The Bible makes the first mention of deep sea springs: In recent decades scientific investigations has revealed the existence of many large free-flowing springs of water, many of them at high temperature, emerging from the bed of the ocean. In the days of Noah, God, displeased by the wickedness of men brought a flood which destroyed all flesh, except those few whom God protected in the ark. Genesis 7:11 records that "*the same day were all the fountains of the great deep broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened*". About 1500 BC, God, challenging the man Job as to his understanding of natural things asked "*Have you entered into the springs of the sea?*" (Job 38:16). Job certainly didn't know they were there, but God did, because He carefully made them all!
6. The Bible first explained sea currents: In the second half of the 19th century, Matthew Fontaine Maury in the USA and Prince Albert of Monaco in Europe independently commenced a process, using ship logs and direct observations, to map the continuous movement of the seas in well-defined ocean currents and the continuous movement of the atmosphere in well-defined prevailing wind flows. Prior to this, although mariners were aware of the movement of the seas, were unaware that such could be accurately predicted, and used to their advantage; while they were aware of the preferred winds in certain latitudes, their detailed knowledge was limited. David, the king of Israel, was a great observer of the natural world, but even he needed great



insight before he could pen the following reflective words “*whatsoever passes through the paths [] of the sea*” [Psalm 8:8]. Solomon, David’s son, was a very wise man, and he also deeply considered the things which he observed, remarking “The wind goes towards the south, and turns about to the north; it whirls about continually, and the wind returns again according to his circuits. All the rivers run into the sea, yet the sea is not full; to the place from whence the rivers come, thither they return again.” The simple mysteries of God’s great creation are there to be seen and wondered about, but men so often fail to consider the wisdom and power of the One who created them.

7. Pleiades is fixed, but Orion is moving apart: Modern observations in astronomy have shown clearly that the many bodies of the solar system are rapidly moving apart, but with some exceptions. Amongst the very well known constellations of the solar system is Pleiades and Orion, both clearly visible in the night skies of the southern hemisphere. Pleiades, also called The Seven Sisters, is a tightly-bound star cluster whose individual stars are held together by their own gravitational pulls. No relative movement is to be discerned. On the other hand, the stars of Orion [The Hunter], although they are among the brightest stars in our sky, are, in fact, separated by vast distances, and each moves in its own divergent trajectory. The geometry of Orion is such that the increasing separation of the stars has been very evident, even in the relatively short time frame of astronomical observations. God challenged Job “*Can you bind the sweet influences of Pleiades, or loose the bands of Orion?*” [Job 38:31] Clearly, Job could not, but God knew all about it, long before it was discovered by astronomers!
8. Light can separate: It was in the 1660s that the early physicist Isaac Newton began experimented with light, showing that white light passing through a glass prism separates into a range of colours from red to violet [which is based upon the varying wavelength of the light]. In words written in around 1500 BC God, speaking to the man Job, said “*by what way is the light parted*” [Job 38:24]
9. The sun has a circuit: The relationships and behaviour of the bodies of solar system. Initially many thought that the Earth was at the centre of the solar system; subsequently it was determined by scientific observation that the Earth, along with the other planets of our solar system rotated in orbit around the sun. Later again, it was further determined that not only was this so, but that the sun itself, with all its orbiting attendants, was also moving on a course through the galaxy of which it was a part. All is structured and held in equilibrium by the constant attention of God. But what men didn’t understand, God, who made it all, knew full well! The Bible said of the sun “*His going forth is from the end of the heaven, and his circuit unto the ends of it; and there is nothing hid from the heat thereof.*” [Psalm 19:6]

The Bible is full of wonders. But there is no greater wonder than the love of God for sinful humanity, the gift of His Son to the death of the Cross, and the wonderful eternal salvation that He provides to those who belong to Him.

“Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift” [2 Corinthians 9:15]

The Prophecy of the Bible

Prophecy is one aspect of the contents of the Bible which attracts very much attention, both critical and appreciative.

“Prophecy” is a word used to describe the manner in which God makes known His plans to mankind through individuals with whom he communicates directly. The Bible says *“He spoke in times past unto the fathers by the prophets”* [Hebrews 1:1]. More particularly, prophecy has become identified with those circumstances where God makes known things which have yet to take place – that is, He accurately predicts what will occur in the future. He can very readily do this – for He determines the future!

“Known unto God are all His works from the beginning of the world” [Acts 15:18]

Prophecy is a very large subject, which we can only just touch on briefly in this booklet. God knows *“the end from the beginning”*, all that occurs is known by Him in advance, and nothing ever takes God by surprise. He is “omniscient” [all knowing] and “omnipotent” [all powerful] – He perfectly knows His unalterable and established purpose, and He has the sovereign authority and power to bring it all to pass! His abilities are very difficult for us humans to quite understand. Consider what the Bible says:

“For I am God, and there is none else; I am God and there is none like Me, declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient time the things that are not yet done, saying “My counsel shall stand, and I will do all My pleasure ... I have purposed it, I will also do it.”

[Isaiah 46:9-11]

However, we will look at some prophecies – first some that have already been fulfilled in history, second some specific prophecies, also fulfilled, concerning Jesus, and finally, some important prophecies which relate to the future of the world, and of each one of us.

Prophecies: Fulfilled in History

Let us return to the days of Noah, in the early chapters of Genesis. God said *“The end of all flesh is come before Me; for the earth is filled with violence through them; and, behold, I will destroy them with the earth ... and, behold, I, even I, do bring a flood of waters upon the earth ...”* [Genesis 6:13,17]. One hundred and twenty years later, after Noah had built the ark and preached to the people to warn them of what was coming, we read *“And the rain was upon the earth forty days and forty nights ... the waters prevailed exceedingly ... all flesh died ...”* [Genesis 7:11-24]. How like our own day it really was – rampant lawlessness and sin, the inevitability of soon-coming judgement, the earnest warnings to *“flee from the wrath to come”*, and the continuing indifference and rebellion of man. God always DOES WHAT HE SAYS HE WILL DO!

Step forward in history some 1500 years. The nation of Israel, who occupy a central place in God’s purpose, are living in the land which God had given them. But they are a divided nation, made up of two separate warring parts, Israel in the north and Judah in the south. In the covenant which God had established with the nation long before in the days of Moses, He had made it clear that if they persisted in disobeying Him and rejecting His authority, He would cause other nations to carry

them away as captives. Look at the following warning prophecy *"the Lord shall scatter thee among all people, from the one end of the earth, even unto the other ... the Lord shall give thee there a trembling heart, and failing of eyes, and sorrow of mind: and thy life shall hang in doubt before you ..."* [Deuteronomy 28:54-56]. Sadly, despite the clear warning, they continuously failed. Finally, in around 721 BC, we read *"the king of Assyria took Samaria, and carried Israel into Assyria"* [2 Kings 17:6]. The historical reality is that they have never returned, in any organised manner. What about Judah? After much advice from prophets such as Jeremiah to reform their behaviour, Judah eventually received this word *"this whole land shall be a desolation, and an astonishment; and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years"* [Jeremiah 25:11]. Then, in about 588 BC, the armies of Nebuchadnezzar, destroyed Jerusalem, burned the temple, and carried away the people into captivity.

But, after the promised seventy years, God again acted, and in 536 BC the Persian king, Cyrus the Great, decreed that the temple in Jerusalem be rebuilt, and over subsequent decades, many of Judah returned to the land, and the temple and city of Jerusalem, as God had promised. God always fulfils His promises! In fact, in about 712 BC, some 176 years before it happened, God had not only predicted it, but named the unborn Cyrus as the man who would do so *"Cyrus ... saying to Jerusalem 'Thou shalt be built'; and to the temple 'Thy foundation shall be laid'".* [Isaiah 44:18]

One of those who anticipated the action of God to conclude the captivity of Judah was one of the captives, a clever man named Daniel. Daniel, a man described by God three times as *"a man greatly beloved"*, received a number of direct communications from God regarding future events. The first occurred in Daniel 2, following a dream of the great Babylonian king, Nebuchadnezzar, which Daniel interpreted; the second, in Daniel 8, as a direct vision. Both revealed the course of future history in a way which was soon to be perfectly fulfilled. The Babylonian empire, the most dominant in history to that point, would fail, and be overwhelmed by another, that of the Medes and Persians, of whom Cyrus was the first monarch. But eventually that too would be overwhelmed by a powerful monarch, whom He names as the *"king of Grecia"* [Daniel 8:21], and whom we now know as Alexander the Great. This occurred at about 330 BC.

But God doesn't stop with Alexander the Great. He predicted, still through Daniel, that Alexander would prematurely die, and that his mighty empire would be divided four ways, and he foreshadows the rivalry that would be evidenced between the Seleucid [Syrian] and Ptolemaic [Egyptian] parts of the old Greek empire. In Daniel 11, God details the conflicts which would occur between the Ptolemaic [*"king of the south"*] and Seleucid [*"king of the north"*] components of the divided empire. His prophetic words were subsequently fulfilled in history to an uncanny level of precision. We cannot outline the details in this short account, other than to comment that these events had a marked impact upon Israel, over whose territory they fought.

But Daniel's prophecy did not end at that point. God predicted one further dominant Gentile [non-Jewish] kingdom, more powerful than them all, a kingdom which He does not name, but which will prevail until brought to destruction by the intervention of God, and the establishment of an everlasting kingdom in which the Lord Jesus Christ will be King.

But how did Daniel know all these things – he didn't, but God did, for it was all in His hands. And if God has fulfilled so much of what He predicted, we should be assured that He will fulfil the remainder.

Prophecies: Related to the Lord Jesus Christ

Much of OT prophecy relates to the promises that God had made to Israel, through their first father, Abraham, and makes predictions of the One who would come, as a descendant of Abraham and David, and deliver Israel and establish them at the head of all the earthly nations. God would never forget that covenant promise. Israel call this One "*Messiah*"; we know Him as Jesus!

There is one outstanding prophecy recorded in Daniel 9, which not only restates the promise of a coming Messiah, but spells out in precise details the timetable on which He would come. Known colloquially as "Daniel's Seventy Weeks", Daniel speaks of seventy weeks of years, that is, 490 years, which would "*finish the transgressions ... make an end of sins ... make reconciliation for iniquity ... bring in everlasting righteousness ... seal up the vision and prophecy ... anoint the Most Holy*" [Daniel 9:24]. Commencing with "*the commandment to restore and build Jerusalem*" it predicts that after sixty-nine weeks "*shall Messiah be cut off, but not for Himself*". Following the actual dates, the fulfilment, in the death of Jesus [for others!] occurs precisely 483 years after the Persian edict to restore the city of Jerusalem [445 BC]. But what of the seventieth week? You and I, beloved reader, are now in a prophetic hiatus, during which time God, with great longsuffering, calls in compassion for men and women to accept the Saviour whom He has provided through His Son, and the world awaits the commencement of the seventieth week, when the unlimited anger of God against human sin will be unleashed in seven years of unparalleled tribulation and bloodshed, until God brings the process to a conclusion with the final establishment of the Kingdom of His Son.

The prophecies of the coming of Jesus are many, and all are either already fulfilled in His first coming, or else to be fulfilled in His promised second coming. Let us look at just a few which have been fulfilled:

Prophecies that deal with Jesus Christ's first coming (lineage, birth, life, death, resurrection & ascension) which have already been fulfilled

Prophecies concerning His lineage and birth

Psalms 35:11 He would be falsely accused; false witnesses would speak against Him
Psalms 18:22,23 Rejected by the Israelite priests, elders, scribes, rulers
Psalms 16:10 He would be raised out from among the dead [He also said Himself that He would rise again]
Psalms 69:3 Jesus would thirst on the cross
Psalms 68:18 Jesus would be received into Heaven

1100-1000 BC

Prophecies concerning His life on earth

Hosea 11:1 His move to Egypt and return to Israel again
Micah 5:2 His birth must be in Bethlehem

785-710 BC

Isaiah 7:14 To be born of a virgin

Isaiah 7:14 His name shall be Immanuel

Isaiah 9:1-2 His ministry was to be in Galilee

Isaiah 61:1-2 He would teach, preach, heal and perform miracles

Isaiah 6:9-10 His teaching would be rejected

Isaiah 50:6 He would be brutally beaten and spat upon by the Sanhedrin

Isaiah 53:7 He would be silent before His accusers

Isaiah 53:12 He would be crucified with two robbers

Isaiah 53:9 His bones would not be broken

740-680 BC

Jeremiah 31:15 ... to escape the massacre of children by Herod

Zechariah 9:9 Entry into Jerusalem riding on a donkey

Zechariah 11:12 Jesus would be betrayed for 30 pieces of silver

Zechariah 12:10 He would be pierced by a soldier with a spear after His death

620-490 BC

Matthew 28:59-61 The chief priests found false witnesses witnesses would speak against Him
John 1:11; John 11:53 They took counsel to put Him to death
1 Corinthians 15:6 The risen Christ was witnessed by over 500 people at once
John 19:28-30 Jesus cried, "I thirst"
Hebrews 1:3 He sat down at the right hand of God

Matthew 2:13-15 Jesus taken to Egypt to escape Herod's massacre.
 Returned after his death
Matthew 2:1 Jesus was born in Bethlehem

Matthew 1:23-25 Mother Mary was a virgin

Matthew 1:23 An angel said His name would be Immanuel

John 4:1-3 Jesus carried out public ministry in Galilee
Matthew 15:30 The blind, dumb, maimed and many others were healed

Luke 22:2 The chief priests sought to kill Him

Matthew 26:67-68 The soldiers spat on His face

Matthew 27:12-14 He was silent in front of Herod

Mark 15:27-28 Two robbers were crucified alongside Him

John 19:33-36 The soldiers did not break Jesus' legs, like the others

Matthew 2:16-18 Massacre of innocent children by Herod. Jesus escaped

Luke 19:35-38 Entered Jerusalem on a donkey

Mark 14:10-11 Judas betrayed Him

John 19:34 The soldiers pierced His side

PROPHECY

FULFILLMENT

7 promises the coming of Jesus, but

Prophecies: Future

If God has fulfilled His prophecies in the past, we can confidently expect that He will bring to pass His prophecies which are for the future. And – there are many of them!

As human beings we have no ability to predict the details of our own future, and no control over it at all. Solomon wrote *“you don’t know what a day may bring forth”* [Proverbs 27:1]. So it is both a fascination and a challenge to know that God has mapped the future out in great detail. Our challenge – what part will we play, and will we be ready? For us as individuals, is it to be heaven or the judgement of God?

Again, space hinders us from expanding upon this to a great extent. Suffice to say that the prophecy that dominates and relates to all future prophecy is the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ! Mentioned in excess of three hundred times in the Bible, His second coming is a certainty, *“if I go ... I will come again and receive you unto Myself, that where I am there you may be also”* [John 14:3].

Why hasn’t He come yet? The Bible anticipated that this question would be used to cast doubts upon the fact of His coming again. Observe the following:

“scoffers ... saying “Where is the promise of His coming? For ... all things continue as they were ...they are willingly ignorant ... one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slack concerning His promise ... but is longsuffering to usward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come ... in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat” [2 Peter 3:3-10]

Let us just map out the programme of events which God has shown will certainly come soon:

1. **The Rapture:** Christians patiently await for this imminent event, which we call the “rapture”, though the Bible doesn’t use this word. Not seen by the world, in a moment of time, Jesus will call and ALL those who trust Him will be immediately transported into heaven to be with Him. *“The Lord Himself ... with a shout ... the dead in Christ shall rise ... we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord”* [1 Thessalonians 4:16-17]
2. **The Judgement Seat of Christ:** Out of sight of the world, each Christian will face judgement, not for their sins, which were all forgiven through faith in Jesus, but as an assessment of their works and service. The Bible says, then *“shall every man have praise of God”* [1 Corinthians 4:5]) *“we must all appear before the judgement seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body ... whether they be good or bad”* [2 Corinthians 5:10]
3. **The Great Tribulation:** We have now reached Daniel’s seventieth week! During this period of seven years, the earth and its inhabitants will experience cataclysmic events, with disease, warfare and bloodshed as never before seen in history. God, after lengthy forbearance, is finally responding to their rebellion and disobedience against Him. It will be a time of deep tribulation for all who are part of it. The nation of Israel will be a particular focus of attention, and in the final 3½ years will be subject to the worst national persecution in human history; then they will

certainly regret the words they used at the trial of Jesus, *"His blood be upon us on upon our children"* [Matthew 27:25].]

"then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be" [Matthew 25:20]

4. **The Visible Return of Christ to the Earth:** The Great Tribulation will be brought to a sudden conclusion when the Lord Jesus Christ comes again with the hosts of heaven, first to rescue the surviving members of the nation of Israel under imminent threat of annihilation, then to destroy the surrounding armies of the final Gentile kingdom at the battle of Armageddon, and then to set up His own kingdom of peace and righteousness.

"Behold, He comes with clouds, and every eye shall see Him, and they also which pierced Him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him": [Revelation 1:7]

5. **The Millennial Reign of Christ:** The visible return of Christ will bring into existence His earthly Kingdom. The Bible often speaks of Him as a King who will *"rule with a rod of iron"*, and makes many predictions of His reign as *"King of Kings, and Lord of Lords"* over a realm characterised by righteousness, perfect justice and complete equity.

"they ... shall reign with Him a thousand years" [Revelation 20:6]

6. **The Great White Throne Judgement:** At the conclusion of the thousand years of the kingdom, God will release Satan, who has been bound, who will *"deceive the nations"* [Revelation 20:7] into a revolt against the rule of God. God will respond with the final judgement of the nations with fire, Satan will be cast into the lake of fire for ever, and God will set up a Great White Throne for the final judgement of humanity. This will require the resurrection of all people who have died, who will each be judged *"according to their works"*. Tragically, ALL who appear there, because they have never trusted Christ for salvation in their life-time will be condemned and *"cast into the lake of fire"*. Will you be there?

"I saw a great white throne, and Him that sat on it ... I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened ... the dead were judged ... according to their works ... and whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire." [Revelation 20:11-15]

7. **The Eternal State:** With sin permanently dealt with, God will destroy the material heavens and earth, and create *"a new heaven and a new earth"*. All will be renewed, and the redeemed will enjoy the near presence of the Lord Jesus Christ and the bliss of heaven forever, *"in Thy presence is fulness of joy, at Thy right hand there are pleasures for ever more"* [Psalm 16:11]

"I saw a new heavens and a new earth ... God shall wipe away all tears ... there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away ... there shall be no more curse ... the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it ... and they shall see His face ..." [Revelation 21:1 – 22:5]

Conclusion: The Challenge of the Bible

None of us can hear or read the words of the Bible without making a personal response to it – it is intended to challenge us, and it demands a response. Such is the character and the source of the Bible that it CANNOT be ignored or rejected without a serious personal implication.

Yet, despite this, Australian society today would seem to have forgotten its foundation in Biblical principles, and turned to more rationalist and liberal ideologies. They do so, as men have done throughout all the course of history, so as to exclude God, and their unavoidable accountability to Him, from their lives! But ... God will not be excluded! And, God will always have the final word, and our responsibility to Him, no matter what our attitude, will be assessed by His all-seeing, all-knowing eye. The challenge is – are we ready for that, and are we prepared to meet Him? Consider – *“prepare to meet your God”* [Amos 4:12].

God speaks in the Bible, but are we prepared to listen?

God shows us that we are sinners, but that He has provided the solution for our sins, but are we prepared to believe it?

God has said *“Christ died for our sins”* [1 Corinthians 15:3], but are we prepared to acknowledge that we are sinners, and that the death of Jesus is sufficient for us?

God has taught *“the soul that sins it shall die”* [Ezekiel 18:4], but does that trouble us?

God shows us that *“it is appointed unto man once to die, but after this the judgement”*, but does that reality cause us to be fearful?

God has indicated to us that Jesus *“is the way, the truth and the life: no man comes to the Father but by Me”* [John 14:6], but have we been prepared to abandon all other attempts to get to heaven, and just accept Him?

God has instructed that *“He now commands all men everywhere to repent for He has appointed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness”* [Acts 17:31], but have we been obedient to His command?

God has said *“He that believes on the Son has everlasting life; but he that believes not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him”* [John 3:36] but have we believed on Him and trusted Him?

God does not settle for an ambiguous response, any more than He settles for a refusal or indifference. His expectation is clear. He challenges our heart to accept the truth of His Word, the Bible, and asks us to consider the question *“what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God?”* [1 Peter 4:17]

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

"Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." [Acts 16:30-31

**"A BIBLE THAT'S
FALLING APART
USUALLY BELONGS TO
SOMEONE WHO ISN'T".**

Charles Spurgeon

*“Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible,
by the word of God, which lives and abides for ever.
For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass.
The grass withers, and the flower thereof falls away:
but the word of the Lord endures for ever.
And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you”.*

The Bible: Peter 1:23 -25

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