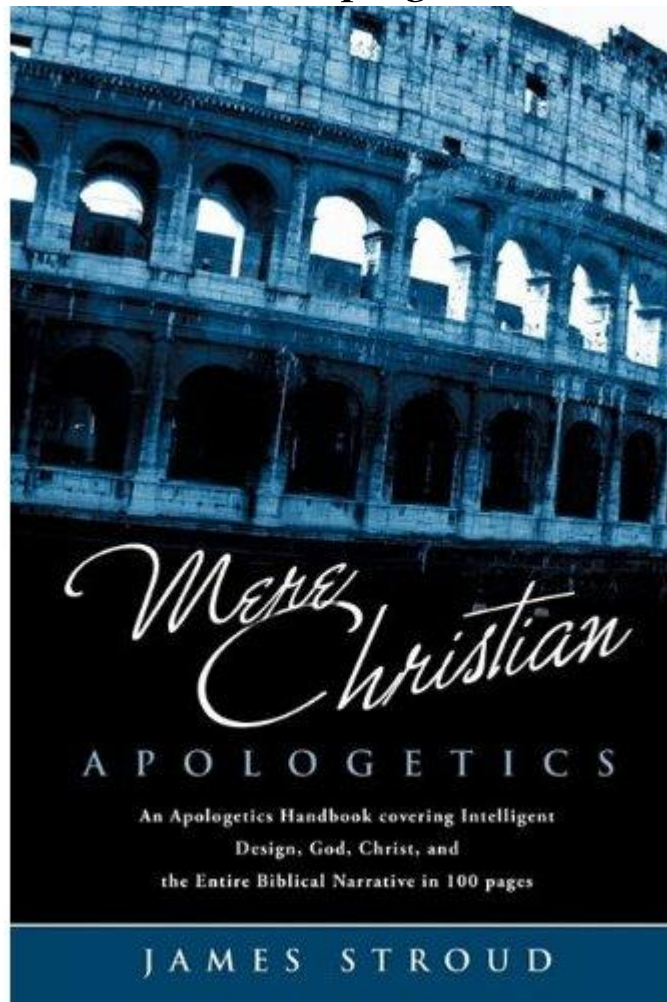


# *Mere Christian Apologetics*

*-An Apologetics Handbook covering Intelligent Design, God, Christ, and the Entire Biblical Narrative in 100 pages-*



**James Stroud**

# Preface

*“Follow the evidence, wherever it leads.”- Socrates*

Why another book? Because it is my opinion that while we can get a 300 page book on 1 Christian theological concept, we cannot get a simple book in approximately 100 pages that adequately covers the Christian story in its entirety that we can simply carry with us to reference for “on the spot” dialogue; the following quote summarize our current plight:

*“Many high school seniors believe that Sodom and Gomorrah were husband and wife, while a majority of Americans cannot name one of the four Gospels. Jay Leno asked his Tonight Show audience one night to name one of Jesus’ twelve apostles; they came up empty. One in ten Americans believes that Joan of Arc was Noah’s wife, and only one-third knows that Jesus (not Billy Graham) preached the Sermon on the Mount.” - Washington Monthly*

I believe this adequately sums up our current situation in the West and why we must revisit with believer and non-believer alike what it means to be a Christ follower and in reference to CS Lewis’ beautiful and still timely book “Mere Christianity,” which adequately peels back the layers to reveal Christ-ianity over church-ianity and all the various creeds and dogmas that have infiltrated the Christ follower’s mentality since the 4<sup>th</sup> century; I have titled this simple book “Mere Christian Apologetics” – in a humble attempt to give a very simple/concise message of Christian Theism that is virtually agreed to by all major branches of Christianity and that can be used simply to have a good understanding of “why” you are a Christian and “what” being a Christian means at a “101” level, (so to avoid being a statistic like the quote above who is a Christian in name only without understanding the basics of what it means). I pray that this simple book can help you in better understanding the concepts of God, Christ, and the Bible. This book is dedicated to you and all those who are interested in the concepts of truth as well as the “Academic Freedom” to pursue that truth in all fields of academia.

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*\*Please note that while I was challenged to keep this book under 100 pages I do realize it has exceeded the 100 pages; nonetheless, I pray that it will be a simple book skimming the top of the universally agreed messages by Christian theist, apologist, & skeptics alike, in order to give you a quick reference tool for on the spot dialogue with either an atheist, Christian, Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist, etc, on what it means to be a follower of Christ.*

*\*\*The material from this booklet is taken out of my longer work: “Christianity in the 22<sup>nd</sup> Century – Jihad, Darwin, and church-ianity” with the appropriate citations*

*\*\*\*The cover is a picture taken by the author while visiting the Roman Coliseum; reflections on persecution and Christianity’s history – moreover the growing persecution against academic freedom to take the evidence where it leads even if that is to Intelligent Design → God → Bible → Christ...*

*“Remember the words I spoke to you: ‘No servant is greater than his master.’ If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also. If they obeyed my teaching, they will obey yours also.” – John 15:20*

# Introduction

*“A coherent worldview must be able to satisfactorily answer four questions: that of origin, meaning of life, morality, and destiny; while every major religion makes exclusive claims about truth, the Christian faith is unique in its ability to answer all four of these questions.”*

– Ravi Zacharias

What would a handy book that one could carry with them that covered all the basics that virtually everyone agree to on the subjects of: Intelligent Design, Creationism, Philosophy of religion, apologetics, and what the Bible and Jesus says at a basic level, (in approximately 100 pages), look like? Hopefully like this one because that is the exact purpose for why I have compiled it. While I admit that I am not a Ravi Zacharias, I have studied history, philosophy, religious studies, apologetics and theology at many major universities as well as having worked with the think tank of the intelligent design movement in Seattle – The Discovery Institute – in hosting talks at universities and colleges. My point being, it is my utmost hope to place in your hands a small booklet that covers all major points of creationism through theology so that you may know and communicate to another person at a macro level of why there must be a God, why Jesus Christ makes the most sense of the concept of God, the reliability of the Bible, and what the Bible says from cover to cover – all in approximately 100 pages. The one advantage to this is that by my covering the basics at a macro-level, this book would become equally usable for a non-believer searching for answers or for a believer from any type denomination, (an extremely liberal or conservative background), because I am explaining the basic tenants of each of these in an easy to understand way, that virtually all believers or non-believers would agree with. We will not be doing a deep-dive in eschatology or certain church doctrines which I will leave to the reader to search out on their own if they would like; what this will hopefully do, is provide you with the same basic information that “is” 90% of what God/Jesus/Bible/Good News is all about. So whether you are Anabaptist, Roman Catholic, Anglican, Protestant, Eastern Orthodox, or skeptic/agnostic – this book will give you all the basics of what Christian-Biblical-theism is in my 10+ years of studying it – all in approximately 100 pages.

Eurobarometer Poll 2005

Country	Belief in a god	Belief in a spirit or life force	Belief in neither a spirit, god or life force
Spain	59%	21%	18%
Austria	54%	34%	8%
Lithuania	49%	36%	12%
Switzerland	48%	39%	9%
Germany	47%	25%	25%
Belgium	43%	29%	27%
Finland	41%	41%	16%
United Kingdom	38%	40%	20%
France	34%	27%	33%
Netherlands	34%	37%	27%
Norway	32%	47%	17%
Denmark	31%	49%	19%
Sweden	23%	53%	23%

The above poll shows that belief in any God has been reduced to 38% in Britain and 34% in France and a dismal 23% in Sweden, so there is obviously a sense of urgency by these types of statistics. Surprisingly, (as we will see), the atheist has no real reason “for” atheism, (because it is a somewhat bankrupt worldview); so once the Christian theist is able to communicate the reasons for Christianity as well as share the “Good News” of who exactly Christ is, we should expect to see these numbers of belief increase. The problem is that today’s Christian knows little to nothing about what or why they believe what they do.

- **Christian apologetics** is a field of Christian theology that aims to present a rational basis for the Christian faith, defend the faith against objections, and expose the perceived flaws of other world views.
- **1 Peter 3:15** – “But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect.”

If we remember the above 2 points and adhere to them, then we should not see the type of statistics above or the quote below continuing to grow...

*“Good News: 1/3 of Americans read their Bible at least once a week. Bad News: 54% can’t name the authors of the Gospels. 63% don’t know what a Gospel is. 58% can’t name 5 of the 10 commandments. 10% think Joan of Arc was Noah’s wife.”*

*- New York Times, 12/7/97*

# CHAPTER I

*“The Bible speaks of the Book of Nature, the Book of Consciousness/morals, and the Book of Revelations; to fully grasp the complicated concept of “God” we must review each of these books to open up a greater understanding of this God, because they should each be in agreement with each other.”*

## **Intelligent Design**

While my book, “Christianity in the 22<sup>nd</sup> Century – Jihad, Darwin, and church-ianity,” goes into much more detail on the subject, I am going to simply hit on the basics of each component and provide you with references and suggested sources of additional research at the end of this book; but from a starting point it will be helpful to identify what we mean by “Intelligent Design” and why it matters to the Christian.

The theory of intelligent design holds that certain features of the universe and of living things are best explained by an intelligent cause, not an undirected process such as natural selection. In a nutshell a non-believer or a different religion could be a supporter of ID (intelligent Design), because it does not name the designer as a god or anything else; it simply looks at the evidence of naturalism (that everything can be explained by natural causation), and sees that since the chances of the universe coming into existence or life arising as the result of purely undirected material processes is effectively zero, an intelligent designer of some type makes more sense. Design theorists favor the latter option and argue that our universe and living organisms look designed because they really were designed.



*“The author with Stephen C. Meyer, Senior Fellow of Discovery Institute and Intelligent Design Advocate – author of the best seller “Signature in the Cell: DNA and the Evidence for Intelligent Design ([www.SignatureInTheCell.com](http://www.SignatureInTheCell.com))”*

The beautiful thing about ID is that it shows the weaknesses of naturalistic evolution, (as we will look at later), but also allows us to communicate the evidence for a “creator/designer” to a secular audience or a skeptic; thus allowing us to effectively build a case for the fact that all arrows are growingly pointing

towards design for the cause of the universe as well as for life on earth. A good example of this is that I hosted Casey Luskin from the Discovery Institute, (<http://www.discovery.org/csc>), to come and speak at the University of Arkansas in 2010 on academic freedom and why intelligent design is stronger scientifically than Darwinian Evolution. The crowd was very open to the information with about 100 students and faculty showing up as well as the local atheists group and a few professors who wanted us shut down, (if they have the facts against ID and for evolution then why didn't they blow Casey out of the water in front of a large crowd?) We must remember that anyone will tell you that one must believe that there is "a god" before they can believe in the "Christian God." This is where ID makes perfect sense – it gives you the philosophical and scientific facts behind theory that there must be some type of designer without "crossing the line" in a secular setting and naming "who/what" the designer could be thus adhering to what all of academia should in the old Socrates quote – "Follow the evidence where it leads." Agnostic Astronomer Robert Jastrow came to this same ID conclusion in the 1970s when he wrote the book "God and the Astronomers":

"Consider the enormity of the problem: Science has proved that the universe exploded into being at a certain moment. It asks: 'What cause produced this effect? Who or what put the matter or energy into the universe?' And science cannot answer these questions."  
– Dr. Robert Jastrow, "God and the Astronomers"

Professor of Law Phillip Johnson who somewhat helped to "open the flood-gates" (along with Michael Denton in 1986 with his book "Evolution – A Theory in Crisis"); that began a non-stop barrage by scientist, mathematicians and philosophers publishing book after book on the impossibilities of Darwinian Evolution summed up Intelligent Design beautifully in "Intelligent Design 101" when he said:

*"Intelligent Design really came to the forefront in the early 1990s among some scientists colleagues of mine who fell into various viewpoints. They agreed that there is fundamental evidence that lies behind the origin of life and the universe. This theory does not identify the mind. That is left to theologians. What the theory does say is that science is capable of telling us that the universe and life bear detectable fingerprints of an intelligent designing agent. Intelligent design thus united into one movement people of many viewpoints who were once divided on side issues."*

Intelligent Design theory thus allows us to connect to the next logical step within Christian theism usually known as Creationism. Creationism for the most part takes the scientific, philosophical, historic, and social sciences of intelligent design and then combines them with the Bible to make sense out of the world and universe we live in. While there are many different types of creationist who may differ on such topics as the age of the earth, all collectively agree that:

### **Intelligent Design + the Bible = Creationism**

I have sadly seen much debate between Christian groups over the details of the age of the earth, but I will agree with Ken Ham inasmuch that we cannot compromise the Bible or Jesus of Nazareth with that of man's theories; naturalism tells us a virgin birth is not possible but this is a fundamental Christian belief, so I would caution any of us on relying too much on man's theories that change every few years if they are blatantly against the God Hypothesis.

## **Creationism**

\*In a very broad nut-shell, Creationism is the belief that the earth and universe and the various kinds of animals and plants was created by God or some other supreme being. Those that hold the views of *Creationism* are referred to as *Creationists*. Within creationism in the Abrahamic religions, there are various ideas. In regards to those religions, one form of creationism holds that the earth is approximately 6,000 years old and is referred to as Young Earth Creationism. The other form of creationism is called Old Earth Creationism and holds that the earth and universe are billions of years old. Creationist scientists believe that the first law and second law of thermodynamics argue against an eternal universe and they

also claim that these laws point to the universe being supernaturally created. Dr. Norman Geisler stated that "Both young- and old-earthers believe that God supernaturally, directly and immediately produced every kind of animal and human as separate and genetically distinct forms of life." Dr. Norman Geisler also wrote that "both young- and old-earthers who are evangelical hold to the historicity of the Genesis account: They believe that Adam and Eve were literal people, the progenitors of the entire human race." Creation scientists assert that the theory of evolution is in conflict with the evidence provided by the physical sciences and often cite secular scientific sources which agree with them on various points.

Those who hold to young earth creationism point out that nearly every culture in the world has a creation story and a flood story. Many of these creation accounts and flood accounts have commonalities with the account given in the book of Genesis although gross differences exist also. The Institute for Creation Research has taken the position that the similarities in regards to creation accounts to the Genesis account demonstrates that the main points of the Genesis account has been preserved. In regards to the assertion that the similarities in flood stories around the world show common origin, young earth creationist particularly assert that there are strong similarities between the Genesis flood account and other world flood accounts. Also, there are remarkable similarities between Native American, Chinese, Persian, and other creation myths from around the world, and the biblical account given in Genesis concerning creation.

### **Creationism and Intelligent Design**

Believers in the Abrahamic faiths who hold to creationism believe that the natural world has been designed by God. Recently, there have been articles which were favorable to the intelligent design position in scientific journals which traditionally have favored the macro-evolutionary position. Believers in the Abrahamic faiths have points of agreement and disagreement with the intelligent design movement. They agree that the natural world has an intelligent cause and was designed as mentioned previously. However, some advocates of creationism believe that the intelligent design movement divorces the Creator from creation by not explicitly stating that the cause of creation is a supernatural being and also failing to state explicitly who that supernatural being is.

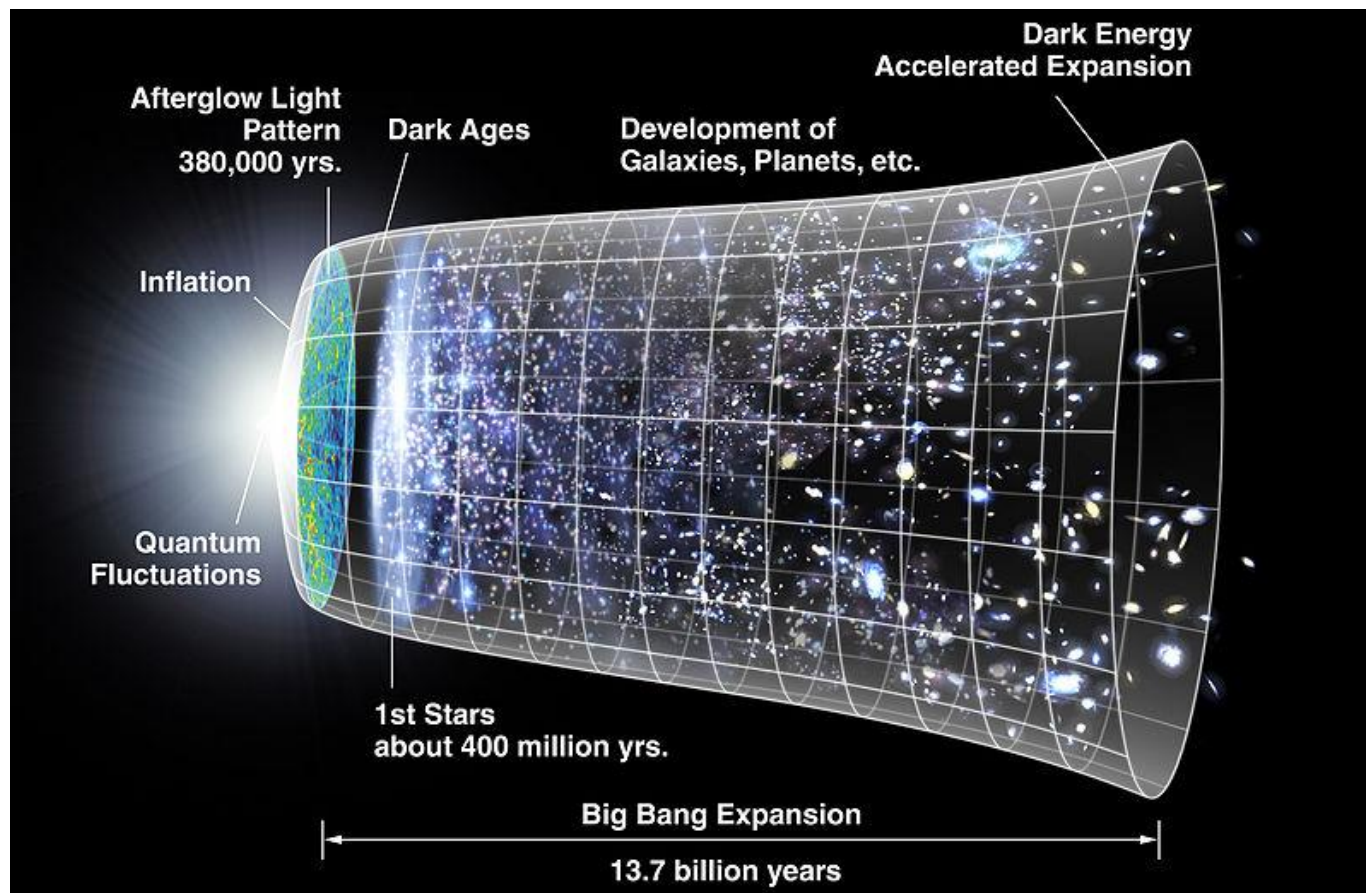
There is considerable disagreement on whether or not intelligent design amounts to a form of creationism and if so, where to place it in comparison to the other forms of creationism. This is due to the concept having many different definitions and proponents espousing different ideas. For example, one major proponent of Intelligent Design is Young Earth Creationist Paul Nelson, while Michael Behe, another major proponent, accepts common descent. William Dembski has stated unequivocally that Intelligent Design is not theistic evolution and they should not be considered the same. Dembski has also asserted that Intelligent Design is the Logos in terms of information theory, while Dembski and others have given other definitions that do not include any specific theological references. Arguably, intelligent design can be summarized as the notion that at some point in the past, in some way, some entity (possibly God) created life, or altered life at some point, or created the universe to be compatible with life.

### **Even Atheist Recognize that Creation is a Valid Necessity**

Have you ever wondered where the universe came from? Why everything exists now as it is, instead of just nothingness? Most people do not realize, (or want to acknowledge), that the last 100 years of scientific discoveries have pointed more to a Designer than ever before. For many millennia, many thought of our vast universe as eternal and uncaused, but since the 20<sup>th</sup> century that has been universally abandoned, in favor of a created universe. (I'm not sure if you caught that or not, but what this means is all space and time itself began in the finite past, (it had a beginning point.)) This cosmological discovery is now most often referred to as the Big Bang theory. The Big Bang is the cosmological model of the



initial conditions and subsequent development of the Universe that is supported by the most comprehensive and accurate explanations from current scientific evidence and observation. As used by cosmologists, the term *Big Bang* generally refers to the idea that the Universe has expanded from a primordial hot and dense initial condition at some finite time in the past (currently estimated to have been approximately 13.7 billion years ago), and continues to expand to this day. (This discovery alone verifies that the universe, space, matter, and time itself has an instantaneous beginning point.)



*“Standard Big Bang model that shows all of space/time/matter coming into being uncaused out of nothing- (picture credit - www.wikipedia.org)”*

The implications of this finding are enormous, and unfortunately the ramifications are rarely spelled out to students. Even though it does not necessarily stipulate the God of the Bible, it does strongly support the Intelligent Designer of the cosmos, (and moreover it does match well with the creation story of Genesis). *I think agnostic Robert Jastrow who sat in the same chair as Edwin Hubble did sums it up best in his book God and the Astronomers:*

*“This religious faith of the scientists is violated by the discovery that the world had a beginning under conditions in which the known laws of physics are not valid, and as a product of forces or circumstances we cannot discover. When that happens, the scientist has lost control.  
-Robert Jastrow (God and the Astronomers, 113-14)*

The discovery that the universe had a beginning was not met with pleasure. Many scientists rebelled against the notion because it implied a Beginner. One scientist admitted, “the notion of a beginning is repugnant to me.” Yet the evidence was there. Jastrow puts his finger on the problem: “Many scientists have a “religious” commitment to the assumption that everything has a natural, scientifically accessible



and quantifiable explanation. Just when they were becoming confident in this assumption, seemingly explaining everything from the formation of stars to the formation of species, they ran into something which in principle cannot be explained scientifically: that first instant of creation, when the universe began as a singularity, a point inaccessible to investigation.” We will simply leave it at this, both believer and non-believer recognize that the universe did have a first cause, and a type of creation where not only space and matter, but time itself came into existence by this first cause.

### *Creationism and the age of the Earth*

I wasn't going to comment on this, but since a lot of people will inevitably ask, I thought I would very briefly touch on a few quick points, referencing heavily on the best summary I have seen in Wayne Grudem's book *Systematic Theology*. So what about the age of the universe/earth? While I personally feel, (though it is beyond the scope of this book), that theologically speaking the creation of all life only seems to be logical within a relatively young creation, (perhaps 10,000 BC (though I do not fall into the YEC camp per se)), and the fact that the Bible says there was no death before sin and that through Adam sin entered into the world, (see Romans 5:12), we are left with either a young creation or a theodicy described by William Dembski in his book "The End of Christianity" in which what we know as the "past" was created after Adam's sin since God transcends time – thus the ancient past came into existence after Adam's sin. Either are plausible considering age is really beyond the realm of science just as the singularity of the Big Bang is, therefore anything much more on the subject is simply speculative. But I do not see any way to reconcile millions of years with humans emerging from ape-like ancestors, death before sin, therefore there was no Adam, Eve, Noah, Flood, Fall, sin, temptation, etc, etc, even though Jesus referenced them all – without losing the heart of Christianity, the Bible, and Christ himself. Therefore I will simply encourage the reader to search this out on their own and just say that we must not sacrifice or placate the heart of the Christian message for the sake of man's every-changing theories. In other words, if we say death was all around us before Adam then that automatically begs the question "then what did Christ save us from exactly?" (See Romans 5:12) Moreover, if Adam was created an adult and not a baby, is it not possible the earth may appear old just as Adam appeared old? Again, this is far beyond the scope or purpose of this book so I will simply end with a great quote on the subject from Theologian Wayne Grudem on the age issue:

“Although our conclusions are tentative, at this point in our understanding, Scriptures seem to be more easily understood to suggest (but not require) a young earth view, while the observable facts of creationism seem increasingly to favor an old earth view. Both views are possible, but neither one is certain. And we must say very clearly that the age of the earth is a matter that is not directly taught in Scripture, but is something we can think about only by drawing more or less probable inferences from Scripture. Given this situation, it would seem best to admit that God may not allow us to find a clear solution to this question before Christ returns, and to encourage evangelical scientists and theologians who fall in both the young earth and old earth camps to begin to work together with much less arrogance, much more humility, and a much greater sense of cooperation in a common purpose.

Finally, we can view this controversy with some expectancy that there will be further progress in scientific understanding of the age of the earth. It is likely that scientific research in the next ten or twenty years will tip the weight of evidence decisively toward either a young earth or an old earth view, and the weight of Christian scholarly opinion (from both biblical scholars and scientists) will begin to shift decisively in one direction or another. This should not cause alarm to advocates of either position, because the truthfulness of Scripture is not threatened (our interpretations of Genesis 1 have enough uncertainty that either position is possible). Both sides need to grow in knowledge of the truth, even if this means abandoning a long-held position.”

## **The Naturalist Opposing View held in Text Books as Superior to ID: “Chance”**

Admitting design into science can only enrich the scientific enterprise. All the tried and true tools of science will remain intact. But design adds a new tool to the scientist’s explanatory tool chest. Moreover, design raises a whole new set of research questions. Once we know that something is designed, we will want to know how it was produced, to what extent the design is optimal, and what its purpose is. Note that we can detect design without knowing what something was designed for. There is a room at the Smithsonian filled with objects that are obviously designed but whose specific purpose anthropologists do not understand – such as arrow heads, etc.

So it is really up to you now. Is the brilliant theory of “chance” for everything sufficient? Or does the theory that there is an intelligence starting to make more sense? I have only touched on a few very basic philosophical points, but this should be enough, Lord willing, to at least establish Deism, (that there is some type of creator or designer behind all of life). In the next chapter, we will quickly review the basics of Darwinian Evolutionary Naturalism that is endorsed by secular academia as fact to see how factual it really is once we begin to peel back the layers because it is important for both believer and non-believer to understand the arguments and what is at stake.

### **You should be able to answer these questions after reading this chapter:**

- 1) What is the difference between Intelligent Design, Creationism, and Naturalism?
- 2) Why is Naturalism less credible than Creationism or Intelligent Design?
- 3) Can one believe in naturalistic evolution and Christian theism?
- 4) How old is the earth?

#### **Top 3 Recommended Readings for greater understanding this Chapter:**

- 1) Intelligent Design 101: Leading Experts Explain the Key Issues by H. Wayne House (Paperback - Mar 11, 2008)
- 2) Understanding Intelligent Design: Everything You Need to Know in Plain Language by William A. Dembski and Sean McDowell (Paperback - Jul 1, 2008)
- 3) The Politically Incorrect Guide to Darwinism and Intelligent Design by Jonathan Wells PhD (Aug 21, 2006)

# CHAPTER II

## **Darwinian Evolution vs. Christian Creationism**

Darwinian Evolution is an incredibly slippery word to define because it can mean so many different things. For the purpose of this book we will go with the general definition held in school text books which concludes that against everything we know, life somehow arose by chance following the Big Bang – somehow non-life materials such as rocks gave rise to simple life – which then someone slowly became all of the different life phylas we see today from plants/animals/insects, etc.

*The two premises on which the various theories of evolution are based:*

### **1 - This is the evolutionary formula for making a universe:**

Nothing + nothing = two elements + time = 92 natural elements + time = all physical laws and a completely structured universe of galaxies, systems, stars, planets, and moons orbiting in perfect balance and order.

### **2 - This is the evolutionary formula for making life:**

Dirt/inorganic materials + water + time = living creatures.

Evolutionists theorize that the above two formulas can enable everything about us to make itself. (How ironic is it that this theory is held so viable today?) Contrast this with Creationism or Intelligent Design theories that consider the possibility that an intelligent agent has to be the “ultimate reality” in which everything else can ultimately be traced back to; moreover, in Christian Creationism this intelligent agent is the Christian concept of God recorded in the Bible – outlining these points and understanding them are of the utmost importance to anyone who is either Christian or Darwinist.

### **Science** (s<sup>i</sup>ēns)

- n.
1.
  - a. The observation, identification, description, experimental investigation, and theoretical explanation of phenomena.
  - b. **Such activities restricted to a class of natural phenomena.**
  - c. Such activities applied to an object of inquiry or study.
2. Methodological activity, discipline, or study: I’ve got packing a suitcase down to a science.
3. An activity that appears to require study and method: the science of purchasing.
4. Knowledge, especially that gained through experience.

Isn’t it interesting how scientists say that they are “open” minded, but by the very definition of “science” they rule out any supernatural or metaphysical options. (Such activities restricted to a class of natural phenomena.) - Science at one point simply meant “knowledge,” then it grew to include the scientific method, and as you can see, now it encompasses several different definitions – in which “B” rules out anything other than “natural phenomena.” - This seems to be self-refuting of option # 1 (theoretical explanation of phenomena.) - Why is it that some of the most “free” nations in the developed world, have the least freedom of inquiry when it comes to educational freedoms? As many of you have

heard, there is an ever-increasing movement urging us to be able to simply follow the evidence where it leads, regardless of the implications, but governmental agencies are restricting this very option, which is at the heart of science, freedom, and education. I would think anyone; theist, agnostic, or atheist would welcome a true openness to all the facts and following the evidence where it leads, but this is becoming less and less so.

Charles Darwin himself said that all evidences should be given to the populace. (In my opinion, I truly think if Darwin were alive today, he would be a supporter of intelligent design theory.)

When my great – grandparents were children, they were taught in public schools from a more theist approach in public schools, my grandparents more of a deist approach, my parents more of an agnostic approach with a leaning towards theism, my generation saw a more straight agnostic approach, and now today's children are getting a more atheistic approach. This truly is not a warranted or scientific approach, but an ideological one, that unfortunately our elected officials and Christians as a whole, have let happen without much of a fight. So as the documentary film "EXPELLED: No Intelligence Allowed" showed, our society has an ever-growing intolerance to anyone that challenges the naturalistic/Darwinist approach to explain origins. As I had mentioned earlier, we are living in a post Christian America, but this is no reason for an inquiring mind, much less a Christian mind, to roll-over and play dead. I am honestly dumbfounded by much of the way this has fallen apart, and the inactivity that Christians are playing in it all.

We will first look at what evolution is and is not. One could break evolution into the following categories:

- 1) **Cosmic Evolution**
- 2) **Chemical Evolution**
- 3) **Organic Evolution**
- 4) **Macro Evolution**
- 5) **Micro Evolution**

Of these terms, only micro evolution, (change over time), has been verified. This term was never really controversial in the first place and existed well before Darwin. An example would be Eskimos having a higher fat content because they live in colder climates than someone who lives on the equator; different kinds of cats, dogs, etc. There are some changes notable as the generations have gone on, but that is where it stops. We have big dogs and little dogs, but they are always dogs. This is an example of micro evolution, which no one to my knowledge contests.

The other theories are 100% speculative and must be followed by extreme faith. Macro evolution contends that at some point, everything can be traced back to a single cell that was created by complete chance as mentioned above. (Modern evolutionary trees have slowly "evolved" to include four super groups, (Plants, parasites, fungi/all animals, and algae related)). This is related to the term we hear called "common descent" which is generally accepted that all living organisms on Earth are descended from a common ancestor or ancestral gene pool. In "layman's terms," this basically means that somehow beyond all probability, life came about from what is often called "primordial soup" from the early Earth, and then it somehow came to life and basically went through a series of drastic evolutionary changes/mutations followed by natural selection to account for all the phylum, genus, species, etc., we have today.

There are an incalculable number of problems with this theory. First of all it cannot be tested; therefore it sets itself up as un-falsifiable. We cannot test origin science, so cosmic, chemical, and organic evolutions are 100% conjectured. We do not see any of these changes happening at present, (because it would take at least millions of years), we cannot duplicate any of these experiments, so we are left with conjecturing and theorizing, but there is no data available for us to have any real confidence in these speculations. We also do not have any reason to believe that macro evolution is plausible. We have never seen this happen, (because once again, it would take millions of years), there should be a plethora of

transitional intermediary fossils found, but there is not; moreover, the metamorphic changes required are grossly neglected by the vast majority of supporters to this idea. In a nutshell, what this means is that we never see any type of transition of one animal evolving into another, (evolutionist say it takes millions of years so we wouldn't notice it); so in theory "if" evolution was true then we should see a fossil like a cow then another one a little less like a cow and another one less and less and less and each one progressing towards let's say a whale, (since the cow to whale evolution model is one that the evolutionist say are there "strongest.") But the facts are that we have none of these – we have a few fossils that may look like a cow then one that looks like a seal and one that looks like a whale so the evolutionist "infer" that this equates that Darwinian evolution is true. The problem is that math tells us there would have to be at least 50,000 transitions between the cow and whale so there should be a plethora of fossils confirming this; even if there were (which there is not), it would still be an "interpretation" of the fossils. This is no joke – (I encourage you to research/Google it yourself) – and this is one of the evolutionist strongest evidences?

*"The supposed 'Cow to Whale' Evolution model of 'magical-change' over time" in which mathematicians have calculated at least 50,000 intermediate changes would be needed if this model is true, (not 4...) - (picture credit – [www.evolution.berkeley.edu](http://www.evolution.berkeley.edu))"*

With this type of lack of evidence coupled with the fact that our oldest fossils of beavers, dogs, trees, insects, even animals like the platypus, etc, all look exactly like they do today with the exception of minor changes and larger overall size, we begin to see why more and more people are abandoning Darwinism for ID; the cow to whale transition as mentioned above is supposed to be one of the stronger evidences in favor of evolution, but mathematician David Berlinski has calculated at least 50,000 metamorphic changes would be required to go from the cow to the whale. We do not see any evidence for this today, we do not see any evidence for this in the fossil record, nor would the fossils even be able to give us a great picture because they are un-testable themselves. (In fact, we are not able to prove by looking at a seal fossil and a walrus fossil that one "changed" into the other). Once again, it is a speculation, which everyone is entitled to make; but this is a relatively weak theory when all that has been proven since well before Darwin, is that we see variations within genus. We have all types of different people, but we do not have half ape/half man creatures, nor do we have any reason to think there ever were such creatures. Think about it, we should not only have at least some species/genus of ape-men still alive, but we should have a ton of fossils showing these changes.

Instead we see a history of more than 100 years of frauds and fakes trying to find just one single ape-man for Darwinists to get behind. I encourage you to research these on your own, but just to name a few of the famous fakes of history that still exist in some text books: Piltdown man, Nebraska man, Peking man, Neanderthal, Lucy, and the list goes on. While I was attending the University of Arkansas, I took a class in 2001 called Biological Anthropology, which focused primarily on human evolution. Neither could the professor answer any of these types of questions, but some of the criteria they mapped out for the class was changed a few years later because new fossil discoveries proved their evolutionary tree wrong, but it also caused scientists yet again to acknowledge the complexity of attempting to force evidence together that does not exist. It is hard for me to believe, when I see top scientists pick up four or five fossils and say that these prove something such as the cow to whale evolution, or that they find a single tooth, (such as Nebraska Man), and say this tooth proves that humans evolved from apes. (The tooth ended up being that of an extinct pig) The list continues to grow, with usually at least one headline per year exclaiming: "Missing link found for sure this time!"

For half a century, Anthony Flew was the world's most famous intellectual atheist. Then in 2004, he made a shocking announcement: God must exist. In a headline-making reversal, Flew now holds that the universe must be the work of an intelligent designer. In an interview for *Philosophia Christi*, he added, "It

now seems to me that the findings of more than fifty years of DNA research have provided materials for a new and enormously powerful argument to design.”

More and more scientists agree with Antony Flew: The world appears designed because it is designed. They argue that the design in the world is just as real as the design in a computer chip, a car, or a sports stadium. These scientists have also observed another surprising thing: The hard empirical evidence for Darwinism is in fact very, very limited. Darwin’s mechanism of natural selection acting on random variations can account for small-scale changes in living forms: variations in species themselves. But neither Darwin’s mechanism nor any other purely natural mechanism explains how insects and birds came to exist in the first place. The theory is supposed to explain such large-scale adaptations, but it doesn’t and there has not ever been ONE SINGLE point of evidence other than pure speculation and guessing, so I at least, am utterly dumbfounded why after 150 years from the release of Darwin’s book that this theory is still taken seriously to the degree which it claims.

While we could dive into book after book on the theory of evolution, enough has been said to establish a solid base that evolution requires at least as much faith as does the hypothesis of a supernatural creator. However, I am by no means using a type of “God of the Gaps” theory that many will claim. I simply continue to reveal the hard core facts to both hypothesize, and challenge you to do the same, because none of the basic premises I am saying here are disagreed upon even by those who are Darwinists themselves. I am only using the most basic of facts without going into the minute details. This I am neither qualified for, nor seek to accomplish. I merely seek to review the topics discussed on a macro, easily accessible approach to give both layman and expert a presentation to sit back and contemplate. What we can establish, is that evolution does now qualify as an ideology and philosophy, more than it does as a credible interpretation of the facts. So while we can all agree with change over time, also known as micro evolution, any other type “evolution” past this point is speculative at best. When a group accepts all definitions of evolution discussed earlier as fact, and begin incorporating this in all of their various outlooks, this becomes an ideology that many now call “Darwinism.”

I had the privilege of meeting and talking with Dr. Jonathan Wells of Discovery Institute in Seattle in the summer of 2009. Dr. Wells has PhDs from both Yale and Berkeley Universities, with one being in cell and molecular biology. It is interesting that he too confirms the complete fraud of Darwinism. Like me, he is dumbfounded why so many adhere to a theory that has developed into an ideology. In his book, *Icon of Evolution*, he goes through a list of repeated hoax and outright lies that have been used to support evolution in text books, magazines, museums, and so on for the last century. In regards to human evolution he states with reference to Henry Gee, Chief Science writer for *Nature*:

*“The conventional picture of human evolution as lines of ancestry and descent is a ‘completely human invention created after the fact, shaped to accord with human prejudices.’ Putting it even more bluntly, Gee concludes: ‘To take a line of fossils and claim that they represent a lineage is not a scientific hypothesis that can be tested, but an assertion that carries the same validity as a bedtime story – amusing, perhaps even instructive, but not scientific.’”*

**When asked further about this type of information being given to the general public Dr. Wells states:**

***“The general public is rarely informed of the deep-seated uncertainty about human origins that is reflected in these statements by scientific experts. Instead, we are simply fed the latest version of somebody’s theory, without being told that paleoanthropologists themselves cannot agree over it. And typically, the theory is illustrated with fanciful drawings of cave men, or human actors wearing heavy makeup. Whether the ultimate icon is presented in the form of a picture or a narrative, it is old-fashioned materialistic philosophy disguised as modern empirical science.”***



## What about “theistic evolution?”

I recently attended a seminar at Westminster Seminary in Philadelphia where philosopher Dr. Jay Richards, Cosmologists Guillermo Gonzalez, biologist Paul Nelson, and many theologians who reviewed the irony of what many Christians are attempting to reconcile peace with Darwinian Evolutionism and the Bible; interesting to note is, (as I eluded to above), attempting to link a “Creator” god with a “naturalistic/no god” hypothesis is not only impossible and self-contradictory, but it like saying: “I believe that circles are square,” or that “I am a married bachelor,” by their very definitions they cannot be linked – one is either a theist or an atheist, but you cannot be both. So how can we possibly attempt to use a strictly unguided naturalistic process to describe how God guided the process? We have already discussed why evolution is not a very probable explanation for how life developed from a non-theistic view; moreover, it is absolutely an illogical concept for one to claim a belief in bridging Darwinism with theism to get theistic evolution. Most supporters of this view that I have encountered, quickly abandon the view when we begin to discuss it, simply because they did not have a full grasp of what it implied, and how it contradicted not only probability, science as we know it, but also Christian theology. So if someone tells us that they believe in “theistic evolution,” we should push them to explain what they mean by these terms, (most likely it will either not be theistic or it will not be evolution).

Chance is the atheists’ God. Was Adam a highly intelligent primate? Of all the questions that can be raised about the theory of evolution, none is more vital than whether humans evolved from non-human animals. In naturalistic evolutionism, human beings were not created with a dignity transcending all other animals, but instead are simply a particularly intelligent primate. The biblical teaching is that the human race has fallen from an original innocence, and that our tendencies to violence, greed, lust, deceit, and selfishness are in some sense unnatural for us. This teaching is at direct odds with the notion that the human race evolved from similar primate species, and that our unethical tendencies are actually part of our evolutionary history, (aka - “survival of the fittest”).

While this is only skimming the surface of the subject, in the next chapter we will review if the creation account itself portrayed in the Bible can better cover the Naturalist’s theory of “chance” by testing them both for:

1. Logical consistency
2. Empirical Adequacies
3. Experiential Relevance

### **You should be able to answer these questions after reading this chapter:**

- 1) What are the different types of evolution?
- 2) Which types of evolution have been observed?
- 3) Can one believe in Darwinian Evolution and Christianity?
- 4) Why is evolution a weak theory?

#### Top 3 Recommended Readings for greater understanding this Chapter:

- 1) God and Evolution by Jay W. Richards (Oct 15, 2010)
- 2) Darwin on Trial by Phillip E. Johnson (Oct 5, 2010)
- 3) Bones of Contention: A Creationist Assessment of Human Fossils by Marvin L. Lubenow (Oct 1, 2004)

# CHAPTER III

## **The Historicity of Genesis as a Foundation**

### **Genesis: A Book of Beginnings**

I believe the book of Genesis not only provides the overall strongest understanding of the ultimate reality/intelligence we collectively call “God,” but that it also reveals much more than simply the book of beginnings for the Hebrew Nation; I believe it can be traced back to the very beginnings of mankind itself. If my hypothesis is true, then we should be able to see a very similar Genesis 1-11 type story throughout various cultures and writings of the ancient world. We should also see that while modern science and cosmological theories change yearly, that there remains nothing to disprove the account of creation given by the Genesis account. Lastly, we should be able to establish some type of validity in the historicity portrayed by the ancient Genesis account. If these 3 measures are successfully fulfilled, then we have a cumulative case argument for my hypothesis of the Genesis account being accurate and applying to not just the Hebrew nation, but all of mankind – and moreover will help us to better bridge the gap between the Intelligent Designer and Christianity.

### **Details concerning the writings of Genesis**

While both Jewish and early Christian tradition consistently associated the whole Torah, (including Genesis), with being authored by Moses, (as does the Talmud, Mishnah, and Old and New Testament references), there is limited information on how Moses wrote Genesis which pre-dated him. Assuming that Moses was responsible for the Book of Genesis as it has come down to us, there seems to only be three options for how he attained these stories and recorded them in what became known as the Torah. Moses either received all of the Genesis account by direct revelation from God, he received them by oral traditions passed down from the beginnings of time, or he took actual written records of the past and collected them into a final form known to us by Genesis today. For the direction of this book, I will make a case for a combination of all three, with an emphasis that he actually collected past ancient records of the past and formed them into the Genesis account.

Israel was not alone in formulating explanations for the world’s beginnings. All the great civilizations of the ancient Near East had literature that described how the universe began. Surprisingly the most ancient records and artifacts of the oldest civilization in the world also seem to give plausibility to the Genesis record. China is often considered a civilization of ancestral worship, Taoism, Buddhism, and Confucianism; yet if we look at the times before all of these other worldviews, we find a very different religious atmosphere. We find evidence of an ancient people who served only one god called ShangTi, (Lacouperie). It is supposed that the Chinese originally migrated from a site in Mesopotamia because of various Babylo-Assyrian similarities in arts, sciences, and government, (Kang, C. H). The approximate dates of their origin at 2500 BC, is surprisingly close to the strict dating of the great event described in Genesis as the Tower of Babel. There is a reason to believe that the Chinese written language bears a testimony to prehistory which matches with the Genesis account. Not to go into too much Chinese character detail, we see at the radical base of the Chinese language many peculiar finds that seem to lend credence to the Genesis account 1,000 years before Moses was born. While the symbols within the language are not conclusive, we do see for example that the Chinese character for “create,” is comprised of 3 symbols: speak, dust, life, (God speaks man into existence from the dirt). We also see “forbidden” comprised of: two trees, and God (tree of good/evil); “boat,” is comprised of 3 symbols: vessel, eight, and people, (Noah’s Ark + 8 total people saved):

# 船

*boat*

舟 八 口  
*vessel eight people*

The Discovery of Genesis, C.H. Kang and Ethel Nelson, p. 55

*"A sample of the Chinese symbol for "Boat" giving us a possible clue to its ancient origin found within the Genesis narrative. ([www.AnswersInGenesis.org](http://www.AnswersInGenesis.org))"*

While this is only 3 quick examples, once we begin to research many more within the language as well as the most ancient manuscripts of China, (Shu Ching), the Book of History, dating back to the supposed time of Genesis' Noah. Within this book are records of the first three dynasties of Hsia, Shang, and Chou, and several of their predecessors embracing the period from about 2450 to 721 BC. Also of note is the earliest account of religious worship by Emperor Shun in 2230 BC where he sacrifices to this one god

known as ShangTi. But can this “ShangTi” be identified as the same God of Genesis? The following quote from the recitation script of the emperor who served as a type of high priest:

*“Of old in the beginning, there was the great chaos, without form and dark. The five elements had not begun to revolve, nor the sun and the moon shine. In the midst thereof there existed neither forms nor sound. Thou, O spiritual Sovereign camest forth in thy presidency, and first didst divide the grosser parts from the purer. Thou madest heaven; Thou madest earth; Thou madest man. All things with their reproducing power got their being.”* (Kang, C. H)

This recitation extolling ShangTi as Creator does sound quite similar to that of the Genesis account. “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep...” (Genesis 1)

When we look at the various creation accounts that either pre-dated Genesis or would have been separated from it, we seem to find re-occurring accounts from various traditions. When we look at the Enuma Elish, Sumerian Eridu Genesis, writings of Lao-tzu, Egyptian myths, Hinduism’s Brahman, etc, etc, we see a very similar Genesis like pattern:

*“Before time, and throughout time, there has been a self-existing being, eternal, infinite, complete, omnipresent... Outside this being, before the beginning, there was nothing.”* (Lao-Tzu, Tao-te-ching, pg 13)

*“I am the creator of all things that exist... that came forth my mouth. Heaven and earth did not exist, nor had been created the herbs of the ground nor the creeping things. I raised them out of the primeval abyss from a state of non-being...”* (Wallace Budge, pg 308-13)

While much more could be said for example on the Ebla tablets, (that predate the Babylonian account by almost 600 years and sounds very familiar to the Genesis account), and other legends, the value of these various quotes lies in the fact that this knowledge of Genesis-like creation existed quite independently of the Biblical-Genesis amidst cultures that were and are quite separated from Judaism or much later in Christianity.

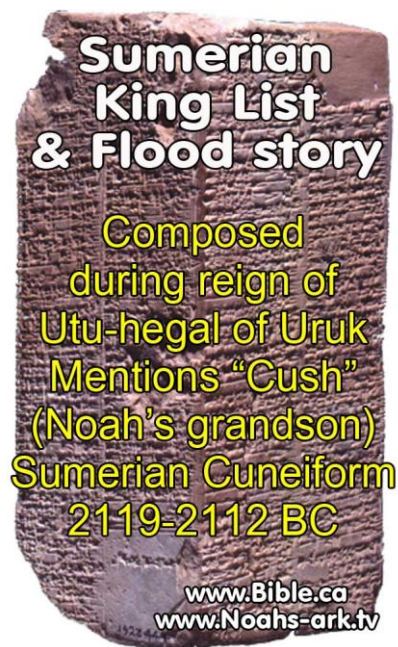
### **Creation account vs. Cosmology**

If this creation account is authentic, then we must assume it is also accurate for all times. With the opening lines of Genesis we see what most would call “Creation ex-nihilo” or creation out of nothing. The book of Genesis stands alone in accounting for the actual creation of the basic space/matter/time continuum which constitutes our physical universe. It does seem that Genesis 1:1 is unique from every other system of cosmogony which starts with eternal matter or energy in some form; only the book of Genesis even attempts to account for the ultimate origin of matter, space, and time. What is amazing is that while many within the realms of science has held to an eternal universe, discoveries in the 20<sup>th</sup> century have indeed confirmed what appears to be “Creation ex-nihilo” in the finite past, most often referred to in cosmology as the “Big Bang.” What is remarkable about this is that even atheistic scientists have concluded beyond reasonable doubt, that all of space/time/matter all began in an unexplained instance. As mentioned earlier - agnostic astronomer Robert Jastrow who held the same seat as Edwin Hubble seems to confirm the accuracy of the Genesis account in the following comment in his book “God and the Astronomers:”

*“Now we see how the astronomical evidence supports the biblical view of the origin of the world...the essential elements in the astronomical and biblical accounts of Genesis are the same. Consider the enormity of the problem : Science has proved that the universe exploded into being at a certain moment. It asks: 'What cause produced this effect? Who or what put the matter or energy into the universe?' And science cannot answer these questions.”* (God and the Astronomers)

Likewise, Genesis explains the origin of man as being in the likeness of God itself. What we find is that of all created beings, science recognizes man alone as being a conscious observer. Agnostic astronomer Paul Davies commented in an interview that while it is logical for man to evolve the abilities to run, climb trees, and hunt, etc; it does not seem necessary for him to develop a consciousness by mere chance to ponder the stars or how they were created, or how atoms are held together, etc. Genesis 1:27 seems to stand alone in its description of why mankind might possess these types of inner workings and ponderings; these type of skills are certainly not required in the “hunter gatherer” sense, but the Genesis account does seem to make logical sense as an explanation. While we are just beginning to scratch the surface of research for my hypothesis, we can begin to see a stronger cumulative case argument forming for the Genesis account possibly being applicable not just to the Hebrew Nation, but to all nations of the world – thus confirming the accuracy of Genesis as a foundational study in all cultures to our understanding (however limited) of God.

As with the Creation accounts, the global flood narrative in Genesis 6-9 can be shown to be more realistic and less mythological than one might think when we begin to look at the surround facts. Dr. Duane Gish has stated that he has recorded 270 similar flood legends from around the world matching that of the Genesis flood. The Flood is told of by the Greeks, Hindus, Chinese, Mexicans, Algonquians, Hawaiians, and Sioux Native Americans just to name a few. The Chinese record records a man named Fuhi, his wife, three sons, and three daughters escaped a great flood and were the only people alive on earth. A flood story in Hawaii records that Nu-u and his family escaped a global flood by building a great canoe and filling it with animals; only he and his family were left alive. While these stories as well as the Gilgamesh story are different in parts of their narrative, the overall themes are shared in all of them which seems to be far more than mere coincidence. Moreover, there is geological evidence to support a worldwide flood. Partial skeletons of recent animals are found in deep fissures in several parts of the world, there are fossils found in almost every mountain top, (including Mt. Everest), sedimentary rock layers which are formed underwater are found in all parts of the world, and we find whale skeletons and other marine life in the Sahara desert; the Flood seems to be a possible explanation of these, if not the best explanation all together.



*“A sample of the matching accounts of a Noah-type Global Flood recorded in almost every culture across the world (www.AnswersInGenesis.org)”*

## The Historicity of the Genesis

All tests so far, (while not conclusive), have seemed to point that the Book of Genesis could indeed be a book of beginnings for all of mankind, but is it complete in its historicity and explanatory scope? Even higher critics have often admitted that the tenth chapter of Genesis is a remarkably accurate historical document. There is no comparable catalog of ancient nations available from any other source. It is unparalleled in its antiquity and comprehensiveness. Dr. William F. Albright, who was known as the world's leading authority on the archaeology of the Near East, (and himself did not believe in the infallibility of the Bible), said concerning the Table of Nations in Genesis 10:

*"It stands absolutely alone in ancient literature, without a remote parallel, even among the Greeks, where we find the closest approach to a distribution of peoples in genealogical framework... The Table of Nations remains an astonishingly accurate document."*(Genesis Record, pg 245)

Here we find the one link between the historic nations of antiquity and the prehistoric times pre-Noah and the antediluvians recorded in Genesis. While many other than Dr. Albright have studied the Table of Nations, I stumbled across a book by Bill Cooper of the United Kingdom called "After the Flood," where Cooper provides genealogical sketches, documented manuscripts, and much more to trace the Sons of Noah to the Chinese, the Aryan race of India, the European cultures, etc, etc, from this Table of Nations:

*"The test I devised was a simple one. If the names of the individuals, families, peoples, and tribes listed in the Table of Nations were genuine, then those names should appear also in the records of other nations in the Middle East. While I would have been quite content if I could have vindicated 40% of these; today I can say that the names so far vindicated in the Table of Nations make up over 99% of the list, and I shall make no further comment on that other than to say that no other ancient historical document of purely human authorship could be expected to yield such a level of corroboration as that!"* (After the Flood, 12))

While a historian could still say these are not 100% certain, they would likewise have to admit that as of today they have yet to be refuted for their historical and genealogical accuracies so far tested.

When we read Genesis 11:1-9, we see an explanation, (thus providing explanatory scope), for why these nations were scattered into different groups and eventually languages in the event known as the Tower of Babel. There is considerable evidence now that the world did indeed have a single language at one time. The Sumerian literature alludes to this several times in a confusing of the languages as does many other cultures across the globe. Linguists also find this theory helpful in categorizing languages. Sanskrit was the classical language of India and today is considered the primary bridge between Hebrew and other Semitic languages, and the Greek/Phoenician and Latin of Western civilization. Gothic, Celtic, and Persian/Farsi languages also are now known as the Indo-European family of languages. But the similarities are not confined to this family. Wayne Jackson stated that the ancient languages of Assyria and Egypt had much in common with those of the Maya and Inca peoples of the Americas. Language scholars were rapidly concluding that all languages had a common root in the 1970's. Even secular scholars now admit that all languages did come from one common root, (though they may or may not believe in the Tower of Babel story). From here we see the Genesis account unfolding with the calling of a particular nation and a particular man in Abram (later to be known as Abraham), to lead his people towards the land of Canaan, and thus the story of the Bible unfolds with Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and the 12 sons/tribes of the eventual land known today as Israel.

So what does this all mean? While I only touched on a fraction of corroborative sources that show a multiplicity of supporting factors for the Genesis account's scope going far beyond that of the Hebrew Nation; I do believe we have seen enough support to form what philosophers call a cumulative case argument for the accuracy levels of Genesis 1-11 going far beyond mere coincidence could allow, and allowing us to form the conclusion that the Genesis book of beginnings is not merely for the beginning of the Hebrew Nation, but for all of mankind. Nothing has been discovered to disprove the Bible in centuries of trying to find evidences against it. Instead, we find with every new discovery or archaeological find,



the Biblical narrative grows in support, and continues to stand up to the test of time, and form the exegetical foundations for the rest of the Bible – so that creation – sin – death – sacrificial systems – murder – flood – languages – repopulation of the earth from the Arafat/Sumerian, etc, area all make sense and have supporting explanatory scope when we take the Genesis account as accurate and not fictional, thus giving even more credence to the Christian concept of God.

So while for the scope of this book being limited to approximately 100 pages in total length I have had to greatly reduce the amount that I would like to dive into, I have provided extra sources to reference at the end of each chapter if one is so inclined to further their research. A few bulleted points to summarize when reviewing the facts about the historicity of Genesis along with secular history that all surprisingly match very well include:

- Cosmological origins endorsed by secular sciences such as the Big Bang theory have concluded what the Genesis account has always stated – that space, matter, and time itself all began in an instance. Genesis 1:1
- The origin of life on earth has always been a mystery that secular sciences have therefore concluded somehow arose from rocks and other inorganic materials whereas the Genesis account shows that this origin is from a designer.
- The creation of animal and human consciousness is not some isolated miracle, but a reflection of the underlying structure of reality. While the secular scientists attribute this to chance, the Genesis account of humans being created in the image of God with special attributes including consciousness does seem more applicable than mere unexplainable chance.
- The account of a “Fall” and the introduction of “Sacrifice” recorded in Genesis makes sense of the human condition or predicament of being separated from this being and explains why almost every religious system has some type of sacrificial atonement base to it – moreover the idea makes more sense when the Christian theist links it to Jesus of Nazareth, (discussed later).
- The idea of a Global Flood recorded in almost every culture, (270 different accounts), where due to the wickedness of the world God brings judgment in the form of a global flood, where most of these legends record only a few righteous survive along with animals to repopulate the earth all fit in with the Genesis recording of the flood and though somewhat fantastical, does explain such phenomena as the Cambrian explosion, the vast fossils that were quickly buried all over the world, etc. (Remember - Before Charles Lyell and Charles Darwin's principles of long ages took hold 150 years ago, most geologists held to a global flood as a credible explanation of the facts)
- The idea of Noah’s Ark resting around the Arafat region also matches well with the first recorded civilizations arising in the nearby Sumerian and Mesopotamian regions and spreading out from there across Asia, Africa, and Europe.
- The Tower of Babel account in Genesis explains how/why languages were mixed and civilizations spread out from the Arafat/Sumerian region; atheist acknowledge that the records of language and civilizations seem to arise almost instantly without any evolutionary development – The Genesis account would explain why this is.
- The Table of Nations recorded in Genesis 10 provides a verifiable genealogy of the Kingdoms arising since the Global Flood and from the Sons of Noah which has been verified by critics as remarkably accurate and without comparison in any ancient genealogy and has so far not been proven false in anyway. The fact is, that wherever its statements can be sufficiently tested, Genesis 10 of the Bible has been found completely accurate; resulting partly from linguistic studies, partly from archaeology, and, more recently still, from the findings of physical anthropologists, who are, to this day, recovering important clues to lines of migration in ancient historic times.
- We then see the calling of Abraham as the beginnings of the Hebrew Nation in which archaeology has done nothing but help support and confirm – which of course makes sense if the Genesis accounts are accurate.

While these are only a few basic facts surrounding what we know of our world in comparison to the Genesis account, it does seem to continually make sense of why we see the first recorded languages, civilizations, histories, etc, arising no earlier than around 3500 BC and explain why they exploded relatively at once with no evolutionary system of evolutionary writing or speech patterns where people are grunting or slowly learning to communicate in written form. So once again we have firm evidence that it is no coincidence that trying to explain our world through “chance/evolution” does not make sense but “if” we think for a moment that the Genesis account and the Bible may be accurate as history and archaeology continually are proving, we find that the story of history, philosophy, linguistics, anthropology, etc, all do make sense “if” the Bible is true. Therefore the Genesis account does not only serve as the foundation of the Bible and which Jesus quoted from repeatedly, but it also has the best explanatory scope of any competing hypothesis in understanding our origins.

**You should be able to answer these questions after reading this chapter:**

- 1) Does Genesis (the first book of the Bible) provide good evidence for the creation that modern science has confirmed?
- 2) How many Flood legends like that of Noah’s Ark has been discovered?
- 3) Is the Tower of Babel a possibly explanation of the spreading out of civilization after the Flood? (Explain)
- 4) Does the Table of Nations provide extra evidence for the genealogy after the flood?
- 5) Has any Biblical archaeology discovery ever discredited anything from the Genesis account?

Top 3 Recommended Readings for greater understanding this Chapter:

- 1) Genesis Record, The: A Scientific and Devotional Commentary on the Book of Beginnings by Henry M. Morris III (Dec 16, 2009)
- 2) After the Flood: The Early Post-flood History of Europe Traced Back to Noah by Bill Cooper (Sep 1995)
- 3) The Bible as History by Werner Keller (Jun 30, 2008)

# CHAPTER IV

## **The Philosophy of Genesis as a Foundation**

"For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse."

Romans 1:20

### **The Argument from "Purpose"**

- If God does not exist, then Life is ultimately meaningless. As William Lane Craig points out: "If you life is doomed to end in death, then ultimately it does not matter how you live." In other words, there is no point to anything. So what if you're rich, if you do good or bad; nothing matters and in the end, there is no ultimate difference whether you existed or not. –This should at least make a person think and reflect on "life" in general.
- On the other hand, though – if God does exist, then not only does life have meaning and hope, but there is also the possibility of coming to know God and his love personally."
- Pascal's Wager – "Therefore, I'm inclined to agree with the French mathematical genius Blaise Pascal that even if the evidence for or against God is equal, the rational thing to do would be to believe in God's existence. That is to say, if the evidence is balanced, then why would someone prefer to bet on death and despair over hope and significance? Therefore, as Craig put it: "I'm inclined to speak of the presumption of theism: we ought to presume that God exists unless we have some good reason to think that atheism is true."

At this point, the only negation I have ever heard of this is: "Yeah! Life and existence is totally pointless! Who cares?" - They are fighting a losing battle in other words. At this point, we should at least be able to encourage someone to reflect on the importance and ramifications of the totality of purpose and meaning.

### **The Cosmological Argument**

As mentioned earlier, the cosmological argument is an argument for the existence of a First Cause (or instead, an Uncaused cause) to the universe, and by extension is often used as an argument for the existence of an "unconditioned" or "supreme" being, usually then identified as God. It is traditionally known as an argument from universal causation, an argument from first cause, the causal argument or the argument from existence.

**This allows us to formulate the three following points:**

- 1. Whatever begins to exist has a cause.**
- 2. The universe began to exist.**
- 3. Therefore the universe has a cause.**

### **The Teleological Argument**

The next area we'll quickly look at is the fine tuning of the universe. If the universe exploded from a finite singularity point, then it is highly unlikely that everything came together the way it needs for us to even be able to exist it would seem. Did we simply get lucky as the naturalist would have us to believe? Why is the universe fine-tuned, and what exactly does this mean? This apparent fine-tuning of the universe is cited by theologian William Lane Craig as an evidence for the existence of God or some form of intelligence capable of manipulating (or designing) the basic physics that govern the universe.

Naturalistic Darwinists choose to default to their favorite explanation that the entire fine tuning is simply due to "chance." Moreover many evolutionist/naturalists now have begun to cling to the "Multi-verse" hypothesis in a desperate attempt to say "if" there were many additional universes then the fine-tuning impossibilities decrease, (there is any evidence that there is any other universe other than our own which shows the great lengths naturalist and our schools go to skew the evidence in avoiding any type of God/Designer). Just to give you a simple comparison of what the majority of people mean by chance, let me explain. We use chance everyday in some way. For example, if we hear on the weather forecast that there is a 90% chance of rain vs. a 10% chance of no rain, it is a fairly high probability that it will rain. Science likewise calculates such subjective statistics to determine whether something might or might not occur. In day to day life, we can say that an event that has only one chance of occurrence in  $10^8$  (100 million) is considered an impossibility; to break it down, if you picked up a rock and dropped it 100,000,000 times and each time it fell to the ground, we have established that gravity is very highly probable. In scientific evaluations the number goes up to  $10^{15}$  (quadrillion). When it comes to stating a scientific law, we are told that the number is  $10^{50}$ . In other words if there is a mathematical probability of something occurring  $10^{50}$  times, with only one chance of failure, the event is said to have been established by law, meaning it will always occur. Conversely, if there is only one chance of occurrence and  $10^{50}$  chances of failure, the event is considered to be utterly impossible. (Keep these probabilities in mind) Just to put this in concrete terms, if I were to write the number 1 on a piece of paper every second  $10^{20}$  times, it would take me 1.5 trillion years just to write the number down just to give you a feeling for how large these numbers and probabilities are; (100 times the age of the entire universe); so I think it is safe to say these are huge numbers. Hubert Yockey, a highly regarded information theorist, has calculated the amount of information content in the minimum genome for life to arise and the probability of that occurring by chance as something less probable than  $10^{186,000}$ ; Harold Morowitz calculated the odds of a whole cell randomly assembling under the most ideal circumstances to be on in  $10^{100,000,000,000}$  – **Anything greater than  $10^{15}$  is considered beyond possibility.** So let us be honest for a moment – who has the most faith – the supporter of the God hypothesis, or the Chance hypothesis?

We now have an adequate amount of information to formulate the following:

1. **The fine tuning of the universe is due to either law, chance, or design.**
2. **It is not due to law or chance.**
3. **Therefore, it is due to design.**

**\*Again – if anyone can refute any of these point then the argument could collapse – but since they cannot it logically follows that this too supports the God hypothesis and not the "chance" one of Darwinian Evolution.**

### **Where does "Information" come from?**

Have you ever asked yourself where "information" itself comes from, or what its source is? "Source" means the origin of something. An **information source** is a source of information for somebody, i.e., anything that might inform a person about something or provide knowledge to somebody. Information sources may be observations, people, speeches, documents, pictures, organizations etc. They may be primary sources, secondary sources, tertiary sources, and so on.

Different epistemologies have different views regarding the importance of different kinds of information sources. Empiricism regards sense data as the ultimate information sources, while other epistemologies have different views. So what is the “information source” for the blueprint found in all things; including the cell? Example – before a building comes together there has to be a blueprint on “how” the building will come together in the first place – so not only “how” but “where” is the construction of the building coming from, but where does the information that leads to the building come from?

### **Philosophy of Information:**

- 1. Information systems come from a mind that designed them.**
- 2. DNA is the product of a massive information system.**
- 3. Therefore, DNA is from a mind that designed the information system.**
- 4. This “mind” is best described as God.**

**\*You could then go one more step:**

- 5) The best explanation for the identity of this God is the one found in the Bible, (see next chapter).**

### **The Moral Argument – Are Morals Objective or Subjective?**

When I say objective, this means that regardless of what someone says, a certain act or action is truly right or wrong, regardless of geography, culture, tradition, or time. On the other hand, subjective would be that I prefer vanilla ice cream over chocolate. This does not mean vanilla is better tasting than chocolate for everyone, in all places and at all times. It is simply my preference. So with that being said, are moral values objective or subjective? Is rape, torture, or murder simply subjective? In other words, while we might not like it, there is nothing actually wrong about it, it is simply our preference against it, (much like the flavor of ice cream analogy). Or are such acts truly, objectively wrong? From a Darwinist approach, our minds and society have just accidentally by “chance” evolved in such a way that our societal instincts have deemed such acts as torture, rape, child abuse as wrong, but it isn’t really wrong. In other words, if we had evolved a little differently, then such acts might be deemed acceptable.

So the Darwinist/Naturalist once again cannot satisfactorily answer this concern, for they must either say that nothing is wrong with such horrible acts, and that there is no real difference between a Hitler or Mother Teresa, but we just happened to by chance, evolve this way. While most will agree this is not a satisfactory conclusion, we must acknowledge if we say that there are truly some things that are right/wrong or good/evil, then we say that moral values do have an objective meaning. But if we say this, how is it objective? Just like the information in DNA, this objectiveness of morals had to come from some type of moral law giver. For how can morals be objective, and not have derived from some type of creator/designer that decided what was right/wrong or good/evil in the first place?

Let me use another example – If the Nazis had won WW2 and executed everyone that said the genocide of the Jews was wrong, (so that everyone in the world said that the genocide was good); would this act truly be “good” then? From the Darwinist/Naturalist perspective, the answer would be “yes,” because society through natural selection had changed to say that the killing and torture of a Jewish child is a good act. I believe (and hope) that we all can see that such an act would still be “wrong/evil” even if no one on earth condemned it. It is wrong, because the consciousness built into us, cries out that such an act is objectively wrong – from the original “source” these are objective and therefore instilled into our “blueprint” so to speak, so that “love” for example is an “objectively” good moral value.

So while you are thinking about this, let me make the following observation:

- 1) If God does not exist, then objective moral values do not exist.**
- 2) Objective moral values do exist.**

### 3) Therefore, God exists

I will just leave you with this simple question to ponder: How can anything be right or wrong objectively, outside of God? Having done a Bachelor of Arts in Philosophy of Religion and Religious Studies, I feel that philosophy is one of the most neglected strengths of Christianity within the confines of the church as well as within Christian education.

**Therefore we should be able to conclude from Philosophy that:**

- 1) The universe, life, morality, information and purpose exist in reality through some type of Intelligent Designer.**
- 2) Genesis and the Bible describe the best ancient and most accurate source of explanation to what this intelligence is.**
- 3) The Intelligence described in the Bible as “God” makes the most logical scope to why the universe, life, morality, information and purpose exist in reality as it is.**
- 4) The Intelligent Designer is the God of the Bible.**
- 5) Therefore, the Bible can be fully trusted in explanatory scope and human understanding of ultimate cause, purpose and destiny.**

*“Despite everything, I believe that people are really good at heart.”*

Anne Frank

Top 3 Recommended Readings for greater understanding this Chapter:

- 1) Reasonable Faith: Christian Truth and Apologetics by William Lane Craig (Jun 9, 2008)
- 2) Philosophical Foundations for a Christian Worldview - Hardcover (Mar. 31, 2003) by J. P. Moreland and William Lane Craig
- 3) The Privileged Planet: How Our Place in the Cosmos Is Designed for Discovery by Guillermo Gonzalez and Jay Richards (Mar 2004)



# CHAPTER V

## Can we Trust the Bible?



“Picture of the Dead Sea Scrolls that were discovered in the 1940s and provide us with further confirmation that today’s Old Testament is 95% accurate when compared to the scrolls that date as far back as 200 BC. (picture credit - [www.wikipedia.org](http://www.wikipedia.org))”

Having done much of my undergraduate work in History at the University of Arkansas, I have always found it quite alluring that Judaism and Christianity are the only religions that use history to substantiate their claims. Islam, for example, follows that the Qur'an describes itself as a book of guidance, rarely offering detailed accounts of specific historical events, and often emphasizing the moral significance of an event over its narrative sequence, but it is a revelation of ONE witness: that of Mohammad. (To even ask the question of which is more relevant: a text on Jesus Christ and the New Testament written 600 years earlier than the Koran by a multitude of authors and first-hand witnesses, or by the interpretation of ONE individual 600 years later; is to answer your own question).

Buddhist texts are more on the life and teachings of Buddha and his teachings.

Hinduism regards the Vedas as a collection of hymns or mantras to be chanted by a priest; Atharvaveda as a collection of spells and incantations.

When we really dive into all other religions and belief systems and their writings, we find the fact that the Bible is the only religious documentation that is steeped in:

- 1) **Creation/origin science documentation**
- 2) **Historic reliability**
- 3) **Prophetic texts**

This means that it can be followed/examined through a historic approach and thus testable, (at least through our limited means of evaluation). Therefore, there are ample reasons to spend a few moments in evaluating the historicity and reliability of this text; Christ Himself used the Old Testament to point to His fulfillment of these texts, so it is important to quickly evaluate, (and be able to explain to others), these three points, to see if they hold up to the test. As I have continually repeated, we will only review a brief summary of these main points, and reference you to much more in depth and knowledgeable authors and their works at the end of this chapter.

One of the first things we must establish is that when we say manuscripts, we are using the term for historic writings that were used in piecing together what we now simply call the Bible. Some will argue that because a text was incorporated into the Bible, that it now cannot be relied upon to be unbiased, but this is simply false. Scribes copied down these manuscripts in various places, languages, and styles, and then through a painstaking evaluation of these texts, the text of the Bible slowly began to be put together. Therefore these manuscripts existed independently, long before the Bible was put together. We have already covered premise one, on the creation story in the first part of the book, and concluded that the universe did indeed have a beginning.

The creation of the universe, the design we see in nature and life itself, the blueprint in our DNA and morals, the history of mankind, etc, all match up perfectly with Genesis and the Bible as a whole. Many believers and unbelievers alike have commented that the biblical account of creation match precisely with what they observe in their scientific studies.

**So the Biblical account holds up well with step 1, so let's review step 2.**

While nowhere in the Bible is there a promise of purity of text throughout history, there is a great deal of evidence that suggests that the Bibles we read are extremely close to the original. Such reliability helps support the consensus of the Bible being a valuable and accurate account of history as well as revelation from God. We must remember that the Old and New Testaments cover a time span that we can verify with archaeology and other sources, from approximately 2,100 BC (Abraham) to the Book of Revelation, approximately 90 AD; so to keep a faithful written account would indeed prove challenging. Looking first at the Old Testament, we find that the accuracy of the copies we have is supported by a number of evidence. All of the copies we have agree with the majority of text, (while some seem to be more paraphrased than a word for word account). These also agree with our more modern copies such as the Septuagint (the Greek translation), which dates from the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC. Finally with the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls (Hebrew), we are able to compare all of our documents to these scrolls that date from approximately 250 BC, and provide an almost complete account of the Old Testament. When we compare all of these, we find that all of these translations are extremely close, and furthermore are extremely close to our modern translations. Most scholars have agreed that these match our current translations by 95% with the 5% mostly being variations in spelling that do not alter any themes. We also have ancient documents quoting the Old Testament that also are shown to act as further confidence of the reliability of the Old Testament.

## **ARCHAEOLOGY –**

Another interesting field of study is that of Biblical Archaeology. While I won't get into the details, historians agree that archaeology has consistently and repeatedly confirmed the history of the Old Testament. Many history books have been re-written after finding archaeological discoveries that proved the biblical story accurate, but was not at the time, considered accurate by the historian. It is ironic, that Biblical Archaeology really got started about 150 years ago, and its purpose was more for disproving the Bible, rather than proving it. But once again, just like scientists and historians, the more archaeologists attempted to disprove the biblical narratives; the more they ended up confirming their truth. Thus began a fascinating field of study that not only gives further confirmation of Biblical truths, but also gives us a real

insight as to how these people lived. It is a shame that this study only came about in the last 150 years, or we would even have more history at our disposal.

One fascinating book that first reviewed the correlation of Old Testament archaeology with that of history, was *“The Bible as History”* by Dr. Werner Keller whose book sold more than 10 million copies. In it, Dr. Keller traces the Old Testament and New Testament histories through that of confirmed archaeological finds. Little did Dr. Keller know that the next 40 years would have a large amount of finds that would further confirm this history. After many of these confirmations, Dr. Keller commented:

*“These breathtaking discoveries, whose significance it is impossible to grasp all at once, make it necessary for us to revise our views about the Bible. Many events which previously passed for ‘pious tales’ must now be judged to be historical. Often the results of investigation correspond in detail with the biblical narratives. They do not only confirm them, but also illumine the historical situations out of which the Old Testament and the Gospels grew.”*

More recently Dr. J. Randall Price (Th.M. Old Testament and Semitic Languages and Ph.D., Middle Eastern Studies), wrote a book called *The Stones Cry Out (1997)*, in which he goes through the basics of biblical archaeology and what it reveals to us about scripture. While remaining humble on archeology’s role, he says:

*“According to Webster’s English Dictionary, one of the meanings of the word confirm is ‘to give new assurance of the validity’ of something. Archaeology provides a new assurance of the Bible from the stones to accompany the assurance we already have from the Spirit. The value is an apologetic one, and from the beginning of the science of archaeology, it was a contributing factor in both instigating and sponsoring excavations. Almost all scholars still attest to the significant agreement between the stones and the Scriptures.”*

Once again, I am not going into a lot of details in this booklet, I will just simply say that while questions always remain, we can conclude that archaeology has confirmed the history of the Old Testament, not only in its general outline, but in many of the minute details also. And as for the New Testament, after the Old Testament period of the Judges, the archeological evidence becomes increasingly clear that the biblical authors knew very well what they were talking about.

## **NEW TESTAMENT**

As we enter into the era of the New Testament, the facts become quite clear and in all honesty overwhelming. When it comes to the New Testament, no other ancient writing is even close to being as well attested or documented as the New Testament writings. For example, we have to date at total of 5,664 Greek manuscripts of the New Testament; when we add the Latin, Ethiopic, Slavic, Armenian and others, the total exceeds 24,000! Moreover, when we look at the manuscript evidence of other writings such as Cesar’s Gallic Wars we have a total of 10 manuscripts to support it; Herodotus’ History has 8, Tacitus Annals has 20, and Homer’s Iliad has an impressive 643. These are not even close to the reliability we have in the New Testament. But it doesn’t stop there; Cesar’s Gallic Wars were written in 100 BC, but the earliest copy we have is dated 900 AD, Herodotus’ History was written 400 BC and our earliest copy is dated 1300 AD, Tacitus Annals was written in 100AD and our earliest copy is dated 1100 AD.

So what about the New Testament? Most historians and critics alike agree that the Gospels were written between 45 – 90 AD, (with Mark being first and John last), and parts of the Pauline Epistles can be dated within 10-15 years of Christ’s crucifixion, (some even estimate the events to be less than five years after Christ’s crucifixion). We must also remember these were written by eye witnesses, and multiple times

attested, unlike most other religious texts, (for example, no one saw the Buddha have his visions, nor did anyone other than Mohammed witness his revelations from the angel Gabriel). What we have is the most ancient document attested writings in history, the fact that we have multiple first-hand accounts from Jesus' followers, and all were written shortly after Jesus' death and resurrection. As Ravi Zacharias states:

*“In real terms the New Testament is easily the best-attested ancient writing in terms of the sheer number of documents, the time span between the events and the document, and the variety of documents available to sustain or contradict it. There is nothing in ancient manuscript evidence to match such textual integrity...”*

We must remember that I am just scratching the very surface of our evidential criteria; as the brilliant Dr. John Warwick Montgomery also points out, not only do we have the remarkable internal evidence, but we also have a plethora of external evidence. For example, while 11 of the 12 apostles were martyred for their faith, John (who walked with Jesus, witnessed his crucifixion first hand, witnessed his resurrection first hand, and took care of Mary the Mother of Jesus until her death; also had first hand students of his own, who wrote down what he said and did. Of these were Papias, bishop of Hierapolis around AD 130, Polycarp, bishop of Smyrna, and others were students who walked with John first hand. We then have Irenaeus who was a student of Polycarp, and his writings also, match what we are told in the Gospels, and so it goes down through history.

Historians and literary critiques continue to be amazed by the level of accuracy of the scriptures. Classical scholar and historian Colin Hemer chronicles Luke's accuracy in the book of Acts verse by verse. With painstaking detail, Hemer identifies 84 facts in the last 16 years of Acts that have been confirmed by historical and archaeological research. Roman historian A.N. Sherwin-White says, “For Acts the confirmation of historicity is overwhelming...Any attempt to reject its basic historicity must now appear absurd. Roman historians have long taken it for granted.” We also find another 59 historically confirmed details in the Gospel of John, which when you add this with John's personal conversations with Jesus, it really does seem that it would take more faith to dismiss these than to take them as authentic. When we look merely at the three books of Acts, John, and Luke, we find 140 historically confirmed details, plus the fact that they continually reference historic figures of that time, we can see how this overwhelming adds further credit to the New Testament's reliability and historicity, as well as what the Apostles themselves had to say. – (*“When Skeptics Ask” and “I Don't Have Enough Faith to be an Atheist” by Norm Geisler for more details*)

Aside from the over 24,000 manuscripts that match to a degree of 99.9%, we also have alternative sources that further collaborate the basics outline of the Gospels.

## NON BIBLICAL SOURCES

**Tacitus** (A.D. 56 – ca. 117)- First-century historian; Tacitus is considered one of the most accurate historians of the ancient world, wrote: *"Consequently, to get rid of the report, Nero fastened the guilt and inflicted the most exquisite tortures on a class hated for their abominations, called Christians by the populace. Christus, from whom the name had its origin, suffered the extreme penalty during the reign of Tiberius at the hands of one of our procurators, Pontius Pilatus, and a most mischievous superstition, thus checked for the moment, again broke out not only in Judea, the first source of the evil, but even in Rome, where all things hideous and shameful from every part of the world find their center and become popular."* (Tacitus, A, 15.44) -The "mischievous superstition" to which Tacitus refers is most likely the resurrection of Jesus. The same is true for one of the references of Suetonius which follows.

**Josephus** (A.D. 37 – sometime after 100 ) - Was a Pharisee of the priestly line and a Jewish historian working under Roman authority; he was a Jew and not a follower of Christ, but in his *"Antiquities of the Jews, SVIII, 33)*, had this brief description of a man called Jesus: *"Now there was about this time Jesus, a wise man, if it be lawful to call him a man, for he was a doer of wonderful works, a teacher of such men as receive the truth with pleasure. He drew over to him both many of the Jews, and many of the Gentiles. He was the Christ, and when Pilate, at the suggestion of the principal men among us, had condemned him to the cross, those that loved him at the first did not forsake him; for he appeared to them alive again the third day; as the divine prophets had foretold these and ten thousand other wonderful things concerning him. And the tribe of Christian so named from him are not extinct at this day."* -This from a non-Christian historian... (Josephus also refers to the martyrdom of James the brother of Jesus as well as John the Baptist, Herod, etc.)

**Suetonius** - Was chief secretary to Emperor Hadrian, (who reigned AD 117-138); he confirms the report recorded in the Book of Acts 18:2, that Claudius commanded all Jews to leave Rome in AD 49, (Life of Claudius, 25.4). Speaking of the aftermath of the great fire at Rome, Suetonius reports, *"Punishment was inflicted on the Christians, a body of people addicted to a novel and mischievous superstition."* (Life of Nero, 16)

**Thallus** - Wrote around AD 52; was quoted in reference to the darkness that followed the crucifixion of Christ: *"On the whole world there pressed a most fearful darkness, and the rocks were rent by an earthquake, and many places in Judea and other districts were thrown down. This darkness Thallus, in the third book of his History, calls, as appears to me without reason, an eclipse of the sun."* (Chronography, 18.1) -Described also in Luke 23:44-45.

**Lucian** - 2nd Century Greek writer - *"The Christians, you know, worship a man to this day--the distinguished personage who introduced their novel rites, and was crucified on that account... You see, these misguided creatures start with the general conviction that they are immortal for all time, which explains the contempt of death and voluntary self-devotion which are so common among them; and then it was impressed on them by their original lawgiver that they are all brothers, from the moment that they are converted, and deny the gods of Greece, and worship the crucified sage, and live after his laws. All this they take quite on faith, with the result that they despise all worldly goods alike, regarding them merely as common property."* (Lucian of Samosata, DP, 11-13)

**Emperor Trajan** - The emperor gave the following guidelines for punishing Christians: *"No search should be made for these people, when they are denounced and found guilty they must be punished, with the restriction; however, that when the party denies himself to be Christian, and shall give proof that he is not, (that is, by adoring our gods), he shall be pardoned on the ground of repentance even though he may have formerly incurred suspicion."* (Pliny the Younger, L, 10:97)

\*When we only use 100% non-Christian/non-Biblical sources of history such as Pliny, Trajan, Lucian, Suetonius, Tacitus, and Josephus just to name a few, we come up with the following facts about Jesus of Nazareth:

- 1) Jesus lived during the time of Tiberius Caesar.
- 2) He lived a virtuous life.
- 3) He was a wonder-worker.
- 4) He had a brother named James.
- 5) He was acclaimed to be the Messiah.
- 6) He was crucified under Pontius Pilate.
- 7) He was crucified on the eve of the Jewish Passover.
- 8) Darkness and an earthquake occurred when he died.
- 9) His disciples believed he rose from the dead.
- 10) His disciples were willing to die for their belief.
- 11) Christianity spread rapidly as far as Rome.
- 12) His disciples denied the Roman gods and worshipped Jesus.

In light of these references, this is yet another affirmation of the New Testament's accuracy.

So while only touching on a few points, we should be able to confidently say that premise two has been successfully addressed, on the historical reliability of the Bible in which we learn about Jesus, (and which Jesus used Himself: today's Old Testament). No other religion can follow these lines of evidence to the degree of the Bible or Christianity.

**Premise 3** – Prophecy is quite unique to the writings of the Bible. Both Old and New Testament have numerous accounts of prophetic messages that are fulfilled. You can say as the naturalist does in most things, it is coincidence, chance, or luck, or you can take a more logical approach and begin researching the probabilities of the first two points, and see how this begins painting an overwhelming picture of a huge puzzle called "purpose/life/existence" etc, and see how they are indeed beginning to form a beautifully complete picture, that no other worldview can.

Instead of giving you all of the different prophecies foretelling the coming "Messiah," I will encourage you to research these on your own. From His birth, life, and death, all prophesied by many of the different Old Testament prophets, all lead to the fulfillment of the chosen Son of God, the Messiah. This in itself is quite amazing, that through many different individuals throughout the Old Testament, none contradicted one another in their foretelling of the coming Messiah – all are filled by one person, in Jesus Christ. (Please remember that we have these prophecies recorded in the Dead Sea Scrolls which were written well before Jesus of Nazareth was born) If we take some of these prophecies it is easy to calculate the probability of someone fulfilling such criteria.

### **The Mathematical Odds of Jesus Fulfilling all Prophecies**

The following probabilities are taken from Peter Stoner in *Science Speaks* (Moody Press, 1963) to show that coincidence is ruled out by the science of probability. Stoner says that by using the modern science of probability in reference to eight prophecies, 'we find that the chance that any man might have lived down to the present time and fulfilled all eight prophecies is 1 in 10 to the 17 power.' That would be 1 in 100,000,000,000,000,000. In order to help us comprehend this staggering probability, Stoner illustrates it by supposing that "we take  $10^{17}$  silver dollars and lay them on the face of Texas. They will cover all of the state two feet deep.

Stoner considers 48 prophecies and says, "we find the chance that any one man fulfilled all 48 prophecies to be 1 in  $10^{157}$ , or 1 in

100,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,  
000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,  
000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,

The estimated number of electrons in the universe is around  $10^{79}$ . It should be quite evident that Jesus did not fulfill the prophecies by accident." \*Remember from earlier that anything greater than  $10^{15}$  is beyond possibility. (Just as a test, I highly encourage you to read Isaiah 53 or to Google "Jesus fulfilled prophecies" so you will gain a sense of these Old Testament prophecies speaking about Jesus Christ).

So while the naturalist or naturalistic historian will still scream "another lucky chance/coincidence," I think Christianity has successfully filled all 3 of these premises. So we can conclude:

- 1) Any document that can be confirmed to be accurate through creation, historicity, and prophecy would be the most reliable document in existence, and could be fully trusted.
- 2) The Bible fulfills this criteria
- 3) Therefore the Bible can be fully trusted.

One may argue with these points, but they must once again, disprove the three points as I have lined them out, or present a more probable hypothesis, (Please encourage them to formulate a better hypothesis than "luck/chance" for each) So you might ask why then do so many now argue against Christianity? Some are simply due to Christians giving Christ such a bad name, they are disgusted with the entire "religious" thing, and most have presuppositions or biases against the miracles discussed in the New Testament or on the resurrection of Christ. When discussing a non-naturalistic miracle, or the Resurrection, we must remember that scientists are out of their fields on this subject, and we must turn to the historian. For example, science can show that it is possible that the Nazi's could have come through the Ardennes forest to launch a stealth attack against the Allied forces, but it cannot prove they did. Therefore, we must look to history. Historic evidences included could be: witnesses, written documentation, dates of written composition, supporting texts from different sources, and archaeology to name just a few.

A great example of the limits of science and moreover naturalism can be seen when Philosopher and Theologian William Lane Craig debated the staunch Darwinist Peter Atkins.

**Atkins stated:** "Everything in the world can be understood without needing to evoke a God. You have to accept that's one possible view to take about the world."

**Craig:** "Sure, that's possible, but..."

**Atkins:** "Do you deny that science can account for everything?"

**Craig:** "Yes, I do deny that science can account for everything."

**Atkins:** "So what can't it account for?"

**Craig** calmly said he would just name five:

- 1) Mathematics and logic – science cannot prove them because science presupposes them.
- 2) Metaphysical truths – such as, there are minds that exist other than my own. (Ex: The Matrix)
- 3) Ethical judgments – you cannot prove by science that the Nazis were evil, because morality is not subject to the scientific method.
- 4) Aesthetic judgments – the beautiful, like the good, cannot be scientifically proven.
- 5) Science itself – the belief that the scientific method discovers truth cannot be proven by the scientific method itself.

(*Atkins* had no immediate response other than a somewhat dumbfounded look on his face.)

With this being said, we must dismiss our presuppositions and prejudices against such things as "miracles," and just see what the best hypothesis surrounding Christ's resurrection is.

We will only touch on a few, to see how credible the resurrection is, and why you should be able to easily share this with a skeptic, (as well as quell any of your own doubts).

# The Resurrection of Christ makes Sense

How do we know from a historical perspective that Jesus rose from the dead? When working on my undergraduate studies in history at the University of Arkansas, I began to see how historians put together their information from past events, to arrive at a working cumulative case argument from the facts at hand. When we take this same approach with an agnostic or skeptic, we have no real choice, (regardless of our preferences), but to take the facts as they are, and see where the supporting facts lead us. So in light of the question concerning a skeptic asking how we know that Jesus rose from the dead, we should approach it the same way we would if someone asked us, "How do you know Alexander the Great never lost a battle?" And that is by taking the most agreed upon historic established facts, and then going down the list of less established facts from there, until we can arrive at a consensus, or best explanation, for our conclusions; and that our conclusions form the best hypothesis, (over competing ones), for the claim. Here are just three of the **established facts**, (which for the most part, are agreed upon by critic and non-critic alike), concerning the facts around Jesus' death:

- 1) **The empty tomb**
- 2) **The post mortem appearances**
- 3) **The origin of the Christian faith**

We will briefly review these three claims – **The Empty Tomb** must have been empty because the disciples could not have believed in Jesus' resurrection if his corpse still lay in the tomb. Also, Jews or Romans could have simply presented the body before the populace to quell any dispute about the missing corpse. One of the most remarkable facts about the early Christian belief in Jesus' resurrection was that it flourished in the very city where Jesus had been publicly crucified. Few would have been prepared to believe such nonsense as that Jesus had been raised from the dead, if they had not had a real reason to justify this belief. I will paraphrase Dr. William Lane Craig in pointing to the fact too, that Jesus' burial is multiply attested in extremely early, independent sources. (See [www.ReasonableFaith.org](http://www.ReasonableFaith.org) debates, discussions, articles by William Lane Craig which much is paraphrased here)

The account of Jesus' burial by Joseph of Arimathea is part of Mark's source material; this being a very early source which is probably based on eyewitness testimony and which some critics date to within seven years of Jesus' crucifixion. Moreover, Paul in 1 Corinthians 15:3-5 quotes a much older Christian tradition that he had received from the earliest disciples, (within the first five years of Jesus' death): "that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, and that He appeared to Cephas, then to the Twelve." For these and other reasons, most New Testament critics agree that Jesus was buried by Joseph of Arimathea in a tomb, and it is one of the earliest and best-attested facts about Jesus. As mentioned, if this conclusion is correct, then it seems very difficult to deny the historicity of the empty tomb.

**The post mortem appearances** - Once again looking at the very early letters of 1 Corinthians 15:3-8:

*"For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures, and that he was buried, and that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the Twelve. Then he appeared to more than five hundred brethren at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me."*

If we briefly break this down, it tells us that Jesus appeared to Peter, to all of the apostles, to more than 500 brethren, to James, and finally to Paul. If we go straight to the 500, we find something quite amazing. Paul reports that "most are still alive," (which is basically saying) - "they are witnesses too, so don't hesitate to go ask them as well," (which would also help explain why a huge populace of the city believed



in the resurrection instead of just a handful of fanatics). Also what is very interesting is James - Jesus' Brother, who by most accounts did not believe in Jesus' Messiahship. After this alleged appearance, James became a large player and instrument in the early church, and as recorded by the Jewish historian Josephus, was martyred for his faith in Christ in which he would not deny even though it could have saved his life if he had. (Josephus, Antiquities of the Jews) Then finally, He appeared to a well trained Jewish Pharisee, Saul of Tarsus, who was a vehement persecutor of the early Christian church. This is only a very brief sketch, but we are once again building a cumulative case argument that is increasingly convincing, and hard to dispute.

**The origin of the Christian Faith** - Even the most critical of New Testament scholars holds that the disciples at least did witness what they "thought" was the resurrected Jesus. It is becoming increasingly difficult to admit that the early and rapid growth of the Christian faith could be attributed to anything else. Jewish tradition had always held to a Messiah that would come in triumphantly to establish the throne of David, not one who would shamefully be executed by them as a criminal. It is difficult to imagine what a disaster the crucifixion was for the disciples' faith. Jesus' death on the cross must have looked like a humiliating end for any hopes entertained that he was the Messiah. But the belief in the resurrection of Jesus reversed the catastrophe of the crucifixion, because God had raised Jesus from the dead as he had foretold, he was seen to be the Messiah after all. This is why the majority of all attempts to explain away the resurrection has thus collapsed. The origin of Christianity owes itself to this belief held by the earliest disciples, that God had raised Jesus from the dead. This belief cannot be plausibly accounted for in terms of either Christian, pagan, or Jewish influences. As Dr. Craig points out: "Even if we grant, for the sake of argument, that the tomb was somehow emptied and the disciples saw hallucinations - suppositions which we have seen to be false anyway - the origin of the belief in Jesus' resurrection still cannot be plausibly explained. Such events would have led the disciples to say only that Jesus had been translated into heaven, not resurrected. The origin of the Christian faith is therefore inexplicable unless Jesus really rose from the dead." (*Reasonable Faith*, pg 395) It is the historian's goal, using all his or her critical skills, to determine what happened in the past by reconstructing it on the basis of evidence. As Fredrick Copleston states in "Problems of Objectivity," in *On the History of Philosophy*:

*"The historian is not free to interpret the texts as he likes. Some statements may be ambiguous; but there are others, the meaning of which is clearly determined independently of the historian's will."*

Insomuch, it is not up to the historian to rule out the resurrection simply because they feel personally that miracles such as the resurrection do not fit their pre-suppositional beliefs. Therefore, based on the above mentioned, and relatively non-controversial facts, plus the multiply confirmed facts by both first-hand and later witnesses to the events, we can confidently say that if one has any confidence in history whatsoever, then they have little to no reason to doubt, (or be agnostic to), the historicity of the resurrection of Christ as the best explanation and hypothesis to the events surrounding Christ's death, empty tomb, post mortem appearances, and the very origin of the Christian faith.

One might still say: "*well, I don't think miracles are a very good explanation,*" but we must remind them, that type of statement is a philosophical statement, (which they are completely entitled to hold), and that is irrelevant to what we know concerning the historic facts around Christ's crucifixion. As resurrection critic Wolfhart Pannenberg admitted to William Lane Craig:

*"The facts that an event bursts all analogies to the present cannot be used to dispute its historicity. When, for example, myths, legends, illusions, and the like are dismissed as unhistorical, it is not because they are unusual but because they are analogous to present forms of consciousness to which no historical reality corresponds. When an event is said to have occurred for which no present analogy exists, we cannot automatically dismiss its historicity."*

Much like Pannenberg admitted, we must look at the facts with an unbiased approach, and when we do, skeptic and agnostic alike, must come to the acknowledgement, that all arrows do squarely point and attest to the resurrection of Christ as the best hypothesis. Whether it is true or not is irrelevant to the strict historian, because he or she is simply reporting the facts as they stand; much like it is not the historian's responsibility to rule out Alexander the Great never losing a battle because of its very unlikely hood, (none of the great military leaders throughout history have ever died undefeated in battle and made such an impact as Alexander), nonetheless, if we interpret the facts with an unbiased approach, we must accept the fact that Alexander the Great was undefeated in battle, and moreover, that the resurrection of Jesus by far stands out as the best hypothesis surrounding the three facts mentioned above.

“No historian can legitimately rule out documentary evidence simply on the ground that it records remarkable events. If the documents are sufficiently reliable, the remarkable events must be accepted even if they cannot be successfully explained by analogy with other events or by an a priori scheme of natural causation.”

- "History, Law, and Christianity" by John Warwick Montgomery

### **You should be able to answer these questions after reading this chapter:**

- 1) How does archaeology help support the Bible?
- 2) What the odds of Jesus fulfilling all of the Old Testament prophecies about himself by chance?
- 3) How many total manuscripts do we have on the New Testament and how accurate are they when compared to our New Testament today?
- 4) On top of the manuscripts – do we have extra biblical support for the New Testament?
- 5) Is the Resurrection of Jesus a viable historic event?

### Top 3 Recommended Readings for greater understanding this Chapter:

- 1) The Case for Christ: A Journalist's Personal Investigation of the Evidence for Jesus by Lee Strobel (Sep 1, 1998)
- 2) The Historical Jesus: Ancient Evidence for the Life of Christ by Gary R. Habermas (Jun 3, 1996)
- 3) I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist by Norman L. Geisler, Frank Turek and David Limbaugh (Mar 12, 2004)

# CHAPTER VI

## What about other Religions other than Naturalism?

**Insert Picture 10 Centered here with the following caption below it in**

**10 font:** “Picture of Communist/Stalin March in Great Britain 2008 – Lenin and Stalin both practiced the militant-atheistic position that religion is an opiate and must be exterminated; this atheistic approach resulted in millions of Christian mass-murders (54,000 churches in 1917 to a little over 100 by 1939) as well as thousands of Muslims, Buddhists, Jews, and other minority religions. (An important point to remember when an atheist claims that without religion the world would be safer). (picture credit - www.wikipedia.org)”

While this topic is far beyond the scope of any book like this which has been challenged to cover the basic tenants of Christianity and stay at the approximate 100 page level, I will reference good sources for a deeper dive at the end of this chapter; what I will attempt in this chapter is give you a short and concise answer that virtually all critics and non-critics alike agree to in regards to these religious worldviews and will give you an idea of their limited scope in light of Christian Theism.

### Basic Outline of Facts vs. Religions

#### “Ultimate Reality/God”



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If we trace religions back to the beginning of time we find that people such as Adam, Eve, Noah, etc, were much earlier than any known religion today such as Judaism or Hinduism; for the purpose of this small description the importance lies in the fact that since all of these religions trace themselves back to a great flood that matches the Noah’s Ark description, we see that after the scattering of nations during the Table of Nations episode, all groups split up and went their own way. With this obviously some changes to religion would happen over time; the key is which one most accurately describes “God” at the time of Noah which would be closer to the “source” material that all religions are derived?

1. **Judaism** – Oldest religion by most definitions with the call of Abraham (approx. 2100 BC); leaders such as Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, David, etc, had to find or discover their calling (they did not know it before God revealed it to them), they all sinned as all humans do, and all pointed towards an eventual Messiah. (*Approximately 12 million practicing Jews today*)
2. **Hinduism** – Some consider this the oldest religion since its writings are closer to 1500 BC vs. Moses writing the Torah slightly after this; but as far as pure religion with the call of the leader Abraham, Judaism is the oldest by several centuries. At its core Hinduism was monotheistic and believed in only 1 God that they called the “ultimate reality” known as “truth” (Brahman). After the feeling of not being able to relate to this “ultimate reality” a type of sub-deities were created to pray to in order for them to relate to this “God” that was beyond our comprehension, (much like Roman Catholicism). No official founder but a type of evolving religion with a multitude of variances which can be interpreted as pantheistic and polytheistic as it has drifted away from its original “One God” origins. (*Approximately 1 billion Hindus today*)

**\*These are the two core religions that can trace themselves back the furthest with Judaism being steeped in human history so it can be verified whereas Hinduism cannot – much of Hinduism is in Sanskrit and cannot be read or interpreted today which caused some (like Buddha) to leave Hinduism.**

3. **Buddhism** – Originated from Hinduism when a Prince named Siddhartha Gautama left his worldly possessions to find “truth” and concluded that Hinduism did not have the truth because it had steamed so far from its original source. It had created caste systems where priests were higher than commoners and could thus exploit them, etc, (similar to early Roman Catholicism); Buddha has been referred to as the “Martin Luther” of Hinduism who broke away from the Caste system separating the poor from the rich to say that all are equal and able to find enlightenment. Buddhism is traced back to this one individual who himself said he had no authority but just could offer advice on how to live lives of meaning without a religious institution per se; Buddha (which means awakened one), repeatedly told his followers that he was just a man and to not treat him as a god, but many did this shortly after his death and continue to today. (*Approximately 400 million Buddhist today*)
4. **Christianity** – Considers itself the completion of Judaism in the fact that Jesus of Nazareth is the promised Messiah – not a prophet, sage, or Wiseman alone such as other religious leaders, but God in flesh as traced through Judaism in which we see God’s essence in a the burning bush on Mt. Sinai, in between the Cherubim on the Ark of the Covenant which was in the Jewish Tabernacle and then King Solomon’s Temple, and finally as the prophets foretold – born from the womb of a virgin (Mary), into a human temple of flesh. He said he had came to fulfill the laws of Judaism and the words of the prophets who all wrote of Him; the fact that Jesus fulfilled all of the prophecies of the Hebrew Judaic (Old) Testament and died and was resurrected – giving credence as the only religion that we are saved by God’s grace not by our works to god make Jesus’ claims higher than that of any other religion. (*Approximately 1.75 billion Christians today (most are not practicing)*)
5. **Islam** – The youngest of the major religions in which one person Mohammad saw revelations from an angel and over 100 years after his death some of his followers put together a book of his revelations known today as the Koran. The Koran gives credence that Jesus of Nazareth was the Messiah and will come again in end of time, but is not historic and cannot be tested. Began spreading influence by war and conquest and throughout its history through the present, punished those who leave Islam with death. It does include many stories included in both the Old and New Testaments but skews them with Mohammad being the final and greatest prophet; for this reason Islam (like Mormonism) is a direct off-shoot of Christianity; however there is much in the Koran that contradicts both the Old and New Testaments. The Koran attests that Mohammad, (just like all prophets), lived a sinful life but testifies that Jesus lived a pure life – this is very unique to see another religion testifying on the behalf of another religion in Jesus Christ and gives an immediate dialogue for conversation. (*Approximately 1.5 billion Muslims today, (Many Muslim countries outlaw the practice of any other religion in their country and force their citizens to practice Islam upon threat of death, (see [www.Persecution.com](http://www.Persecution.com))*)

So based on this simple summary of the 5 major religions we should be able to see how they interrelate to one another and how they do have similarities when we consider their origin from Noah’s Son’s following the great flood and then them changing over time away from their original form. We still have new religions that promise “new” light such as Mormonism, and there will continue to be – but covering these in great detail is far beyond the scope or purpose of this simple book. My hope is that we can simply see that the claims of Jesus are unmatched and that they continue the story of Judaism (Old Testament) and climax with Judaism’s promised Messiah of both Jew and Gentile. These do make sense in light of a Global Flood in which many people were dispersed and the stories they knew about the 1 true God would have become changed over the centuries and why God chose the Jewish nation to preserve the true story

until the Messiah came – therefore both the Old and New Testaments together give one a complete picture of God through Christ and gives a huge window on how we can relate to a Hindu, Buddhist, and Muslim. For example – many Christians can learn much about prayer and meditation from a Buddhist and the Buddhist can then learn about the enlightened one named Jesus who did speak with authority while the Buddha said he had no authority. If we show love and respect we can share and learn much from other religions and cultures as we share (not force) the Good News of who Jesus of Nazareth was and is and who he represents.

### **What is so unique about Christianity and Christ?**

At this point, I would like to follow along my good friend Dr. Subodh Pandit's same journey of inquiry that he describes in his search seminar series and book; and thus quickly tie this in with other religious thoughts, and how they match up in contrast. While it is not my place to judge anyone, I will simply let Dr. Pandit lay out the facts and remind each of us that any religion not willing to examine itself will gain a following only through intimidation and fear:

- Hinduism's highest claims: No single founder, and the highest claim is to be that of a sage
- Islam – Mohammed was called the "Seal of the Prophets."
- Buddhism – Super-enlightened one, who was enlightened in stages while under a fig tree in India.
- Christianity – Jesus didn't claim to just show truth, but to actually be truth as the Son of God.

Obviously all of these are very prestigious roles, but only one is an "out of this world" claim. **All are recognized as being in the grave except Jesus.**

- Only Buddha witnessed his enlightenment.
- The authors of the Hindu Scriptures wrote what was handed down to them. They did not experience the actual stories themselves.
- Only Mohammad saw the angel Gabriel and interpreted these visions. Islam's claims are solely based on Mohammad's witness.
- Christianity hosts at least 40 authors through vast periods of times, from kings to peasants, all parallel in their complete message being fulfilled by the one prophesied of in Jesus Christ. The Apostles and Disciples of Christ did not hear about Christ, they actually walked with and lived with Him first hand.

**All major religious figures had to find their journey and purpose.**

- Buddha had to search for enlightenment and test out various practices within Hinduism first.
- Mohammed was revealed the word; he did not have it, it had to be revealed to him
- Jesus knew from His birth what His purpose and mission was.

All religious texts state that their founders sinned except for Jesus, which was claimed to be without sin.

**The beginnings of the great leaders, their ministry, and death differed.**

- Hinduism – While there is no single founder; all appear to have been revered individuals with honor and prestige surrounding them.
- Buddhism – Gautama Buddha was a prince.
- Islam – Mohammed was of the tribe of Quraysh, which was very important because it was the guardian of the Kaba the most sacred site in the peninsula.
- Christianity – Born in a stable among farm animals.
- Christ was the only one born in poverty-stricken circumstances. He is also the only one born a virgin birth, which both the New Testament and the Koran testify to.

### **The leaders' deaths were quite different as well.**

- Hinduism – Their deaths were regarded as significant losses, to be lamented over for generations, as their lives were recounted over and over again. (Highly celebrated)
- Buddhism – Buddha's body was wrapped in one thousand layers of finest Benares cloth and cremated. He was honored and his followers left to continue his work of searching for enlightenment. (Highly celebrated)
- Islam – Umar, one of the prominent leaders, hurried ashen-faced to the mosque to mourn, and express their great respect and admiration. Mohammed had built the framework for the juggernaut of the caliphate that would later sweep the world and bring almost every opposition to its knees. (Highly celebrated)
- Christianity – Was tried as a criminal; tortured, beaten and convicted and died with two robbers. His disciples having abandoned him, he died as a criminal. (Movement was crushed and ended until the resurrection 3 days later; Christianity would remain illegal and heavily persecuted for 300 years; today it is still illegal in 53 countries in the world)

When we look at the differences from a number of perspectives, it is quite amazing how the differences cry out. Why I would never purposely mean to disrespect anyone's tradition or religious leaders, we can see that Christ stands out as "not of this world." Both in His life of non-materialism, non-earthly empire, and non-prestigious death; but moreover in His resurrection.

It is quite amazing when you piece together what philosophers call a cumulative case argument, where you put all the facts together to form the best hypothesis, how Christ stands out so predominantly. Even my Muslim friend does not deny this. It is amazing from these poor surroundings, in an area of the world not deemed particularly important, that this Jewish Rabbi, makes sense of all things in and out of the world.

- Christ's resurrection story grew rapidly in the very town where He was crucified.
- His Brothers did not believe in Him fully until His resurrection, when they became so devout in their belief, that they died rather than deny Him.
- All the apostles except for John were martyred for their faith. All they could get from following the Lord, was torture, persecution, and eventual martyrdom, but they followed and never doubted Him again after the resurrection.
- \* Hindus consider Jesus a God/Avatar, Buddhism hold Him to be a true model to follow and that He did reach the ultimate stage of Nirvana; Islam holds Him to be the Messiah, that He lived a pure and righteous life, was born of a virgin, and that He will come back at the end of the age; Christianity holds him as the invisible expression of God Himself who died for our sins, and will come back at the end of age; atheists/agnostics hold Him as a model moral teacher. *\*This fact alone is truly remarkable and leaves all types of in-roads to share with other religions.*

***It is indeed amazing that one person in the history of the world stands out like this individual.***

\*Nothing I have discussed in this chapter is overly controversial, and the majority of even skeptics will agree with my points. (They may differ on my conclusions, but the facts speak for themselves) Moreover, nothing I have discussed in this chapter is that difficult or complicated to learn; therefore, there is no reason why all Christians do not at least know these basic facts about God, Christ, and the faith they profess; in accordance to 1 Peter 3:15: "Always be ready to give an account to anyone that asks you for the reason of your faith, with humbleness and respect." This is going to be increasingly important in an increasingly secular world and if we want to have any chance of providing all facts to our young adults and future leaders. So as my good friend Dr. Pandit concludes in his book: "May the God of Truth guide you and bring you safely to the harbor of fulfillment and meaning in your life."

The most important thing that we must not let ourselves lose track of is that of having a personal relationship with Christ. This is the true “Theism” of Christianity. The most important part of this journey is to know and accept the person of Christ. While there is nothing I can say to convince you of this, I can testify that the experiential relationship I have with Christ is real, and I encourage you to explore the realness of this for yourselves; for Christ promises if you will just ask Him to make Himself known to you, He will. I pray that you will have this personal acceptance and relationship with Him, and understand what that means for you personally.

So basically, what we are looking at is while secular philosophies and interpretations of science change regularly to say the least, Christ and the Bible have not. What is more surprising in some ways, is the fact that the Bible, while remaining unchanged, has given us an accurate interpretation of the world around us. From the beginnings of space and time in what is now recognized as the “Big Bang,” the rapid creation of life, (often referenced in the Cambrian Explosion), the rapid sophistication in which humans came into existence in the approximate regions of Samaria/Mesopotamia, history as we know it, all climaxed with time literally being divided with Jesus Christ coming into the scene (BC/AD); all match the biblical narratives, and moreover, the natural and moral theology all around us. So what do we expect to see in the future? If history repeats, naturalistic theories will come and go, with atheists continuing to claim, “We have it figured out now!” while the Bible and Jesus’ words remain the same and timeless; and once again, we will reflect on the truth of Robert Jastrow’s assessment which he makes in his book, “God and the Astronomers:”

*“It is not a matter of another year, another decade of work, another measurement, or another theory; at this moment it seems as though science will never be able to raise the curtain on the mystery of creation. For the scientist who has lived by his faith in the power of reason, the story ends like a bad dream. He has scaled the mountains of ignorance; he is about to conquer the highest peak; as he pulls himself over the final rock, he is greeted by a band of theologians who have been sitting there for centuries.”*

### **After thoughts - Can We Learn from Other Faiths?**

One thing to note is that the “Church” and “Christ” do not always match and the “Church” of the day is what Christ spoke against for being so confused and the “Church” of the day was who was Christ’s biggest opponent – so don’t think Christianity (moreover Church-ianity) has all the answers when it comes to Christ/God. I have found other religions are more sound on some features of “experiencing God” when looking at Christ and how we approach Him and therefore can open up much dialogue between us all – For example:

1. **Hinduism** – States that finite beings cannot properly understand the one and true infinite being known as God (Brahman) in mere words/research. This is technically true; but whereas Hindus have developed sub-deities much like Roman Catholics have saints – Christ has revealed the infinite God to us in a way that we can at least in a small way begin to understand the infinite. Hindus use statues in the form of sub-deities (such as Krishna, Shiva, etc) – this leaves an open door to share with them how we approach the infinite God through Jesus Christ – we must remember that although true Christian theology is sound – having earned a Masters in Theology I can confirm what they are saying in the fact that our theology is the best “attempt” to explain God on paper and in words, but as the prophets of old such as Amos/Isaiah for instance can attest, they did the best they could in communicating God’s message to them in words and actions, but this does not mean that our “words” can properly encompass the infiniteness of God and the prophets alluded to this point as well. – Either way the door is open to communicate to a Hindu about the one and true God through the person of Jesus of Christ – aka: “God Incarnate” which they are often eager to hear about.

2. **Buddhism** – A type of reformed Hinduism in which Siddhartha Gautama abandoned tradition/hierarchy/rituals of Hinduism, (that are also common place in our own non-biblical churches today), because they are man-made attempts to reach the infinite – therefore Siddhartha reached the conclusion that one must free themselves of worldly pursuits and focus on doing good to all things, love all things, equality amongst all things, search inside our very being for the kingdom of God – Siddhartha (the Buddha) admitted that however he was no authority – only the infinite is the authority – on all of the above accounts Buddha was correct and in agreement with Christ’s teaching in many ways on our bodies being full of the Holy Spirit – yet Christ spoke as one “with” authority from God Himself – this too can serve as a great bridge for open dialogue with a Buddhist in sharing the story of Jesus the Christ, (not a specific church creed or dogma).

More could be said, but one thing that the Eastern religions like Hinduism/Buddhism have helped me to remember is that although all evidences do seem to be stacked heavily on the side of Christian Theism (namely in the person of Jesus Christ), we must not be so engrossed with scholarship, logic, and reason that we miss the much bigger picture of meditating on and experiencing Christ personally. This is a much greater concept of exploration than using calculations, logic, and scholastic endeavors which are in and of themselves finite and will never be able to fully grasp the infinite as our Hindu/Buddhist Brothers/Sisters point out. This experience of Christ/Holy Spirit etc, is what Christ was referring to (and Paul later) when in Luke 17:21 Jesus states “the kingdom of God is within you.” Not only must we not lose sight of this inner working that is not explainable, but we can also use this as a stepping stone to discuss Christ within the context that not only Christ used, but that a Buddhist or Hindu would also understand perfectly in a loving, friendly, non-forceful (Christ-like) manner.

## **Conclusions**

In summary, I will use William Lane Craig’s ([www.ReasonableFaith.org](http://www.ReasonableFaith.org)) 5 premises and add a sixth – we should all be willing to acknowledge these as good reasons to think that the God of Christianity exists:

1. God makes sense of the origin of the universe
2. God makes sense of the fine-tuning of the universe for intelligent life.
3. God makes sense of where/how all information originated
4. God makes sense of objective moral values in the world.
5. God makes sense of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.
6. God can be immediately known and experienced

These are only a very small part of the evidences for God’s existence of course. Alvin Plantinga, one of America’s leading philosophers, has laid out two dozen or so arguments for God’s existence. Together these constitute a powerful cumulative case for the existence of God and moreover that Jesus Christ of Nazareth is the most accurate understanding of this Ultimate Reality that finite humans can understand and experience.

“Now if we are travelers and not merely balconeers, the conclusion that God exists is but the first step of our journey, albeit a crucial one. The Bible says, “He who would come to God must believe that he exists and that is a rewarder of those who seek him” (Hebrews 11:6). If we have come to believe that he exists, we must now seek him, in the confidence that if we do so with our whole heart, he will reward us with the personal knowledge of himself.” – *William Lane Craig*

**You should be able to answer these questions after reading this chapter:**



- 1) I believe in God, but why should I believe in Christ?
- 2) What are some characteristics of the other major religions (Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism)?
- 3) What is different about Jesus' life and his claims compared to theirs?
- 4) Is the Bible the only religious writing that is historic in its nature and therefore based on factual evidences?
- 5) How could we use the basic tenants of each religion to lovingly open up a conversation or dialogue with them on the person of Christ?

Top 3 Recommended Readings for greater understanding this Chapter:

- 1) Jesus Among Other Gods: The Absolute Claims of the Christian Message by Ravi Zacharias (Feb 8, 2002)
- 2) Beyond Opinion: Living the Faith We Defend by Ravi Zacharias (Jan 12, 2010)
- 3) Mere Christianity by C. S. Lewis (Hardcover - Mar 6, 2001)

# CHAPTER VII

## The Entire Biblical Story in a Nutshell

Again, this small book cannot do justice to such an engrossing story of our plight and our purpose of existence found within the pages of the Bible and Jesus, but what it can do it give you the basics of the entire story that virtually all theologians, pastors, and Biblical scholars agree to and then simply encourage you to go out and research the details for yourself and share them with others.

### Old Testament Books

The Old Testament divides into four major sections which relate to the nation of Israel as God's chosen people in the following manner from the standpoint of their major characteristics or focus:

1. The *Law*—relates to Israel's moral life.
2. The *Historical*—relates to Israel's national development and life.
3. The *Poetical*—relates to Israel's spiritual life.
4. The *Prophetical*—relates to Israel's future life as fulfilled in the Messiah.

### The Old Testament has 39 books total with the first 5 being known as the Torah:

The name **Torah** also known as the **Pentateuch** refers to the **Five Books of the Bible** — the entirety of Judaism's founding legal and ethical religious texts. Outside of its central significance in Judaism, the *Torah* is accepted by Christianity as part of the Bible, comprising the first five books of the Old Testament. The various denominations of Judaism and Christianity hold a diverse spectrum of views regarding the exactitude of scripture. As we have mentioned earlier, the Genesis account gives not only the Hebrew Creation of the universe and life, but it also parallels the vast majority of other creation stories which make sense if all civilization could be traced back to the same origin. As mentioned earlier, the Torah is the first 5 books of the Bibles with Genesis discussing the creation out of nothing by God and then leading into Abraham as leader of the people later known as the Jewish nation, having a son named Isaac, who in turn had a son named Jacob, who had 12 sons known as the 12 tribes of Israel. Genesis ends with the story of one of these sons – Joseph, who rose to power in Egypt but was forgotten in the generations that followed leading to the enslavement of the Jewish nation. This slavery led to God raising up Moses and leading his people out of Egypt during the “Exodus” into the desert towards the Promised Land; during this Exodus God provides Moses and the rebellious people with the 10 Commandments and provides direction to the building of a Tabernacle in which God will dwell with them in essence. (This same essence will later be in King Solomon's Temple and ultimately in the Virgin Mary as the prophets foretold – to be housed in the “Temple of Flesh” to speak as God Incarnate via Jesus of Nazareth). Many, many things such as Jacob's ladder, the bronze serpent, the manna, the blood on the door post during the Exodus, the Tabernacle and sacrificial High Priest structure itself all standing for a manifestation/representation of this “God Incarnate,” are represented throughout the Torah, but are far beyond the scope or purpose of this book which is to serve as simply given you the basic level “101” level tools of understanding the Bible. This book will hopefully serve as a stepping stone to encourage you to

read further details on these concepts of theology and others by authors much more qualified than myself. Just note that the Messiah – Jesus of Nazareth is represented throughout the Old Hebrew Testament.

**Insert Picture 11 Centered here with the following caption below it in 10 font:** *“Picture of the Ark of the Covenant where God dwelled in essence/spirit with the Jewish people after the Exodus then was housed in King Solomon’s Temple and eventually the essence/spirit entered the womb of a virgin (Mary) as foretold by the prophets, and came to be housed in the bodily temple known as Jesus of Nazareth – hence the term God Incarnate. (picture credit - [www.wikipedia.org](http://www.wikipedia.org))”*

### **The Law – (Torah or Pentateuch) - 5 books**

1. **Genesis** - Creation, the Fall, the Flood, spread of the nations, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph. Enslavement in Egypt.
2. **Exodus** - Enslavement, Moses, 10 plagues, Passover, Leave Egypt, Red Sea Crossing, Mt. Sinai and the 10 Commandments
3. **Leviticus** - Instructions on sacrificial system and the priesthood. Instructions on moral purity.
4. **Numbers** - Still at Mt. Sinai, people make false idol, punishment, 40 years wandering begins.
5. **Deuteronomy** - Moses' discourses on God's Acts for Israel the Decalogue, the ceremonial, civil, and social Laws, and covenant ratification.

### **The Historical Books –**

As previously mentioned, the Old Testament can be divided into four basic sections with each providing a specific focus with regard to the person to Christ. With Joshua through Esther, we come to the second group of twelve books that deals with the history of the nation of Israel. These books cover the life of the nation from their possession of the land down to the two deportations and loss of the land because of unbelief and disobedience. Covering about 800 years of Israel’s history, these twelve books tell about the conquering and possession of Canaan, the reigns of the judges, the establishment of kings, the division of Israel into the northern and Southern Kingdoms, the fall of the Northern Kingdom to Assyria, the exile of the Southern Kingdom into Babylon, and the return to Jerusalem under the leadership of men like Nehemiah and Ezra.

As these books prepare us for the coming of Christ, the Messiah, they can be seen as follows:

#### **Historical Books - 12 books total**

1. **Joshua** - First half of Joshua describes the 7-year conquest of the Land of Promise; the last half deals with partitioning the lands to the people.
2. **Judges** - Time of Judges; this was a bad time period. The Israelites did not drive out all the inhabitants of Canaan and began to take part in their idolatry; 7 cycles of foreign oppression, repentance, and deliverance. In the end, the people failed to learn their lesson.
3. **Ruth** - Kinsman redeemer in Boaz, redeeming Ruth, a Moabitess; speaks of righteousness, love, and faithfulness to the Lord.

**The next 6 books trace the time from Samuel to the Captivity**

1. **First Samuel** - Samuel carries Israel from judges to King Saul
2. **Second Samuel** – The people choose a king of their choosing Saul; eventually replaced by King David.
3. **First Kings** – Solomon takes the throne after his Father David’s death; Israel is at its most powerful. Solomon dies, then division of tribes: 10 to the north and 2 to the south.
4. **Second Kings** - The Divided Kingdom. All 19 kings of Israel were bad; therefore, captivity in Assyria (722 BC). In Judah, 8 of 20 rulers were good but went into exile too, (586 BC).
5. **First Chronicles** - A recounting of the history of Israel to the time of Solomon.
6. **Second Chronicles** - continued recounting of the life of Solomon, building of temple, to the captivity. History of Judah only.

### **The Next 3 books deal with Israel's Restoration.**

1. **Ezra** - Cyrus let most of the Jews return to their land of Israel. Zerubbabel led the people (539 B.C.). Ezra returned later with more Jews (458 B.C.) Built the temple.
2. **Nehemiah** - Building the walls of Jerusalem. Nehemiah got permission from the king of Persia to rebuild the walls (444 B.C.). Revival in the land.
3. **Esther** - Took place during chapters 6 and 7 of Ezra. Mordecai. Plot to kill the Jewish people.

## **The Poetical and Wisdom Books**

The previous survey of the first seventeen books (Law and History), Genesis through Nehemiah, covered the whole history of the Old Testament. The seventeen books which lie behind us are *historical*. These five poetical books are *experiential*. The seventeen historical books are concerned with a *nation*, as such. These five poetical books are concerned with *individuals*, as such. The seventeen have to do with *the Hebrew race*. These five have to do with *the human heart*. These five so-called “poetical books” are *not the only poetry* in the Old Testament Scriptures. We ought clearly to understand, also, that the term “poetical” refers only to their *form*. It must not be thought to imply that they are simply the product of human imagination. These books portray real human experience, and grapple with profound problems, and express big realities. Especially to their concern themselves with the experiences of the *godly*, in the varying vicissitudes of this changeful life which is ours under the sun ...

### **Poetical - 5 books**

1. **Job** - a righteous man tested by God. Deals with God's sovereignty. (Very old book taking place sometime between Noah and Moses)
2. **Psalms** - Consists of 5 divisions. Worship in song. Large variety of subjects
3. **Proverbs** - Practical wisdom in everyday affairs.
4. **Ecclesiastes** - All is vanity. The wisdom of man is futility – as Solomon reflects and hopefully repents on his life of power, wealth, and prosperity; he concludes with the fact that all is vanity except focus on God.
5. **Song of Solomon** - A song between Solomon and his Shulamite bride, displaying the love between a man and a woman.

## **The Prophets and Exile**

### **The Prophets of Israel Viewed as a Whole**

The first division of the Old Testament was known as the Law with the second being called the Former Prophets, but these included four books which have already been outlined—Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and Kings. Though these books deal with the history of Israel, they were composed from a prophetic viewpoint and possibly even the authors themselves may have been prophets by profession.

The seventeen books considered in this section were classified in the Hebrew Bible as the Latter Prophets. The term ‘latter’ speaks primarily of their place in the canon rather than of their chronological position. These prophets are sometimes called *the writing prophets* because their authors wrote or recorded their utterances. There were other *oral prophets* like Nathan, Ahijah, Iddo, Jehu, Elijah, Elisha, Oded, Shemaiah, Azariah, Hanani, Jahaziel, and Huldah who left no records of their utterances. Mostly because of their size, the Latter Prophets are subdivided into the Major Prophets (Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel), and the twelve Minor Prophets, whose writings could all be included in one large scroll: “the Twelve-Prophet Book”). Daniel, usually viewed as one of the Major Prophets in the English Bible, actually appears in the third division of the Hebrew Canon called “the Writings.”

### **Their Directive or Message**

As a mouthpiece or spokesman for God, the prophet’s primary duty was to speak forth God’s message to God’s people in the historical context of what was happening among God’s people. The broadest meaning is that of *forthtelling*; the narrower meaning is that of *foretelling*. In the process of proclaiming God’s message, the prophet would sometimes reveal that which pertained to the future, but, contrary to popular opinion, this was only a small part of the prophet’s message. *Forthtelling* involved *insight* into the will of God; it was *exhortative*, challenging men to obey. On the other hand, *foretelling* entailed *foresight* into the plan of God; it was *predictive*, either encouraging the righteous in view of God’s promises or warning in view of coming judgment. So the prophet was the divinely chosen spokesman who, having received God’s message proclaimed it in oral, visual, or written form to the people. For this reason, a common formula used by the prophets was, “Thus says the Lord.” As God’s spokesman, their message can be seen in a three-fold function they had among the people of God in the Old Testament:

**First, they functioned as preachers** who expounded and interpreted the Mosaic Law to the nation. It was their duty to admonish, reprove, denounce sin, threaten with the terrors of judgment, call to repentance, and bring consolation and pardon. Their activity of rebuking sin and calling for repentance consumed far more of the prophets’ time than any other feature of their work.

**Second, they functioned as predictors** who announced coming judgment, deliverance, and events relating to the Messiah and His kingdom. Predicting the future was never intended merely to satisfy man’s curiosity, but was designed to demonstrate that God knows and controls the future, and to give purposeful revelation. The prediction given by a true prophet would be visibly fulfilled. The failure of the prediction to be fulfilled would indicate that the prophet had not spoken the word of *Yahweh* (cf. Deut. 18:20-22).

**Finally, they functioned as watchmen** over the people of Israel (Ezek. 3:17). Ezekiel stood as a watchman on the walls of Zion ready to trumpet a warning against religious apostasy. He warned the people against political and military alliances with foreign powers, the temptation to become involved in idolatry and Canaanite cultic worship, and the danger of placing excessive confidence in religious formalism and sacrificial ritual.

While the prophets functioned in various ways as they communicated God’s message, *they occupied one major role* in Israel’s religious system. The prophets in Israel occupied the role of *a royal diplomat or prosecuting attorney*, indicting the nation for violations of the Mosaic covenant.

### **Prophetic - 17 books**

## Major Prophets - 5 books

1. **Isaiah** - Looks at the sin of Judah and proclaims God's judgment. Coming restoration and blessing.
2. **Jeremiah** - Called by God to proclaim the news of judgment to Judah, which came; God establishes a New Covenant foretells of the Messiah who will put God's law in their hearts.
3. **Lamentations** - 5 lament poems. Description of defeat and fall of Jerusalem by Jeremiah.
4. **Ezekiel** - He ministered to the Jews in Captivity in Babylon; description of the end of times.
5. **Daniel** - Many visions of the future for the Gentiles and the Jews.

## Minor Prophets - 12 books

1. **Hosea** - Story of Hosea and his unfaithful wife, Gomer. Represents God's love and faithfulness and Israel's spiritual adultery; Israel will be judged and restored.
2. **Joel** - Proclaims a terrifying future using the imagery of locusts; judgment will come but blessing will follow.
3. **Amos** - He warned Israel of its coming judgment; Israel rejects God's warning. Focus on social reform.
4. **Obadiah** - A proclamation against Edom, a neighboring nation of Israel that gloated over Jerusalem's judgments; prophecy of its utter destruction.
5. **Jonah** - Jonah proclaims a coming judgment upon Nineveh's people; they repented and judgment was spared.
6. **Micah** - Description of the complete moral decay in all levels of Israel; God will judge but will forgive and restore.
7. **Nahum** - Nineveh has gone into apostasy (approx. 125 years after Jonah) and will be destroyed.
8. **Habakkuk** - Near the end of the kingdom of Judah, Habakkuk asks God why He is not dealing with Judah's sins. God says He will use the Babylonians; Habakkuk asks how God can use a nation that is even worse than Judah.
9. **Zephaniah** - The theme is developed of the Day of the Lord and His judgment with a coming blessing. Judah will not repent, except for a remnant, which will be restored.
10. **Haggai** - The people failed to put God first, by building their houses before they finished God's temple; therefore, they had no prosperity.
11. **Zechariah** - Zechariah encourages the Jews to complete the temple; many messianic prophecies.
12. **Malachi** - God's people are lax in their duty to God resulting in a growing distant from God. Moral compromise; proclamation of coming judgment.

## The Inter-Testament Period

*(Between Old and New Testaments)*

We would not say that a knowledge of the period between the Old and New Testaments is vital to one's understanding of the four Gospels, but it is very desirable, and indeed quite necessary if we would fully appreciate many of the scenes and incidents on which Matthew lifts the curtain. It gives a background against which we see with clearness the connections and relevance of the sayings and doing which occupy the earlier pages of our New Testament.

### THE PERIOD IN GENERAL:

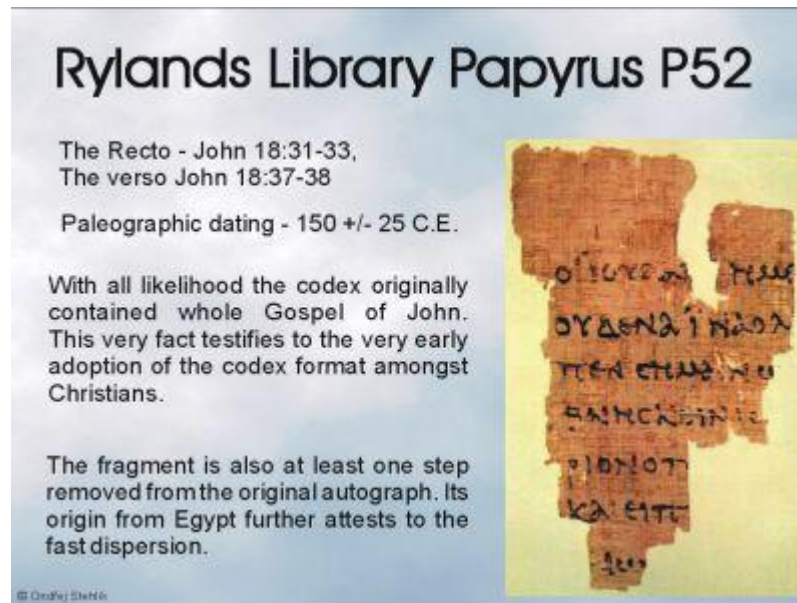
With the Old Testament canon closing with Malachi at about 397 B.C., we see that this period between Malachi and Matthew covers some four hundred years. This four hundred year interval has been called "the dark period" of Israel's history in pre-Christian times, because during it there was neither prophet nor

inspired writer. With this period we seem to find the sad fulfillment of Psalm 74:9 upon Israel: "We see not our signs; there is no more any prophet; neither is there among us any that knoweth how long."

The condition of the Jews as a nation and race at the beginning of this four-hundred-year period should be kept in mind. Two hundred years earlier Jerusalem had been overthrown and the Jewish people carried into the Babylonian exile (606 B.C. - 586 B.C.) as punishment for their unfaithfulness to God. At the end of this 70 year punishment period, the Babylonian empire having been overthrown and succeeded by that of Media-Persia (536 B.C.), Cyrus, the Persian emperor, issued a decree permitting the return of the Jews to Israel. Under the leadership of Zerubbabel, some five thousand Jews returned. Some twenty years after their return, after many setbacks, the building of the Temple was completed in 516 B.C. Then after another 58 years had passed, in 458 B.C., Ezra the scribe returned to Jerusalem with a small group of Israelites and restored the Law and the ritual. Still another 13 years later, in 445 B.C., Nehemiah had come to Jerusalem to rebuild the walls and become governor. Now, once again, there was a Jewish state in Judea, though of course under Persian rule.

Such, then is the picture of the Jewish people at the beginning of the four-hundred-year period between Malachi and Matthew: the Jewish Remnant back in Judea for about one hundred and forty years (536 B.C. - 397 B.C.); a small, dependent Jewish state there; Jerusalem and the temple rebuilt; The Law and the ritual restored; but with the mass of the people remaining dispersed through-out the Media-Persian empire. This eventually led to the Greek conquest by Alexander the Great and the introduction of Greek culture throughout Israel. This also led to the formation of the Hasmoean Dynasty that is described in the Apocryphal books of Maccabees that introduced groups such as the Pharisees and Sadducees of Jesus' time and setup the eventual place of Roman rule which endorsed King Herod. This is the point "in the fullness of time" that Jesus enters into human history.

# The New Testament



“Picture of early Papyrus New Testament copy – there are over 5,664 Greek New Testament Manuscripts and counting Latin, Coptic, Syrian, etc, there are over 24,000 all matching to an accuracy on all major points to over 99% the same when compared to today’s New Testament; this has warranted the New Testament to be deemed the most accurate ancient literature in human history – written the closest to the actual time of the events with the highest number of manuscript support than any other piece of ancient literature. (picture credit - [www.wikipedia.org](http://www.wikipedia.org))”

The New Testament is a record of historical events, the ‘good news’ events of the saving life of the Lord Jesus Christ—His life, death, resurrection, ascension, and the continuation of His work in the world—which is explained and applied by the apostles whom He chose and sent into the world. It is also the fulfillment of those events long anticipated by the Old Testament. Further, it is sacred history, which, unlike secular history, was written under the supernatural guidance of the Holy Spirit. This means it, like the Old Testament, is protected from human error and possesses divine authority for us today and throughout human history until the Lord Himself returns.

## Origin and Meaning of the Term “New Testament”

Our Bible is divided into two sections we call the Old Testament and the New Testament, but exactly what does that mean? The Greek word for “testament,” *διαθηκη* (Latin, *testamentum*), means “will, testament, or covenant.” But as used in connection with the New Testament “Covenant” is the best translation. As such, it refers to a new arrangement made by one party into which others could enter if they accepted the covenant. As used of God’s covenants, it designates a new relationship into which men may be received by God. The Old Testament or Covenant is primarily a record of God’s dealings with the Israelites on the basis of the Mosaic Covenant given at Mount Sinai. On the other hand, the New Testament or Covenant (anticipated in Jeremiah 31:31 and instituted by the Lord Jesus, 1 Cor. 11:25), describes the new arrangement of God with men from every tribe and tongue and people and nation who will accept salvation on the basis of faith in Christ.



The old covenant revealed the holiness of God in the righteous standard of the law and promised a coming Redeemer; the new covenant shows the holiness of God in His righteous Son. The New Testament, then, contains those writings that reveal the content of this new covenant. The message of the New Testament centers on (1) the Person who gave Himself for the remission of sins (Matt. 26:28) and (2) the people (the community of believers which is much different than “church” we think of today in institutionalized forms, (so beware that some churches today follow “church-ianity” instead of Christ-ianity via “wolves in sheep’s clothing)), who have received His salvation. Thus the central theme of the New Testament is salvation. The names *Old* and *New Covenants* were thus applied first to the two relationships into which God entered with men, and then, to the books that contained the record of these two relationships. “The New Testament is the divine treaty by the terms of which God has received us rebels and enemies into peace with himself.”

## **Divine Preparation for the New Testament**

In the time of the New Testament, Rome was the dominant world power and ruled over most of the ancient world. Yet in a small town in Palestine, Bethlehem of Judea was born one who would change the world. Concerning this Person, the apostle Paul wrote, “But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law (i.e., the Old Covenant).” In several special and wonderful ways, God had prepared the world for the coming of Messiah. Several factors contributed to this preparation.

## **Preparation through the Jewish Nation**

The preparation for the coming of Christ is the story of the Old Testament. The Jews were chosen of God from all the nations to be a treasured possession as a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation (Ex. 1:5-6). In that regard, beginning with the promises of God given to the patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Gen. 12:1-3; Rom. 9:4), they were to be the custodians of God’s Word (the Old Testament [Rom. 3:2]), and the channel of the Redeemer (Gen. 12:3; Gal. 3:8; Rom. 9:5). The Old Testament, therefore, was full of Christ and anticipated His coming as a suffering and glorified Savior. Furthermore, these prophecies were not only many, but very precise giving details of Messiah’s lineage, place of birth, conditions around the time of His birth, life, death, and even His resurrection.

Though Israel was disobedient and was taken into captivity as God’s judgment on her hardness of heart, God nevertheless brought a remnant back to their homeland after seventy years, as He had promised in preparation for the coming of the Messiah. Though four hundred years had passed after the writing of the last Old Testament book, and though the religious climate was one of Pharisaic externalism and hypocrisy, there was a spirit of Messianic anticipation in the air and a remnant was looking for the Messiah.

## **The Collection of the Books of the New Testament**

As we alluded to in Chapter 5, originally, the books of the New Testament were separately circulated and only gradually collected together to form what we now know as the New Testament part of the canon of Scripture. By preservation of God, our twenty-seven New Testament books were set apart from many other writings during the early church. They were preserved as a part of the New Testament canon because of their inspiration and apostolic authority. After they were written, the individual books were not immediately gathered together into the canon, or collection of twenty-seven that comprise the New Testament. Groups of books like Paul’s letters and the Gospels were preserved at first by the body of believers to whom they were sent, and gradually all twenty-seven books were collected and formally acknowledged by the church as a whole. This process took about 350 years. In the second century the circulation of books that promoted heresy accentuated the need for distinguishing valid Scripture from other Christian literature. Certain tests were developed to determine which books should be included. (1)

Was the book written or approved by an apostle? (2) Were its contents of a spiritual nature? (3) Did it give evidence of being inspired by God? (4) Was it widely received by the body of believers (ecclesia)?

Not all of the twenty-seven books that were eventually recognized as canonical were accepted by all the churches in the early centuries, but this does not mean that those that were not immediately or universally accepted were spurious. Letters addressed to individuals (Philemon, 2 and 3 John) would not have been circulated as widely as those sent to churches. The books most disputed were James, Jude, 2 Peter, 2 and 3 John, and Philemon, but ultimately these were included, and the canon was certified at the Council of Carthage in A.D. 397.

## New Testament Books

The New Testament has 27 books total, which consist of:

- **Historical Books** - Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Acts
- **Pauline Epistles** - Romans, 1 Corinthians, 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 Thessalonians, 2 Thessalonians, 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon
- **Non-Pauline Epistles** - Hebrews, James, 1 Peter, 2 Peter, 1 John, 2 John, 3 John, Jude, Revelation

### Historical Books/The Gospels and Early Church

1. **Matthew** - Presents Jesus as the Messiah. Genealogy of Jesus through Joseph. Fulfillment of O.T. prophecy. (Written by Matthew the Apostle of Jesus)
2. **Mark** - Presents Jesus as the Servant. 1/3 of the gospel deals with the last week of His life. (Generally agreed to be the first written Gospel – Mark was a follower of Peter the Apostle)
3. **Luke** - Presents Jesus as the Son of Man to seek and save the lost. Genealogy of Jesus through Mary. Largest of the gospels.
4. **John** - Presents Jesus as God in flesh, the Christ, so that you might believe – Written by John the Apostle – the only Apostle not to be martyred, (also penned Revelations).
5. **Acts** - Historical account from Jesus' ascension to travels of Paul in his missionary journeys – this was originally a 2-part document with the Gospel of Luke (Luke wrote both of them). This gives an early history of the church (ecclesia) – body of believers and how the church got started, (and how it is completely different than the institutionalized church today)).

### Pauline Epistles

1. **Romans** - A systematic examination of justification, sanctification, and glorification. Examines God's plan for the Jews and the Gentiles.
2. **1 Corinthians** - This letter deals with factions and corrections due to immorality, lawsuits, and abuse of the Lord's Supper. Also mentions idols, marriage, and the resurrection.
3. **2 Corinthians** - Paul's defense of his apostolic position.
4. **Galatians** - Paul refutes the errors of legalism and examines the proper place of grace in the Christian's life.
5. **Ephesians** - The believer's position in Christ and information on Spiritual warfare.
6. **Philippians** - Paul speaks of his imprisonment and his love for the Philippians. He exhorts them to godliness and warns them of legalism.
7. **Colossians** - Paul focuses on the preeminence of Jesus in creation, redemption, and godliness.
8. **1 Thessalonians** - Paul's ministry to the Thessalonians. Teachings on purity and mention of the return of Christ.

9. **2 Thessalonians** - Corrections on the Day of the Lord.
10. **1 Timothy** - Instructions to Timothy on proper leadership and dealings with false teachers, the role of women, prayer, and requirements of elders and deacons.
11. **2 Timothy** - A letter of encouragement to Timothy to be strong.
12. **Titus** - Paul left Titus in Crete to care for the churches there. Requirements for elders.
13. **Philemon** - a letter to the owner of a runaway slave. Paul appeals to Philemon to forgive Onesimus.

### Non Pauline Epistles

1. **Hebrews** - A letter to the Hebrew Christians in danger of returning to Judaism. It demonstrates the superiority of Jesus over the O.T. system. Mentions the Melchizedek priesthood. (Hebrews may be of Pauline origin. There is much debate on its authorship).
2. **James** - a practical exhortation of believers to live a Christian life evidencing regeneration. It urges self-examination of the evidence of the changed life.
3. **1 Peter** - Peter wrote this letter to encourage its recipients in the light of their suffering and be humble in it. Mentions baptism.
4. **2 Peter** - Deals with the person on an inward level, warnings against false teachers, and mentions the Day of the Lord.
5. **1 John** - John describes true fellowship of the believers with other believers and with God. Describes God as light and love. Encourages a holy Christian walk before the Lord. Much mention of Christian love.
6. **2 John** - Praise for walking in Christ and a reminder to walk in God's love.
7. **3 John** - John thanks Gaius for his kindness to God's people and rebukes Diotrephes.
8. **Jude** - Exposing false teachers and uses O.T. allusions to demonstrate the judgment upon them. Contends for the faith.
9. **Revelation** - A highly symbolic vision of the future rebellion, judgment, and consummation of all things.

\*Thanks/citation to partners at <http://carm.org>/Matt Slick for providing the Old and New Testament breakdown.

#### Top 3 Recommended Readings for greater understanding this Chapter:

- 1) Encountering the Old Testament: A Christian Survey (Encountering Biblical Studies) by Bill T. Arnold and Bryan E. Beyers (May 1, 2008)
- 2) Encountering the New Testament: A Historical and Theological Survey (Encountering Biblical Studies) by Walter A. Elwell and Robert W. Yarbrough (Mar 1, 2005)
- 3) Why I Am a Christian: Leading Thinkers Explain Why They Believe by Paul K. Hoffman and Norman L. Geisler (Dec 1, 2006)

## ***Main Events in Biblical History***

*TIMELINE: Thanks/Reference to Bible History Online (<http://www.bible-history.com>)*

Note: Approximate Biblical dating follows scholarship consensus; some dates are uncertain. There is also some overlap, especially in the case of the judges and the kings, but this should help you to get a better grasp of when the events of the Old and New Testaments took place.

### **B.C.**

- **The Year 2090 BC** - Abraham called by God
- 2067 Isaac born
- 2007 Jacob born
- 1992 Abraham dies
- 1944 Isaac dies
- 1877 Jacob arrives in Egypt
- 1860 Jacob dies in Egypt
- 1806 Joseph dies in Egypt
- 1730 Hyksos invasion of Egypt; Hebrews bondage begins.
- 1548 Hebrew midwives ordered to destroy all Hebrew male children
- 1528 All newborn Hebrew males are to be cast into the Nile
- 1525 Moses born
- 1487 Moses flees Egypt
- 1483 The great oppression of the Hebrews begins
- 1447 The Exodus begins
- 1446 The Tabernacle constructed
- 1407 Moses dies; Joshua conquers Canaan
- 1400 Conquest of Canaan completed
- 1375 Othniel becomes judge
- 1319 Ehud becomes judge
- 1318 Rameses I founds the 19th dynasty in Egypt
- 1240 Deborah and Barak judge Israel
- 1194 Gideon becomes judge
- 1167 Eli born
- 1155 Abimelech usurps power in Israel
- 1152 Tola becomes judge
- 1131 Jair becomes judge
- 1109 Eli becomes priest
- 1105 Samuel born
- 1089 Jephthah becomes judge
- 1083 Ibzan becomes judge
- 1071 Elon becomes judge; Samson becomes judge
- 1069 Samuel begins to minister
- 1066 Abdon becomes judge (Last of the Judges)
- 1043 Saul becomes king
- 1011 Saul and Jonathan slain; David becomes king of Judah
- 1004 David becomes king over all Israel
- 971 Solomon ascends the throne
- 966 Solomon begins to build the Temple in Jerusalem
- 931 Rehoboam becomes king of Israel and Judah
- 931 Jeroboam rebels; sets Up a rival kingdom in the north (This causes Israel to be split into two separate kingdoms known as Judah and Israel)
- 913 Abijam becomes king of Judah

- 911 Asa becomes king of Judah
- 910 Nadab becomes king of Israel
- 909 Baasha becomes king of Israel
- 886 Elah becomes king of Israel; Zimri becomes king of Israel
- 885 Tibni becomes king of Israel
- 880 Omri becomes king of Israel
- 874 Ahab becomes king of Israel
- 873 Jehoshaphat becomes king of Judah
- 858 Elijah begins to prophesy
- 853 Ahaziah becomes king of Israel
- 853 Jehoram becomes king of Judah
- 852 Joram becomes king of Israel
- 852 Elisha begins to prophesy
- 841 Jehu becomes king of Israel
- 841 Ahaziah becomes king of Judah
- 841 Athaliah seizes the throne of Judah
- 835 Joash becomes king of Judah
- 830 Joel prophesies
- 814 Jehoahaz becomes king of Israel
- 798 Jehoash becomes king of Israel
- 796 Amaziah becomes king of Judah
- 790 Uzziah becomes co-regent of Judah
- 783 Jonah begins his ministry
- 782 Jeroboam II becomes king of Israel
- 767 Uzziah becomes full king of Judah
- 764 Amos begins to prophesy
- 755 Hosea begins to prophesy
- 753 Rome founded; Zechariah becomes king of Israel
- 752 Shallum becomes king of Israel
- 752 Menahem becomes king of Israel
- 742 Pekahiah becomes king of Israel
- 740 Pekah becomes king of Israel
- 739 Uzziah dies; Isaiah begins to prophesy
- 739 Jotham becomes king of Judah
- 736 Micah begins to prophesy
- 735 Ahaz becomes king of Judah
- 732 Hoshea becomes king of Israel
- 722 Sargon II becomes king of Assyria Samaria falls;
- 722 The ten tribes of Israel go into captivity
- 715 Hezekiah becomes king of Judah
- 701 Judah invaded by the Assyrians
- 686 Manasseh becomes king of Judah
- 648 Nahum predicts the fall of Nineveh
- 642 Amon becomes king of Judah
- 640 Josiah becomes king of Judah
- 634 Zephaniah begins to prophesy
- 627 Jeremiah begins to prophesy
- 622 Revival in Judah
- 619 Habakkuk begins to prophesy
- 612 Nineveh falls
- 609 Neco II becomes pharaoh of Egypt
- 609 Jehoahaz becomes king of Judah
- 609 Jehoiakim becomes king of Judah

- 605 Nebuchadnezzar becomes king of Babylon
- 605 The Babylonians invade Judah Daniel begins to prophesy
- 597 Jehoachin becomes king of Judah
- 597 Zedekiah becomes king of Judah
- 593 Ezekiel begins to prophesy
- 586 The Babylonians destroy Jerusalem and the Temple
- 586 The Jews deported to Babylon
- 550 Cyrus becomes king of Persia
- 539 Babylon falls to the Medes and Persians
- 538 Zerubbabel and Joshua lead a small party back to Palestine
- 536 The Temple started in Jerusalem
- 520 Zechariah begins to prophesy
- 520 Haggai begins to prophesy
- 520 Construction of the Jerusalem Temple resumed
- 516 The Temple completed
- 509 The Roman Republic founded
- 478 Esther becomes queen of Persia
- 478 Esther saves the Jews of the empire from extermination
- 458 Ezra takes a small contingent of Jews back to Palestine
- 445 Nehemiah takes a small contingent of Jews back to Palestine
- 443 Nehemiah and Ezra read the Scriptures to the Jews
- 436 Malachi begins to prophesy
- 168 **Recorded in 1-2 Maccabees** - Antiochus pollutes the Temple in Jerusalem and suspends the sacrifices of the Jews
- 166 Matthias leads the Jews in revolt against Antiochus Epiphanes
- 165 The Jerusalem Temple repaired and cleansed
- 40 Herod appointed king
- 37 Herod captures Jerusalem
- 20 Herod begins to rebuild the Jerusalem Temple
- 4 Herod dies
- 4 THE BIRTH OF JESUS

### **A.D.**

- **The Year 14 AD** – Augustus Caesar dies and Tiberius becomes Roman emperor
- 26 Jesus begins to teach; He characterizes rabbinic teaching (the Mishna) as “vain tradition”
- 30 Jesus crucified and raised from the dead
- 30 Full Pentecost; the Christian church is born
- 54 Nero becomes Roman emperor
- 59 The apostle Paul is imprisoned at Caesarea
- 60 Paul appears before Agrippa
- 61 Paul a prisoner at Rome
- 66 The Jews of Judea revolt against Rome
- 68 Paul martyred at Rome
- 69 Jerusalem besieged by the Romans
- 70 Jerusalem falls; the Temple burned; the Jews deported

## Conclusion

*“Public School Education is thus a most powerful ally of humanism. What can a theistic Sunday school’s meeting for an hour once a week and teaching only a fraction of the children do to stem the tide of the five-day program of humanistic (public school) teaching?”*

(Humanism: A New Religion, 1930)

*– If we look at the time since this statement was made to today – we can conclude that they were correct...*

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Some people have asked me if teaching these types of truths might lessen a student’s knowledge level since evolutionist/naturalist have collectively labeled Christian theist/Creationist as non-intellectual. Interestingly enough an article from a secular educational research company recently discovered that the largest Protestant Christian Educational system, (Seventh Day Adventist), scored higher than the much heavier tax funded public school systems in every field of testing. Not only does the Seventh-Day Adventist Educational system endorse a literal 6-day creation of Genesis, but they are simple and have only a fraction of money to work with compared to the secular school systems; and yet they scored higher in every field of testing including science? I think this is a fitting article to conclude this book with:

Elissa Kiddo, Ed.D., Professor of Curriculum and Instruction at La Sierra University, relates some findings from the Cognitive-Genesis research project she directs. “Between 2006 and 2010, my colleagues and I analyzed test scores of 51,706 students, based on the Iowa Test of Basic Skills for Grades 3-8, the Iowa Test of Educational Development for Grades 9 and 11, and the Cognitive Abilities Test for all grades, as well as surveys completed by students, parents, teachers, and school administrators. In each subject category, students attending Adventist schools scored higher than the national average. They also scored higher than their expected achievement based on assessment of individual ability – a factor few other schools measure. One of our most dramatic findings is that students who transferred to Adventist schools saw a marked improvement in academic achievement. The more years a student attended an Adventist school, the more his or her performance improved.” The study also reports that socioeconomic status and funding are not factors. In fact, according to “research by Dave Lawrence, a graduate student at La Sierra University. . .students at Adventist schools that spend as little as \$2,000 to \$4,000 per pupil are roughly at the same achievement level as students in schools that spend as much as \$12,000 per student. Mr. Lawrence found no significant correlation between a school’s budget and student achievement.” The piece suggests that the cause is the holistic philosophy of Adventist education—with its emphasis on the mental, spiritual, and the physical. It would be interesting to see a study that compares how that oft-referenced tripartite signifier of Adventist education compares to other faith-based private schools with standardized curricula and physical education components.

### **My Hope...**

My hope is that this simple book will at least encourage you to better understand what it means to be a Disciple of Christ, to at least understand the message in the context of what CS Lewis called “Mere Christianity” in its simplest form, share that simplicity with others, research the information yourself, and if you are not a follower of Christ at least consider it, (do not be dissuaded by “church-ianity” vs. Christianity if you have been hurt or offended by the actions of those who claim to be His followers).

***“Draw near to God and He will draw near to you.” – James 4:8***

## Afterword...



“The Lollards were a group of Christian followers that work with Philosopher/Theologian John Wycliffe in translating the first copies of the Bible into English. They went out in pairs of two, a hand-written New Testament, and conversed with the public on apologetic concepts as well as philosophical on why Christian theism is the most logical worldview and what the Christian story is all about; they were heavily persecuted by the organized church of the day that practiced church-ianity not Christ-ianity, in order to share the Good News of Jesus Christ of Nazareth. What is our excuse for not doing likewise today? (picture credit - [www.wikipedia.org](http://www.wikipedia.org))”

Keeping this book to approximately 100 pages has not only been difficult, (since I have went over my 100 page limit), but it has only given you the basic facts about Christian theism and what it means. On a good note by this simple book only touching on the subjects at a relatively macro-level, it has made itself easy to read and digest as well as hopefully share with others; moreover we have not touched on any fine-line topics of theology or church doctrine so that one can use the information in this book whether they are of Protestant, Anabaptist, Anglican, Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, skeptical, mindsets. The key in my humble opinion is that we must not be afraid to engage schools, colleges, universities, churches and friends with this type information in lovingly communicating the facts as well as the Good News; we must never look to apologetics however as any type of substitute for the more important part of the moving of God’s Spirit in our lives, our personal time with Him through prayer, study, and simply experiencing Him every day. But if someone asks “why are you a Christian,” then we need to be able to adequately give them an answer. I currently work in New York City, and having worked with people of other faiths, colleges and universities, and can confirm that if you can digest the basics of this book and communicate them to others in a loving way, then the seed will be planted for others to water as God grows. The school systems have practically been handicapped to only hear one side of the evidence (the atheistic/naturalistic view) – it is our loving and humble job to insure they hear the other side. Please let me know if I can be of any assistance at all and I pray that I do not read any future statistics on Christian ignorance such as these when we have all the tools at our disposal to adhere to 1 Peter 3:15:

*“Many high school seniors believe that Sodom and Gomorrah were husband and wife, while a majority of Americans cannot name one of the four Gospels. Jay Leno asked his Tonight Show audience one night to*



*name one of Jesus' twelve apostles; they came up empty. One in ten Americans believes that Joan of Arc was Noah's wife, and only one-third knows that Jesus (not Billy Graham) preached the Sermon on the Mount." - Washington Monthly*

**God be with us all,  
James Stroud**

**[www.Apologetics101.org](http://www.Apologetics101.org)**

**[www.ReasonableFaithFayetteville.org](http://www.ReasonableFaithFayetteville.org)**

**[www.TheLollards.org](http://www.TheLollards.org)**

“In your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect.”

1 Peter 3:15

## Notes –

\*The vast majority of this book is simply a condensed version of my book “Christianity in the 22<sup>nd</sup> Century – Jihad, Darwin and church-ianity” which lists all references/paraphrases/quotes aside from the below.

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