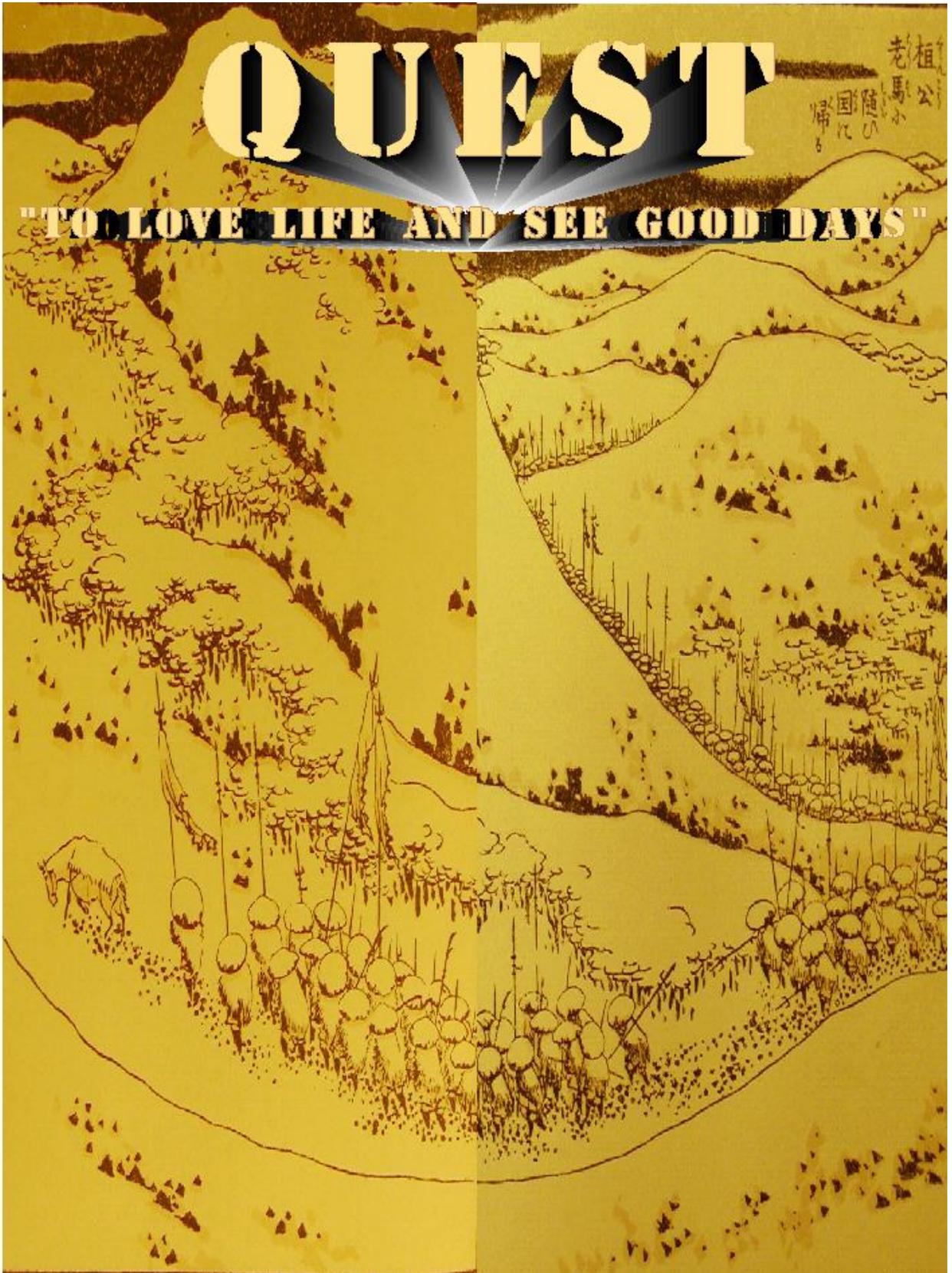


QUEST

"TO LOVE LIFE AND SEE GOOD DAYS"

祖公
老馬
隨の
國に
帰る



THE QUEST

“TO LOVE LIFE AND SEE GOOD DAYS”

Special thanks to my wife Barbara for encouragement,
valuable suggestions, and proof reading.

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INTRODUCTION:

The material in this book has come from a wide range of sources, all of which I can not possibly recall. It is the product of time, experiences, and many contributions, both oral and written. Feed back through questions and comments in a class setting always contributes to the refinement of content and a widening of perspective. I first put most of this information together while teaching an informal home Bible class with some friends. Later I used these same ideas for an adult Bible study on Sunday mornings. The class moved from these general concepts all the way through to a verse by verse study of the letters of the New Testament. When we finally finished an exhaustive study of the book of Revelation, the last of the letters, it was decided that we should review this material and start over with the same approach.

All was going along smoothly for a number of months until I experienced trouble with my voice, which was later diagnosed as cancer in my vocal cords. After some minor surgery and a period of radiation treatments I was without much ability to speak, much less to publicly teach anything. Because I was not teaching anymore I found that I had a little extra time to do something I had wanted to do for some time, which was to organize this material in a written form. I didn't know exactly how to go about the whole project until Barbara said to just write it like you talked it. So here it is in printed, but unspoken words.

ABOUT THE COVER:

The cover is from a pair of wood block prints by the Japanese artist, Hokusai, who lived and worked in the late 1700's and early 1800's. He was recording the historical return home of the army of Huan Chi, a Chinese Emperor of the 7th century BC. I noticed that Hokusai depicted the army of the Emperor as being guided on their homeward quest by a horse. It came to my mind that Christians are the army of the Sovereign of the universe and are also on their way home. If they follow good "horse sense" they will stay on the right trail and arrive safe at home.

*Proverbs 4:25-27 Let your eyes look straight ahead, fix your gaze directly before you. **Make level paths for your feet and take only ways that are firm.** Do not swerve to the right or the left; keep your foot from evil.*

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THE QUEST

“TO LOVE LIFE AND SEE GOOD DAYS”

CHAPTER I.

THE FIRST PRINCIPLES OF LIFE

In keeping with the first law of the bio sciences, we all come into this world in basically the same fashion. That is to say: **“like begets like”**. We each have a mother and a father and make our arrival kicking and screaming in our **quest** for certain basic requirements... among those are food, love, warmth and shelter. Consequently, the very first lesson that we learn in this new life is that we have an inescapable **dependence** on others. Much to our distress, we are not self sufficient. A new single human life, left to its own devices, will not exist for any significant length of time. Those newborns that fail to recognize that they are dependent, or fail to receive the required assistance, will certainly perish if intervention does not occur. **Recognizing dependence is a first principle of life;** both in the physical as well as the spiritual realm.

A companion prerequisite to life is the discovery of the first principle of all science and rational thought: **cause and effect**. Our initial outcry is met with our parent’s soothing voice of tender love: food, warmth and shelter follow quickly. As a result of this communication and relationship a bond of **love** and appreciation forms and grows between ourselves and our parents as the source and sustainer of our life. From this point on, we will attempt to assemble the cause, or causes, which will produce the effect that we are searching for. This principle is so fundamental that it is used to identify rational sanity or insanity. In fact, insanity has come to be defined as presenting the same cause over and over again while expecting a different effect. We do not need to strike our thumb too many times with a hammer to drive home the reliability of the principle of cause and effect. Consequently we understand that there is a dependable order in our universe that makes it possible to search out the cause and effect relationship of all things; thus making it possible to avoid unwanted effects, or consequences, while obtaining desirable effects. This is the fundamental basis of all scientific pursuits: to understand and take advantage of the process of cause and effect. It is the tool by which we are able to make wise and informed choices in life and to obtain the goals which we seek. Therefore, it is appropriate in every facet of life to say... **“Come now, let us reason together”**. All rational thought is predicated on this principle of cause and effect.

In the process of learning **dependence** and the practice of **cause and effect**, we are also introduced to the bond of **love** by that marvelous support system called **family**; through which these things have been, and will continue to be, taught to us with the greatest of tender care. All of this transpires within just a few moments of the first breath taken in our physical existence. We have the motivation, tools, and support to learn to **“love life and see good days”**. Life, Love and Learning ... it is an indescribably marvelous gift that has been given to all those who are so fortunate as to arrive in the land of the living. we all have dreams and expectations concerning our life, and our short term goals are as varied as our own ages, circumstances, personalities and

As human beings abilities. However, all these personal goals fall under one single common umbrella of human objective: to **“Love life and see good days”**. The universal nature of this common goal

encompasses all humanity from the beginning to the end. We are all driven to reach that full sense of happiness and purpose of life. The need to pursue this great quest, is as universal and critical as understanding that we have a dependence on forces outside our selves, and that our realm of existence is governed by cause and effect. So the great common human quest comes down to this: What are the causes that will bring about this desired effect of true happiness.

History overwhelms us with examples of those who have, in all good conscious, diligently and skillfully spent their lives in pursuit of knowledge, power, or wealth only to find at the end that the greater goal of life has eluded them. Time is of the essence in this quest because time, like money, is quantitative in nature. If we get detoured on too many wrong roads that promise fulfilment but never reach that destination, our time will run out and we will have wasted the gift and opportunity of life that was so graciously given to us. In order to be successful in this quest for true happiness, which is the common goal of all rational human beings, we must determine what causal forces will bring about the desired effect and concentrate our time and efforts in the pursuit of these productive goals. **Don't waste your life, it is a precious gift.**

Surely you have watched a newborn child as he examines his fingers and toes and you have felt him touch your face and tug your ear or pull your hair. From the very moment we are born, before we can even speak a coherent word, our life becomes a great and ever expanding search for answers as to who we are, why we are here, where we came from, and where we are going, etc., etc.,etc.. The mind is involved in a quest to construct a foundation network of **truths** on which to build and expand life and to obtain a full sense of purpose and fulfilment. The most frequent of all early childhood phrases is that ever present question "WHY?" It sometimes seems to reach an incessant thunder of harassment through those early formative years of childhood. Good parents know that true questions are an indication that the mind is engaged and growing in the quest for understanding and in the search for purpose and the meaning of life.

CHAPTER II WHERE DID WE COME FROM?

This journey began long before we drew our first breath and were called into active duty in the great quest for understanding what constitutes true happiness. Early in life we become aware of the fact that we are who we are, and the way we are, by reason of where we come from, that is to say, our parental heritage. Our physical characteristics are the result of our genetic contributors who number in the thousands. Skin, eye, and hair color; along with height and weight tendencies and many other general aspects of identity are the result of our origins. Even where and when we exist in the fabric of time is related to the **attitudes, actions and consequences** of those who came before us in the stream of time. How lucky for us that our mother was pro-life. Consequently, our quest for answers about ourselves, as well as life in general, looks to the **past** for the influence of our origins, to the **present** for attention to the direction of our actions, and to the expectations of the **future**. To set an accurate course of life one must know where he came from, where he is now, as well as where he wants to take his life. Once again we see that these principles of physical life are parallel to our spiritual life. Without these benchmark references we are just wandering, without direction or purpose on the ever changing storm tossed sea of time. It is not the storms and trials of life that should determine our destination, it is the set of our sails. We have LIFE, and we have LIBERTY, and we have the privilege, opportunity and responsibility to **PURSUE TRUE HAPPINESS**.

We look first to our past, and seek the answers to that age old question of our origins. The first thing that must be established in the process of logic, or reason, is the statement of premise. Much care must be taken in the presentation of this beginning point because the validity of any conclusion in the process of reason is dependent on the truth of that premise as well as the process of reason. Consequently it is prudent to take the most elementary premise possible. The fact that the universe exists is about as basic as can be found. No rational human being would reject this as a sound beginning premise.

In harmony with this premise, an observation is made regarding the fact that every effect must have a preexisting cause, which in turn raises the following question. Since the universe exists, and something can not come from nothing, we are forced to conclude that something (or some eternal power) has always existed. At this point in the process of logic there remains two possible answers regarding the origin question. The first is that the universe is itself eternal and therefore possibly qualifies as the creative factor in the cause and effect function of the universe. The second possibility is that a preexisting causal force brought the universe into existence.

The universe testifies and demonstrates, **by scientific law**, that it is not eternal....by reason of the scientific fact that it is wearing out. **The second law of thermodynamics** (law of entropy) states that “Matter, can be, has been, and is now being, changed into radiant energy, such as light and heat. At each exchange, the ratio of useful to useless energy declines....” Thus science demonstrates that the universe is not eternal. It is this exchange between matter and energy that powers every aspect of the

physical realm in which we exist. By use of the spectroscope we are now able to determine that the sun uses 4,600,000 tons of helium per second to supply our system with the required radiant energy to power the multitude of cycles needed to make our solar system function.

Albert Einstein presented a scientific theory that seeks to identify the relationship of energy to matter in our universe. (energy = mass times the speed of light squared). The basic conclusion is that matter is simply highly condensed energy. The efficient and controlled extraction of energy from matter is precisely what a nuclear energy program is about. Even in weapons of war we have taken advantage of this knowledge by the efficient and sudden extraction of energy from a very small amount of matter. Consider how much radiant energy is produced by a hydrogen or atomic bomb in relation to its size and weight.

In speaking of the spectroscope and Einstein's theory of relativity, and even the second law of thermodynamics; one might begin to think that those generations before us could not have understood these conclusions. If that is what we are thinking we would be very wrong. All men have known these principles from the very beginning of human existence: they simply did not call them by such sophisticated names. When a man sets fire to a piece of wood so he can keep warm, or cook his food; he demonstrates the fact that he knows that radiant energy can be extracted from matter. When the first pile of wood has been exhausted and he has to gather more to continue the process he shows that he is aware of the second law of thermodynamics. Whether viewed from the most primitive setting or the vantage point of modern science; the inescapable conclusion is that all "stuff" runs out and wears out.

In keeping with the first rule of science and rational thought;(cause and effect), the observation was made that every effect must have a preexisting cause. And since the universe exists, and something can not come from nothing, then something, or some eternal power, has always existed. We have just demonstrated, by scientific law, that the universe is not eternal. This inescapably forces the conclusion that some eternal preexisting causal force brought the universe into being. This is not exactly a new concept in the halls of human reason: in fact it is the conclusion that has been reached by nearly all recorded civilizations.

Now that we have determined that there is an eternal causal force that brought about this physical universe in which we live and upon which we depend for our continued existence; we are ready, to the best of our ability, to learn what we can about the nature and character of that force.

CHAPTER III

THE POWER AND NATURE OF THE “FORCE”

A basic observation of the world around us demonstrates that anything that has been created reveals, by its **size**, **design** and **purpose**, the minimum level of power and intellect of its cause. In the case at hand, the universe testifies about that force that caused it to come into existence. We know that when we look at a pair of shoes we can understand some things about the shoemaker. First we see that he had the power to do this, but it is also evident that he had an intelligent design and purpose for that which he has created. When examining the object that had been created we can only understand the minimum levels of power and intellect that were required to accomplish this end. The following example should help to clarify this point. Prior to World War II Hitler charged an automotive engineer with the task of designing an inexpensive automobile for the general public. The Volkswagen was the result of that charge. When we look at that vehicle we can understand the minimum levels of Dr. Porsche's automotive skills. However, his other automotive designs and accomplishments indicate a level of power and intellect in this field that far exceeds that which was evidenced by the Volkswagen.

In order to make an informed assessment of the minimum level of power that the creative force of the universe has, we need to consider the **size** of that which has been created. This will prove to be a difficult undertaking in view of the fact that humanity has not yet been able to even see the whole thing. We do, at this point in time, have a grasp of the size of our own galaxy but it is only one of billions of galaxies in the universe. Light, moving at the rate of 186,000 miles per second, will take 100,000 years to travel from one edge of our galaxy to the other. The sun, from which we draw our light and energy, is 92,000,000 miles from earth and 1,000,000 times larger than our home planet. These numbers and sizes exceed the grasp of the human mind and consequently so does any true understanding of the minimum level of power that the force which created the universe has. The conclusion is that this force has, as a minimum, more power than the human mind can even conceive of.

From an examination of that which has been created we can draw some other basic conclusions about the **minimum level of intellect** and **personality** of this creative force just as we could in the case of the shoemaker or Dr. Porsche and his automobiles. In spite of the enormous size, and the number and complexity of the various component parts, the universe operates with great precision. We can, and in fact do, set our clocks by it. We can even plot the future course of planets, stars, and comets for many years in advance. Halley's comet comes by every 76 years, it was here in 1986 and if you care to look for it again it will be right on time in the year 2062. We count on the precision and reliability of these cycles in our space exploration programs as well as in every other aspect of life on this planet.

From the largest stars, to the smallest living cells, we are discovering a total interrelationship of all creation as science uncovers more and more about our universe. It has been observed, with some alarm, that there is a recent trend toward global warming. The reason for this apprehension is because we are well

aWare of the principle of cause and effect and the orderly interrelationship of the universe in which we live. The scientific field of ecology, which is the study of the relationship of organisms to their environment, has made great progress in understanding this aspect of the world we live in. Here in Florida, the alligators in the Everglades were, for many years, considered a nuisance and were hunted to the point that their numbers were critically reduced. We were alarmed to discover that all the rest of the Everglades wildlife were also dwindling in number. With the help of ecological studies it was discovered that the actions of the alligator making his nests created needed water holes which make it possible for smaller game to survive in times of drought. When the alligator population was allowed to restore itself the rest of the wildlife population also returned to healthy numbers. This also demonstrates the recuperative power that the universe has to overcome some levels of the stupidity of human errors. It seems that this force even made some allowances for the ignorance of mankind as we seek to understand our own environment. We are continuing to learn and are becoming increasingly aware of the fact that this universe, in which we live, and upon which we depend, is precisely ordered and interrelated.

Previously we considered the size of that which was created as an indication of the level of power that the force of creation has. It was determined, in the case of the universe, that our minds could not even conceive of the magnitude of that volume of power because as human beings we are not, as yet, even capable of viewing the whole of the subject. From that point we moved on to ponder the minimum levels of intellect required to construct such a creation. And now we find ourselves with another inescapable conclusion regarding the intellect of that creative force. **The level of complexity and dependable interrelationship of the parts to the whole reveals the fact that the force that brought this universe into being has a depth of intellect that we can not fully grasp. It is safe to say that the causal force of the universe is more powerful and intelligent than the human mind can even comprehend.**

The **third** area that we want to examine has to do with the question of whether this force has **personality** and **attitude**. This will be revealed by examination of the function or purpose of that which has been created. It can, in some measure, be understood by the focus of the function of the universe on the welfare of humanity. Just as in the case of power and intellect, we will only be able to ascertain the minimum levels of attitude as they are revealed to us through an observation of that which has been created. It is clear that **design and function relate to purpose, and purpose reveals attitude and character.**

It was mentioned earlier that the sun is 92,000,000 miles from earth. Consider what the impact on human life would be if that sun was farther away or closer. The obvious answer is that we would freeze or cook, in either case, we would not survive. The light and warmth that we receive from the sun also powers our wind and weather patterns and drives the water cycle. **Evaporation--condensation--precipitation:** without this function there is no rain and if there is no rain we would have no crops and starvation would be the result. The light we receive from the sun enables the process of photosynthesis to function, which is a basic requirement of the plant life upon which we depend for our survival. The earth is tilted at an angle of 23 degrees on its axis thus giving rise to the annual cycle of seasons as the earth makes its yearly circuit in orbit of the sun. This also is critical in relation to crop production. The earth, while in orbit around the sun, is rotating on its own axis at about 1000 miles per hour. This gyroscopic action provides for the cycle of day and night as well as being a powerful stabilizing force. If you played with a spinning top or a gyroscope when you were a child you observed this critical force in action. It is the reason that a bicycle in motion does

not fall over but when the gyroscopic action of the spinning wheels stops, the bicycle loses its stability and falls over. From these, and numerous other examples, it is clear that the order of the universe has a focus on the support and welfare of human life.

Scientific law,(not theories), and logic are in agreement with this inescapable conclusion. There is an eternal causal force of the universe and it is **powerful, intelligent, and also mindful of the welfare of mankind.**

CHAPTER IV

IDENTITY OF THE CREATIVE FORCE OF THE UNIVERSE

There are, I suppose, thousands of theories concerning the origin of physical existence and human life which I am not familiar enough with to even discuss. Among these the most prominent scientific idea is referred to as the “big bang” theory. It, however, begins in mid stream with a single great explosion of energy that it does not explain the origin of. Consequently it does not account for the beginning. However, the thought goes on to say that at first the universe was “formless and empty” until the formation of stars and that through the process of fusion “light” is generated and the various elements are produced. The formation of elements progresses until iron is developed. Sufficient energy can not be extracted from iron to continue the process so the star explodes and the matter that has been formed is dispersed in accord with the laws of gravity and a galaxy is born. This is a very interesting theory of the process, and there may very well be some truth to it, but it still fails to account for the origin of that energy that brought all physical existence into being.

Some individuals say that the observable precision and focused orderliness of the universe is a product of chaos. That is to say that chaos produces order. This conclusion is certainly in violation of the principle that like begets like. Such a theory would consider it reasonable to expect that an explosion in a scrap metal yard would produce a Rolex watch or a Rolls Royce automobile. **There is no human experience that would support the idea that order is ever the product of disorder.**

History reveals that nearly all civilizations came to the conclusion that a preexisting causal force, which they referred to as God or Gods, brought the universe into being and that there is an ongoing dependence on that source of life. After that unified beginning there seems to be no common ground. The first point of difference is related to numbers: Are there many gods or is there only one? There is also a great variance in the attitudes ascribed to these gods; most are cruel and oppressive as any human absolute ruler might be. For thousands of years they predominately took the form of images produced by craftsmen out of stone, gold, silver or wood to be worshiped by the followers. This is, of course, without rational support and such ineffective forms of worship began to pass away as men started to rely more strongly on the mental process of reason.

The following is a quote from about 680 B.C. that calls out to the reader to use his mind and ability to reason when seeking an understanding of the nature and character of God. “All who make idols are nothing, and the things they treasure are worthless. Those who would speak up for them are blind; they are ignorant, to their own shame. Who shapes a god and casts an idol, which can profit him nothing? He and his kind will be put to shame; craftsmen are nothing but men. Let them all come together and take their stand; they will be brought down to terror and infamy. The blacksmith takes a tool and works with it in the coals; he shapes an idol with hammers, he forges it with the might of his arm. He gets hungry and loses his strength; he drinks no water and grows faint. The carpenter measures with a line and makes an outline with a marker; he roughs it out with chisels and marks it with compasses. He shapes it in the form of man, of man in all his glory, that it may dwell in a shrine. He cut down cedars, or perhaps took a cypress or oak. He let it

grow among the trees of the forest, or planted a pine, and the rain made it grow. It is man's fuel for burning; some of it he takes and warms himself, he kindles a fire and bakes bread. But he also fashions a god and worships it; he makes an idol and bows down to it. Half of the wood he burns in the fire; over it he prepares his meal, he roasts his meat and eats his fill. He also warms himself and says, "Ah! I am warm; I see the fire." From the rest he makes a god, his idol; he bows down to it and worships. He prays to it and says, "Save me; you are my god." They know nothing, they understand nothing; their eyes are plastered over so they cannot see, and their minds closed so they cannot understand. No one stops to think, no one has the knowledge or understanding to say, "Half of it I used for fuel; I even baked bread over its coals, I roasted meat and I ate. Shall I make a detestable thing from what is left? Shall I bow down to a block of wood?"

Anyone can, and many do, make all sorts of claims but for those claims to be accepted as truth they must be supported by proofs. This is such an elementary point of reason that we even observe children employing it in their own dealings with each other. One child will claim to be able to run faster than another, or throw a ball farther, and you will likely hear that old reliable charge to "prove it". The validity of the claim is not accepted without the presentation of proof. If it is reasonable to expect proof of claims in the elementary affairs of children, it would follow that one should expect proof in regard to the greater claims as to the identity of God. Those who make claims have an obligation to present proofs.

BIBLE CLAIMS

When the Bible begins with just such a claim as to the identity of the creative source of the universe, it assumes that the reader has already come to an understanding that God exists. The prerequisite specifics that are expected to be in place in our understanding are those which we have already talked about and that are gleaned from an observation of the world around us. Such specifics as: **like begets like, recognition of dependence, function and support relationship of family, process of cause and effect, the second law of thermodynamics**, or simply that stuff wears out and consequently physical existence is not eternal, and that physical time is quantitative in nature. This basic information, and a whole lot more, has been available to all rational beings from the beginning of human existence. The scriptures indicate that creation is the way it is for the very purpose of directing human beings to an awareness of the existence and nature of its creator. The Bible, in fact, make a statement of responsibility on the part of man to understand and act on these simple truths.

Romans 1:20-25

For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities--his eternal power and divine nature--have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse. For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened. Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like mortal man and birds and animals and reptiles. Therefore God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another. They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator--who is forever praised. Amen.

There are five primary claims made by the scriptures concerning the identity and character of God.

These claims are all encompassing and strongly supported by indisputable proofs which we will discuss in more detail. However, it is vital to understand that this process of claims and proofs are not an end in themselves; the primary objective is the welfare of humanity. This fundamental point of the Scriptures conveys an additional understanding of the attitude and character of God as the author. The pattern is **claim-proof- purpose**. This is especially clear in the structure of the gospel of John, which we will examine at a later point in this book.

The scriptures are careful to point out that God has no needs, and consequently, his motivation in the relationship between himself and man is solely directed toward the welfare of humanity. Whatever is required of man through the teaching of God's word is solely for the benefit of mankind, individually and as a group. Luke records for us, in the Book of Acts, these words that Paul spoke to those who had invited him to speak at a meeting of the Areopagus in Athens. *Acts: 17:23-28 For as I walked around and looked carefully at your objects of worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: TO AN UNKNOWN GOD. Now what you worship as something unknown I am going to proclaim to you. "The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by hands. **And he is not served by human hands, as if he needed anything, because he himself gives all men life and breath and everything else. From one man he made every nation of men, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live. God did this so that men would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from each one of us. `For in him we live and move and have our being.` As some of your own poets have said, `We are his offspring.`"***

CLAIM 1. GOD IS THE CREATOR

The first claim is that the God of the Bible is that creative force that caused everything to come into existence. This is presented in the very first verse of the Bible. *Genesis 1:1 "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth"*.

CLAIM 2. GOD KNOWS EVERYTHING

The second claim, like the first, is totally inclusive. He knows everything. *Hebrews 4:13 Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account.*

CLAIM 3. GOD HAS ALL POWER

The third claim is also universal and inclusive in nature. *Mark 10:27 Jesus looked at them and said, "With man this is impossible, but not with God; all*

things are possible with God."

CLAIM 4.

GOD IS EVERYWHERE

The fourth primary claim speaks to the omnipresence of God.

Psalms 139: 7-10 Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence? If I go up to the heavens, you are there; if I make my bed in the depths, you are there. If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle on the far side of the sea, even there your hand will guide me, your right hand will hold me fast.

CLAIM 5.

GOD IS THE SOURCE OF ALL SCRIPTURE

This final basic claim speaks to the reliability of all scripture based on the inspiration of God. The importance of the validity of these claims is seen in the fact that if the Bible is not the inspired word of God, then the claims of those who wrote it are false, and they are ignorant, and/or dishonest. Consequently, their word would not be worthy of any consideration at all. One must accept the whole of it as truth or reject the whole of it as a fabrication of lies.

II Timothy 3:16 All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness,

CHAPTER V. PROOFS OF BIBLE CLAIMS

In this chapter we will examine some of the proofs of Bible claims from several perspectives. In order to substantiate the statement of the Divine origin of scripture we will first consider some pre-scientific proofs. What I mean when I say “pre-scientific” is that the scriptures will, from time to time, present within the context of discussion, a reference to some scientific information that pre dates the discovery of those truths by mankind. It must be clearly understood that the Bible

was not written as a science text book. However, when it does speak directly of scientific matters it is always dependable because of its Divine origin and the underlying truth of all of its content. This aspect of the scriptures has not been overlooked by men of old who have made many a discovery based on information they gleaned from scripture.

PRE-SCIENTIFIC PROOFS

1. GERMS

BIBLE:

Chapters 13 and 14 of the Book of Leviticus, which were written about 1500 BC, contain some of the health laws that were given to the Hebrew Nation. These laws discuss quarantines and disinfection procedures and are obviously based on a clear understanding of the nature of these diseases. Which is particularly interesting because science had not yet discovered germs, bacteria, or viral infectious matter. Man, in fact, would not make that discovery for more than three thousand years. However, those who acted in accord with these laws, on the basis of trust, received the benefits even though they had no concept of the science involved.

Sometime around 1700 AD there was a great outbreak of leprosy in southern Europe which claimed many thousands of lives and nothing seemed to be effective in stopping the spread of this plague until, in desperation, some one suggested that they try the old Hebrew health laws. The spread of disease was halted by the implementation of those quarantine and disinfection procedures.

Human excrement still runs down the streets of many towns and cities of the world today. Only in the last several hundred years has any significant effort been made to handle this disease carrying problem in the “civilized” world. Early science had no clue as to the danger that the general public was exposed to by contact with disease carrying human waste. Once again the ancient health laws that God gave to the Hebrews protects those who keep them. The following is a quote from the book of Deuteronomy which was written about 1500 BC. *Deuteronomy 23: 12-13 “Designate a place outside the camp where you can go to relieve yourself. As part of your equipment have something to dig with, and when you relieve yourself, dig a hole and cover up your excrement.”*

SCIENCE:

To give us an idea of the state of human advancement in medical science of that time, we can look to an Egyptian “cure” for treating splinter wounds with donkey dung. This can almost guarantee that a splinter wound will have severe, if not fatal consequences. For the next three thousand years doctors never bothered to wash their hands between patients and thus carried, in ignorance, numerous infections and diseases from one patient to another. More than three thousand years passed after the health laws of the Old Testament were given before science had advanced far enough to understand anything about germs, bacteria, and viral infectious matter. Louis Pasteur was foremost in the discovery of these facts in the late 1800's, but the medical profession resisted making any changes for a long time. Consequently many more lives were lost. **What you don't know can hurt you.**

2. NATURE OF FLESH

BIBLE:

About the year 55 AD, Paul is writing his first epistle to the church at Corinth. In the text of this letter he makes a comment about the fact that there are differences in the flesh of men, animals, birds, and fish. Ordinarily you might pass right over such a statement without notice, except that there was a popular theory, prior to the 1930's, called the single cell theory, that sought to bridge these basic divisions of life forms by saying that all flesh was the same at the cell level.

I Corinthians 15:39 All flesh is not the same: Men have one kind of flesh, animals have another, birds another and fish another,

SCIENCE:

With the invention of the electron microscope in the 1930's, 1,875 years after the scriptures revealed this scientific truth, we can now affirm what Paul said to those in Corinth in the year 55 AD. This also goes on to disprove the common cell theory that was so widely accepted before we had the scientific instruments with the capability to examine things at the cellular level. It is also interesting to note that the study of animal life is still subdivided in this fashion: man, beast, fish, and fowl, on the basis of scientific observation of the differences in cell structure between these groups.

3. NATURE OF THE UNIVERSE

BIBLE:

The Hebrew letter was written about the year 63 AD. Neatly nested in a discussion about the subject of faith is an interesting reference to the nature of the universe. It mentions something that would, in its day, certainly have been viewed with skepticism. The idea that all matter, or physical existence, is constructed of that which can not be seen. This idea is in complete harmony with Genesis 1:1 in which it is identified that all physical existence came into being as the result of the power, or energy, of God's spoken word. This points to a fundamental relationship between energy and matter that is clarified by this reference in Paul's letter to the Hebrews.

Hebrews 11:3 By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God's command, so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible.

SCIENCE:

More than 1800 years would pass from the time of the writing of the Hebrew letter until science would come to even the beginning of an understanding of this basic relationship between energy and matter in our universe. The door of scientific understanding was cracked open with the discovery of x-ray in 1895. By the 1970's this relationship was well understood. The theory of the relationship of energy to matter is expressed in the formula: $E=MC$ squared. Thus identifying the fact that matter is highly condensed energy. The magnitude of this relationship would be expressed in the ratio: 34,596,000,000 to 1. Consequently, we understand that matter is a tremendous energy resource from which we need to learn how to safely and efficiently extract and harness power for the welfare of humanity.

The amount of energy that is bound up in matter is mind boggling, to say the least. In recent years, the efficient extraction of energy from matter has been a primary objective of many human projects, both peaceful and war like. I understand that the nuclear powered Aircraft Carrier Reagan, which carries 6,000 people and is large enough for the Empire State Building to be laid down on its deck, is able to operate for 27 years without having to refuel. This is obviously much more efficient extraction of energy from matter than has been known to man before he became more fully aware of the nature of the universe that was expressed by the Hebrew letter in 63 AD.

4. NATURE AND FUNCTION OF BLOOD

BIBLE:

Leviticus chapter 17, written about 1500 BC., makes several interesting points about the subject of blood. The first is that eating blood is forbidden. The explanation that follows in verse 11 is two fold: *“For the life of a creature is in the blood,”*. Because the context of this comment is within the discussion of health laws, we need to consider that this restriction is in some way health oriented. They could not have known that the blood, by reason of designed function, was the concentrated carrier of all manner of disease and infection that the critter had, and as such, was a terrible health threat. Once again, those who faithfully kept these health laws were protected from a broad spectrum of terrible consequences by simply trusting God. It would be many thousands of years before science would uncover this information.

The Hebrew health laws that are recorded in Leviticus 17:13-14 explains that animals that are to be eaten must have the blood drained and properly disposed of. *“Any Israelite or any alien living among you who hunts any animal or bird that may be eaten must drain out the blood and cover it with earth, because the life of every creature is its blood. That is why I have said to the Israelites, “You must not eat the blood of any creature, because the life of every creature is its blood; anyone who eats it must be cut off.”*

Leviticus 17:11 goes on to identify a second reason not to eat blood: *“and I have given it to you to make atonement for yourselves on the altar; it is the blood that makes atonement for one's life.”* This has to do with the symbolism that is rooted in the physical dual function of blood as the giver of life and that which removes disease. The parallel of the symbolic nature of the blood of Christ is inescapable. The New Testament letter to the Ephesians in chapter 1:7-8 speaks of the redemption or cleansing nature of Jesus blood in relation to our sins. *In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace that he lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding.*

Revelation chapter 1:5 speaks of being freed (or “washed”) by his blood. *To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood,* . Yes, life is in the blood, and blood, because of its function in living creatures, is the perfect symbolism to express the nature of the sacrifice of Christ.

SCIENCE:

Only within the last two hundred years have we come to the scientific understanding that “Life is in the Blood” and that blood actually functions as a vital washing agent and supplier of life-giving oxygen for the human body. Blood absorbs oxygen and distributes it to every cell. Any cell that does not receive this vital treatment soon dies. The function of blood is also to remove waste, fight disease, repair the body, and cause growth. This function and distribution is carried out by a circulatory system that must reach every cell in the human body. Because of our current knowledge of the function of blood and its relation to our health, the medical field has made great progress in understanding the state of ones health through examining a sample of a patients blood. In this day and time, the first, and perhaps most valuable tool the doctor uses is blood work.

I am sure that you have noticed that the doctors and lab workers all wear those latex gloves. They are fully aware of the danger involved in contact with blood that might be carrying some disease. They don’t plan to touch it, much less ingest any of it. It is also worth noting, that health codes in this country require that the blood be drained from butchered animals before they can be sold in the market place. Look how much we have learned in our modern times that God already told us about thousands of years ago.

We still have a familiar symbol on the streets of nearly every town in this country that speaks of a time of our ignorance of the nature and function of blood. The next time you notice the red and white barber pole you should remember the origin of that sign was to indicate that you could get your hair cut **and** have some blood drained off if you were feeling poorly. The symbol arose from the bloody rags being dried on the white post in front of the barber shop. If you were new in town you always could locate the barber by looking for the red and white post. In ignorance, many a man was bleed to death by his barber who knew nothing of the nature and function of blood in the human body. In keeping with ignorance of the circulatory system, blood would be drained from the left side and right side in the idea that you could be better balanced if the amount of blood on one side was the same as that on the other. This action clearly revealed complete ignorance of the whole blood work system. The implication is that we were “unbalanced”, but it had nothing to do with blood.

The sum of the matter is this: The nature, function, and symbolisms of blood, as revealed in both Old and New Testament scripture, indicates a complete knowledge of the facts about this subject that predates human understanding by thousands of years. This is an additional foundation block that serves to confirm the validity of those claims concerning the nature of the God of the Bible.

OCEANOGRAPHY

I have a niece who lives in the older section of Richmond Virginia and we stopped by for a brief visit while traveling through that part of the country. She was well aware that I had an interest in Civil War information by reason of the fact that I had written a book detailing my great grandfathers experiences in that

conflict. So she mentioned that before I left town I should see “Monument Row” which was located only a few blocks from her home. There were many large statues of famous American war heroes, and as expected, mostly Confederate. However, I noticed one that was very different from all the rest. I parked the car and went over to read what was written about this man who was presented as standing with an open Bible in his hand. It struck my interest because the whole message of the monument seemed a great contrast with the warrior nature that was conveyed by the others. And I am much more interested in the Bible than Civil War.

He was identified as an American Naval officer from that same time frame around the Civil War. The name cut in the stone monument was “Matthew Fontaine Maury and he was described as **“The Pathfinder of the Seas”**. I had recently read about the achievements of this man and was quite delighted and surprised to find this monument. He is one of the primary forces behind the establishment of the United States Naval Academy, an institution from which both of my brothers graduated. However, he is primarily known as the **“father of the study of oceanography”**.

The interesting thing about Matthew Fontaine Maury is that he was one of those men who had full faith in the truth of the Scriptures. He understood that even though the Bible is not intended to be a science text book, when it makes mention of some aspect of science it will always be dependable. It thus becomes a valuable research tool to all those who have that understanding and attitude toward the truth of its content. He was willing to commit his life’s work on that principle and others knew it. That is why that monument is shown with the Bible in one hand and an ocean chart in the other. He personally expressed that he was able to discover the things for which he became famous because of his respect for the truth of the Scriptures.

This whole adventure of oceanography came about while he was experiencing a bout with poor health. He was resting in bed when his son came to visit, and Matthew asked if he would read to him from the Scriptures. The young man picked up the Book and began reading from Psalms. In time he came to chapter 8:3-9 which read as follows: *When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, what is man that you are mindful of him, the son of man that you care for him? You made him a little lower than the heavenly beings and crowned him with glory and honor. You made him ruler over the works of your hands; you put everything under his feet: all flocks and herds, and the beasts of the field, the birds of the air, and the fish of the sea, all that swim the **paths of the seas**. O LORD, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth!*

When he heard the term “paths of the seas” he told his son; “stop!-- read that again!” And then he remarked that if God said there are “paths”, or customary roads, in the sea, then it most certainly is so. The balance of his life work would be to search out and record these paths. And so the whole field of oceanography science was drawn together out of an observation of a seemingly small point of truth that a faithful man took note of and acted on it.

1. “RECESSES OF THE DEEP”

BIBLE:

In the time of Job, about 2000 BC, the scriptures identify that there are “recesses of the deep”. Job 38:16 *“Have you journeyed to the springs of the sea or walked in the **recesses of the deep?**”* In the book of II Samuel, about 1015 BC, we are told of valleys of the sea. II Samuel 22:16 *The **valleys of the sea** were*

exposed and the foundations of the earth laid bare at the rebuke of the LORD, at the blast of breath from his nostrils.

SCIENCE:

The earliest concepts of the nature of the floor of the oceans was that it must surely be like a great tub of water; going down from the coastline and running across a long flat plane. It was also thought, by many, that at the far side of the ocean, the water simply spilled off a flat earth into emptiness. Sailors were warned to be careful and not to get too close to the edge.

By the year 1504 AD, thousands of years after the Scriptures spoke of the nature of the floor of the ocean, men began in earnest to examine the bottom of the sea. In that year, Juan de la Costa initiated the first recorded coastal soundings. It would be 1840 before the first true ocean soundings are made by Sir James Clark Rose using a hemp line and a weight. It is amazing how far and fast we have come since the days of hemp lines and weights. Even on my small boat I have electronic instruments that tell me exactly how deep the water is and the nature of the bottom, as well as exactly where I am in the world at that time.

In 1873 AD, the English ship “Challenger” discovered a trench, or canyon, in the Pacific that was 5.5 miles deep.(I would definitely call that “recesses of the deep”). By 1911 AD science had developed echo soundings -- that’s the “ping...ping...ping” sound that you hear in those old submarine movies. In 1945 we discovered the Marianas trench which is more than 7 miles deep. In 1964 AD we even sent a human being down to the bottom of the Puerto Rico Trench ..about 27,500 feet. By 1971, right in the middle of our own time, we are just now completing the project of mapping the “recesses of the deep”, in the ocean floors.

2. “SPRINGS OF THE SEA”

BIBLE:

The same reference from the book of Job, (about 2000 BC),that speaks of the recesses of the deep also talks of “springs of the sea”. Job 38:16 *“Have you journeyed to the springs of the sea or walked in the recesses of the deep?”* Genesis 7:11 and 8:2(written about 1491-1451 BC) also speak of those springs of the deep. *“ In the six hundredth year of Noah's life, on the seventeenth day of the second month--on that day all the springs of the great deep burst forth, and the floodgates of the heavens were opened.”* *“Now the springs of the deep and the floodgates of the heavens had been closed, and the rain had stopped falling from the sky.”* King Solomon, the son of David spoke of the “fountains of the deep” in Proverbs 8:28... *“when he established the clouds above and fixed securely the fountains of the deep,”*

SCIENCE:

In 1930, thousands of years after the Scriptures spoke of these “springs of the deep”, science began to take note of the fact that they do exist. Fresh water wellings are continuing to be discovered, some are identified as resulting from large underground rivers. They also estimate that 430,000,000 tons of fresh water is heat extracted by the approximately 10,000 volcanoes on the floor of the Pacific Ocean. I have also heard that some early sailors were familiar with these “springs of the sea” and would take advantage of the opportunity to top off their vital fresh water supply.

3. PATHS OF THE SEA

BIBLE:

Psalms 8: 6-8: *You made him ruler over the works of your hands; you put everything under his feet: all flocks and herds, and the beasts of the field, the birds of the air, and the fish of the sea, all that swim the paths of the seas.*

Around the year 1015 BC it was written in the Psalms that there are “paths in the sea”. Paths are essentially customary roads. What is being identified here is that the seas have a pattern of currents which marine life take advantage of. I suppose there are a multitude of reasons for this design, among those, as far as the marine life is concerned, would be location of food supply and to facilitate the process of migration. Commercial fishermen are particularly interested in this information because it helps to identify where the concentrations of sea life are located. If you don’t fish where the fish are you don’t catch many fish.

We have, for many centuries, understood that there are paths, or customary roads, that land creatures take in their day to day travels as well as in their migration patterns. As a child I had a dog, that had been trained by a native American Indian woman on my uncle’s ranch. The dog’s name was Patsy and she had many interesting and peculiar habits. Although she never chased a rabbit in her life, she was the most efficient rabbit hunter I ever heard of. She achieved this efficiency in hunting simply because she was aware that rabbits frequent rabbit trails, or “customary roads”. Consequently, she just had to locate a trail and wait patiently for a rabbit supper to be delivered. There was no chasing involved at all; she simply pounced from ambush and it was all over for the unsuspecting long eared critter. Because of her knowledge of these customary rabbit trails she was able, without much effort, to obtain many more rabbits than she desired for her own appetite. Over the years we received numerous

“gift” rabbits from Patsy’s over supply; all carefully placed on the door matt by the backdoor.

Ship traffic also benefits from this knowledge of sea lanes and currents through the efficient use of the flow patterns to reduce the time and fuel necessary to complete a specific voyage. The efficiency of sea travel and seafood harvest production has been greatly improved in direct relationship to our human understanding of the fact that there are, just as the scriptures said long ago, “paths of the seas”.

SCIENCE:

Thousands of years have passed since the Bible revealed that there are “paths of the seas” and we, as human beings, have not yet fully charted these vital and productive resources. One would think that, as smart as we are, the human race would have figured this all out and charted the sea lanes and currents in the early days of man’s experience. It is surprising that no serious advancement was made in the understanding and charting of these “paths of the seas” until the mid eighteen hundreds. As mentioned before, Matthew Fontaine Maury began this great work in response to hearing the words of Psalms 8:6-9 *“You made him ruler over the works of your hands; you put everything under his feet: all flocks and herds, and the beasts of the field, the birds of the air, and the fish of the sea, all that swim **the paths of the seas**. O LORD, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth!”* As a result of his study and research in this field of science, he published the first modern text book on the subject of oceanography. The title of that work is: “Physical Geography of the Sea”. He has since come to be known as “The Pathfinder of the Seas”.

He also committed his life work to the task of charting sea lanes and currents for the advancement of human knowledge. And all this was the result of an observation he made from the Scriptures. We are still searching out these sea lanes and currents to this day.

The most unique method of research I have heard of in this field came about as the result of a great storm in the Pacific during the year of 1992. A cargo ship, bound for America, from the Orient, lost several large boxes that had been lashed to the deck. This would not be all that unusual except for the nature of that cargo. About 12,000,000 rubber ducks were turned loose in the storm tossed Pacific and began

arriving at various locations over an eleven year period. The word about these sea faring ducks made the news and those who found them would report the locations and a considerable amount of information was gleaned about ocean currents from this duck spill. I've always liked rubber ducks, but I never expected that they would be involved in scientific research.

PROPHECIES AS PROOF

The use of Bible prophecies as proofs of the claims that the Scriptures make concerning the identity and character of the God that created the universe is somewhat different from that of pre scientific proofs. We understand that the Bible is not intended to be a science text book; but it most certainly is intended to be a book of prophecies. In view of this we will see the discussion of prophecies as a focus subject and not a side issue. The very nature of Bible prophecy is to establish proof, which in turn builds faith. A fundamental objective of prophecies is to demonstrate that with God all things are possible.

In the Gospel of John; Jesus speaks of four specific witnesses that testify to the validity of his identity: 1. John 2. Work 3. Father 4. Prophecy of Scripture. Prophecy is an extremely powerful tool in the development of faith.

John 5:31-40 *"If I testify about myself, my testimony is not valid. There is another who testifies in my favor, and I know that his testimony about me is valid. "You have sent to **John** and he has testified to the truth. Not that I accept human testimony; but I mention it that you may be saved. John was a lamp that burned and gave light, and you chose for a time to enjoy his light. "I have testimony weightier than that of John. For the very **work** that the Father has given me to finish, and which I am doing, testifies that the Father has sent me. And the **Father** who sent me has himself testified concerning me. You have never heard his voice nor seen his form, nor does his word dwell in you, for you do not believe the one he sent. You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the **Scriptures** that testify about me, yet you refuse to come to me to have life."*

There are three references in the book of Isaiah which can help our understanding that the need for, and function of, prophecy is bound up in our short attention span. As human beings we keep forgetting who God is and what he has done for us. We must be frequently retrained to overcome these short comings. We reach out for God when times are difficult; but when times are good we soon forget the source of all our blessings, and then we simply drift away again. Men, individually, and as nations, inflict terrible consequences on themselves when they forget the basic principles that are continually taught through God's prophecies.

A fundamental purpose of prophecies is both to establish and maintain an awareness of who God is, his exclusive identity, unlimited power, and certainty of purpose. A function of prophecy is not just knowing what will happen in the future, it is also to identify the fact that God is active in his creation; he acts to bring about all that is needed to accomplish his will for the welfare of faithful men. Bible prophecies are a solid building block in the foundation of faith, and they are a certain proof of his identity, character and attitude toward mankind.

Isaiah 46:8-13 *"Remember this, fix it in mind, take it to heart, you rebels. Remember the former things, those of long ago; I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me. I make known the end from the beginning, from ancient times, what is still to come. I say: My purpose will stand, and I will do all that I please. From the east I summon a bird of prey; from a far-off land, a man to fulfill my purpose. What I have said, that will I bring about; what I have planned, that will I do. Listen to me, you stubborn-hearted, you who are far from righteousness. I am bringing my righteousness near, it is not far away; and my salvation will not be delayed. I will grant salvation to Zion, my splendor to Israel.*

Isaiah 48:3-6 *"I foretold the former things long ago, my mouth announced them and I made them known; then suddenly I acted, and they came to pass. For I knew how stubborn you were; the sinews of your neck were iron, your forehead was bronze. Therefore I told you these things long ago; before they happened I announced them to you so that you could not say, 'My idols did them; my wooden image and metal god ordained them.' You have heard these things; look at them all. Will you not admit them? "From now on I will tell you of new things, of hidden things unknown to you."*

Isaiah 48: 17-18 *This is what the LORD says-- your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel: "I am the LORD your God, who teaches you what is best for you, who directs you in the way you should go. If only you had paid attention to my commands, your peace would have been like a river, your righteousness like the waves of the sea.*

The specific prophecies that we will discuss are chosen because they are well documented major world historic events and individuals. The time and details of these events is a matter of secular history that is recorded in many other records outside the Scriptures. It seemed to me that this type of reference would be most valuable and

impressive to those who are searching, with an open mind, to see if Biblical prophecies are dependable. The timing and particulars of these events are well known to anyone who has a basic knowledge of the history of the world.

1. NINEVEH

A. THE PLACE:

The origin of the city of Nineveh, according to Genesis 10:11, is that it was originally founded by Nimrod after the flood. Babylon and Nineveh were rival cities for a long time. Babylon, located in the southern part of the Euphrates valley and Nineveh in the northern part of the valley; about three hundred miles distant from each other. Both cities grew in importance and power over many centuries. And they have a prominent place in world and Biblical history.

Nineveh is located in what is called, in our time, Iraq. On the east side of the Tigris River, directly across from the modern town of Mosul. The rulers of modern Iraq continue to share the same reputation for ruthless cruelty that Nineveh, and the whole Assyrian Empire was famous for. The tremendous wealth that was accumulated by the city of Nineveh came not from any productive commerce, but from just plain armed robbery of surrounding nations and peoples. They would strip the nations they conquered of all forms of wealth and then remove the inhabitants of that land to another area of the Assyrian Empire. The purpose of displacement of peoples from their native land was to prevent the spirit of nationalism from developing.

Sometime around 790 to 770 BC the prophet Jonah was sent to warn the great city of Nineveh concerning the consequences of their wickedness. Jonah, knowing the reputation of these people, wanted nothing to do with this assignment. It was a “whale” of a job to convince him to do what he was told. The message that Jonah brought was well received and repentance took hold. However, it was not long before they drifted back to their old evil ways. By about 721 BC their brutal conquest of the Northern Kingdom of Israel was completed. For the next 100 years Nineveh continued to grow more and more brutal and cruel in their dealings with other peoples.

Nineveh had finally reached super power status as the capital of the Assyrian Empire about 900 BC and continued to grow in power and cruelty for several hundred of years after that. It was a city, in its own time, on a par with Babylon, Rome,

London, or Washington DC.

According to Felix Jones' survey in 1834 the **central district** of the city was encompassed by a wall that was nearly eight miles around and 100 feet high. This wall was wide enough at the top to accommodate four horse drawn chariots running abreast. The **general city** was about 30 to 60 miles across.

B. THE PROPHECY: 630 BC

Nahum, the Prophet, writing about the year 630 BC, speaking of the destruction that is coming on the great city of Nineveh, says directly that the subject of his prophecy is an oracle concerning Nineveh: *Nahum 1:1 An oracle concerning Nineveh.* He goes on to present the underlying principle of God's administration of justice with these words in chapter 1:3. *The LORD is slow to anger and great in power; the LORD will not leave the guilty unpunished.*

Chapter two of the prophecy of Nahum presents a graphic picture of the coming siege and sacking of the great city of Nineveh. The text even describes the fact that the river gates would be breached resulting in the collapse of fortification. The tactics and specifics of siege and flooding by the conquering force are clearly presented. This is a remarkable prophecy concerning not only the fact that this world power was about to be destroyed, but it goes on to present the details as to how this was to be brought about.

Nahum 2:1-13 An attacker advances against you, [Nineveh]. Guard the fortress, watch the road, brace yourselves, marshal all your strength! The LORD will restore the splendor of Jacob like the splendor of Israel, though destroyers have laid them waste and have ruined their vines.

The shields of his soldiers are red; the warriors are clad in scarlet. The metal on the chariots flashes on the day they are made ready; the spears of pine are brandished. The chariots storm through the streets, rushing back and forth through the squares. They look like flaming torches; they dart about like lightning.

He summons his picked troops, yet they stumble on their way. They dash to the

city wall; the protective shield is put in place. The river gates are thrown open and the palace collapses. It is decreed that [the city] be exiled and carried away. Its slave girls moan like doves and beat upon their breasts. Nineveh is like a pool, and its water is draining away. "Stop! Stop!" they cry, but no one turns back. Plunder the silver! Plunder the gold! The supply is endless, the wealth from all its treasures! She is pillaged, plundered, stripped! Hearts melt, knees give way, bodies tremble, every face grows pale.

Where now is the lions' den, the place where they fed their young, where the lion and lioness went, and the cubs, with nothing to fear? The lion killed enough for his cubs and strangled the prey for his mate, filling his lairs with the kill and his dens with the prey.

"I am against you," declares the LORD Almighty. "I will burn up your chariots in smoke, and the sword will devour your young lions. I will leave you no prey on the earth. The voices of your messengers will no longer be heard."

Chapter three of Nahum's prophecy contains a restatement of the underlying reasons for the destruction of this cruel super power. This is a graphic word picture of the character of Nineveh.

Nahum 3:1-5 Woe to the city of blood, full of lies, full of plunder, never without victims! The crack of whips, the clatter of wheels, galloping horses and jolting chariots! Charging cavalry, flashing swords and glittering spears! Many casualties, piles of dead, bodies without number, people stumbling over the corpses-- all because of the wanton lust of a harlot, alluring, the mistress of sorceries, who enslaved nations by her prostitution and peoples by her witchcraft. "I am against you," declares the LORD Almighty.

The Prophet Zephaniah, writing between the years of 630-625 BC, speaks of the scope of the coming destruction of Nineveh with these words from chapter two of his prophecy.

He will stretch out his hand against the north and destroy Assyria, leaving Nineveh utterly desolate and dry as the desert. Flocks and herds will lie down there,

creatures of every kind. The desert owl and the screech owl will roost on her columns. Their calls will echo through the windows, rubble will be in the doorways, the beams of cedar will be exposed. This is the carefree city that lived in safety. She said to herself, "I am, and there is none besides me." What a ruin she has become, a lair for wild beasts! All who pass by her scoff and shake their fists.

C. FULFILMENT OF PROPHECY: 612 BC

Eighteen to twenty years following Nahum and Zephaniah's prophecy concerning the destruction of this great city, we see these events come to pass in amazing accuracy. An army of Babylonians and Medes closed in on Nineveh and set up a siege for a period of two years. Historians say that it was August of the year 612 BC when a sudden rise of the river breeched the walls, and the attacking army swiftly entered the city. Complete and utter destruction followed.

These Bible Prophets had announced, with extreme detail, the reason for the destruction of Nineveh, the method and events that would take place, and the scope of the destruction that would occur. These are well known world historical events and serve to further confirm the claims of the Scriptures.

2. CYRUS

THE MAN: 539 BC

After his father's death, Cyrus ruled Anshan and soon over took Persia and by the year 550 BC he had become the "King of the Medes". In October of 539 BC the Persians entered the great city of Babylon through a dried up river bed that they had caused by diverting the waters. Seventeen days later Cyrus himself made his triumphal entry into Babylon. Cyrus left his own written records concerning his attitudes and actions toward the Hebrew exiles and they are in harmony with the Old Testament accounts.

THE PROPHECY: 700-750 BC

About **two hundred years** before Cyrus was even born, the Prophet Isaiah recorded the words that God had revealed to him concerning this man. God calls him by name and says that he will give him all manner of kingdoms, treasures and honor. He goes on to declare that he will do this for the sake of Israel and in spite of the fact

that Cyrus does not even acknowledge him. Within these few verses are a series of tremendous claims concerning the power and identity of the God of the Scriptures.

Isaiah 45:1-7 "This is what the LORD says to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I take hold of to subdue nations before him and to strip kings of their armor, to open doors before him so that gates will not be shut: I will go before you and will level the mountains; I will break down gates of bronze and cut through bars of iron. I will give you the treasures of darkness, riches stored in secret places, so that you may know that I am the LORD, the God of Israel, who summons you by name. For the sake of Jacob my servant, of Israel my chosen, I summon you by name and bestow on you a title of honor, though you do not acknowledge me. I am the LORD, and there is no other; apart from me there is no God. I will strengthen you, though you have not acknowledged me, so that from the rising of the sun to the place of its setting men may know there is none besides me. I am the LORD, and there is no other. I form the light and create darkness, I bring prosperity and create disaster; I, the LORD, do all these things.

After the fall of Jerusalem, the prophet Jeremiah also spoke of the time when God's people would return from Babylonian captivity. We have seen that Cyrus was the chosen instrument by which God would effect this return. Jeremiah identifies that there was an exact time table for these events to take place. In this observation we note that the God of the Bible is also master of time. Not only does he know what will happen and when it will happen, he is a causal factor in bringing these things to fruition. The universe is his and He is master of every aspect of it, including time.

Jeremiah 29:10-14 This is what the LORD says: "When seventy years are completed for Babylon, I will come to you and fulfill my gracious promise to bring you back to this place. For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart. I will be found by you," declares the LORD, "and will bring you back from captivity. I will gather you from all the nations and places where I have banished you," declares the LORD, "and will bring you back to the place from which I carried you into exile."

THE PROPHECY FULFILLED: 539 BC

Cyrus's miraculous rise to power and the overcoming of the great city of Babylon, which Isaiah wrote about more than two hundred years before the fact, has already been mentioned. The time and events are a matter of secular history as well as Biblical record. **For a man to be called by name, more than two hundred years before he is born is a powerful proof.** This, taken in conjunction with the details of what would be accomplished through this individual for the welfare of the faithful, is as powerful as proof can get. No rational person could reject the validity of this clear demonstration of the origin of the Scriptures.

Ezra, the priest, the author of the book of Ezra, writes concerning the fact and timing of the return that had been spoken of by the Prophet Jeremiah during the period of Babylonian captivity.

Ezra 1: 1-3 In the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, in order to fulfill the word of the LORD spoken by Jeremiah, the LORD moved the heart of Cyrus king of Persia to make a proclamation throughout his realm and to put it in writing: "This is what Cyrus king of Persia says: "The LORD, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth and he has appointed me to build a temple for him at Jerusalem in Judah. Anyone of his people among you--may his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem in Judah and build the temple of the LORD, the God of Israel, the God who is in Jerusalem.

3. THE FALL OF BABYLON

THE CITY:

Babylon is identified in Genesis 10:8-10 as also being founded by Nimrod, at an even earlier time than the city of Nineveh. This is an ancient city located on the Euphrates River about 51 miles south of Baghdad in the present day country of Iraq. It was 300 miles south of its rival, the great city of Nineveh which we have already discussed. The city was surrounded by an extensive system of walls and moats covering many miles. Some of these walls were wide enough on top for several chariots to pass. There were numerous gates and a series of defense towers. The world famous hanging gardens which Nebuchadnezzar had built for his wife, as a reminder of her home land, were also located in Babylon. The Euphrates River ran through the middle of the city. With the help of about 10,000 inscribed text, that have been recovered from the site, there is a great deal of information available concerning the city in the

days of Nebuchadnezzar's rule.

This is the capital city to which the Prophet Daniel was taken when he was just a youth. From the study of the book of Daniel we can gain an insight into the great power of the Babylonian Empire as well as an understanding of the super powers that would come after the fall of this "golden" Empire.

THE PROPHECY:

The Prophet Isaiah, writing between 700 and 750 BC, about 200 years before the fact; speaks of the complete destruction of one the most powerful political forces that would ever be known to man. Another interesting fact about this whole thing is that Isaiah spoke of the fall of this Babylonian Empire about 100 years before it even came to a world class super power status in about the year of 606. This city of unparalleled wealth, power, and beauty was, according to Isaiah, to be reduced to the same state of those ancient evil cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. This once grand city was to be brought down to a condition of being uninhabitable through all generations.

Isaiah 13:19-22 *Babylon, the jewel of kingdoms, the glory of the Babylonians' pride, will be overthrown by God like Sodom and Gomorrah. She will never be inhabited or lived in through all generations; no Arab will pitch his tent there, no shepherd will rest his flocks there. But desert creatures will lie there, jackals will fill her houses; there the owls will dwell, and there the wild goats will leap about. Hyenas will howl in her strongholds, jackals in her luxurious palaces. Her time is at hand, and her days will not be prolonged.*

Isaiah 14:23 *"I will turn her into a place for owls and into swampland; I will sweep her with the broom of destruction," declares the LORD Almighty.*

Isaiah was not alone in this great prophecy concerning the fall of Babylon. The Prophet Jeremiah, writing during the Babylonian Captivity, at the very apex of the Empires' power and wealth, speaks of the fact that an alliance of nations from the north would bring this about. He reaffirms what the Prophet Isaiah said much earlier about the degree and duration of destruction that was in store for Babylon.

Jeremiah 50:9-13 For I will stir up and bring against Babylon an alliance of great nations from the land of the north. They will take up their positions against her, and from the north she will be captured. Their arrows will be like skilled warriors who do not return empty-handed. So Babylonia will be plundered; all who plunder her will have their fill," declares the LORD. "Because you rejoice and are glad, you who pillage my inheritance, because you frolic like a heifer threshing grain and neigh like stallions, your mother will be greatly ashamed; she who gave you birth will be disgraced. She will be the least of the nations-- a wilderness, a dry land, a desert. Because of the LORD's anger she will not be inhabited but will be completely desolate. All who pass Babylon will be horrified and scoff because of all her wounds.

THE FULFILLMENT OF PROPHECY:

According to historical records it was October 16 of the year 539 BC when The Medes and Persians entered the city and Belshazzar, the last king of Babylon, was killed. "The hand writing is on the wall" -- that phrase has come to mean that the thing is a certainty. It is an expression derived from Daniel's account of King Belshazzar's last day of life. This event is recorded in chapter 5 of the book of Daniel. A hand was seen writing on the wall and Daniel was called to determine the meaning of what was written. *"This is the inscription that was written: MENE, MENE, TEKEL, PARSIN "This is what these words mean: Mene : God has numbered the days of your reign and brought it to an end. Tekel : You have been weighed on the scales and found wanting. Peres : Your kingdom is divided and given to the Medes and Persians."* Daniel translated the words and told Belshazzar the meaning. That very night the great city of Babylon fell, and Belshazzar was slain. The event took place exactly as Daniel said it would. This alliance of the Medes and Persians came down from the north, as the Prophet Jeremiah said they would. The city was not completely destroyed at that time. It remained a functioning part of the Empire of the Medes and Persians who had over taken it. However, It was stripped of every valuable asset and the degeneration that continued was slow but certain. When Alexander the Great over powered that Empire he made plans to restore the city to its former glory. That was not in keeping with the prophecy --Alexander suddenly died at the age of 33. (We will have a lot more to say about Alexander later). The Euphrates River shifted to the east, and whatever might have been restorable was continuing to degenerate into rubble. In the first century AD building blocks were being hauled away to be used in the city of Baghdad. It has, for centuries been nothing but a desolate heap of mounds. Mighty

Babylon has fallen.

4. DESTRUCTION OF TYRE

THE CITY OF TYRE:

Tyre was a principal and powerful Phoenician sea port city along the eastern shore of the Mediterranean Sea. Some historians say that it was founded as early as 2700 BC. In Joshua's description of the land that was given to Asher, (Joshua 19:24-31), the coastal city of Tyre is described early on as fortified. That reputation continued on in Samuel's time as indicated by II Samuel 24:7 which characterized Tyre as a fortress, or strong hold. Hiram I, a ruler of Tyre, was on friendly terms with David and his son King Solomon. They carried on trade in wood and stone for the building of the Temple and numerous other projects. Because of its strategic location it was always subject to being taken over by eager empire builders. They had a reputation for pursuing profit without regard to principle. When the Assyrian Empire declined in 627 BC, Tyre regained her autonomy and reestablished, once again, her prominence in sea trade. The Babylonians took note of this valuable asset and besieged the city for thirteen years in an attempt to overpower it. In response to the pressure of this siege from the Babylonians, the people basically lost their landside assets, but moved what they could to an island about a half mile off the coast and continued to carry on commerce. They were still doing business when Alexander the Great came to see them.

THE PROPHECY:

The Prophet Ezekiel, writing between the years of 593-571 BC, announces that God is against Tyre because of the attitude they presented toward the trouble that Jerusalem was having. They were void of compassion in the time of Jerusalem's trouble and sought only to profit from their difficulties. In our day that attitude is clearly seen in that old cold phrase: "Business is Business". Several things are noted by this prophecy in regard to the consequences that were to come on the city and people of Tyre.

Ezekiel 26:1-3 In the eleventh year, on the first day of the month, the word of the LORD came to me: "Son of man, because Tyre has said of Jerusalem, 'Aha! The gate to the nations is broken, and its doors have swung open to me; now that she lies in

ruins I will prosper,' therefore this is what the Sovereign LORD says: I am against you, O Tyre, and I will bring many nations against you, like the sea casting up its waves.

These first three verses of Ezekiel 26 explain why God is angry with the city of Tyre and identifies the fact that he was going to bring many nations against them in waves. As a seafaring people they would understand the relentless pounding and wearing nature of wave action. The next three verses go on to explain the erosion of their assets that would take place in this ongoing wave after wave that was to be brought against them. In the end they will finally understand the Sovereignty of the Lord.

Ezekiel 26:4-6 They will destroy the walls of Tyre and pull down her towers; I will scrape away her rubble and make her a bare rock. Out in the sea she will become a place to spread fishnets, for I have spoken, declares the Sovereign LORD. She will become plunder for the nations, and her settlements on the mainland will be ravaged by the sword. Then they will know that I am the LORD.

Verses 7-14 of that same chapter identify, for the reader, that the first wave to be brought against them would come from the north in the form of Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon. And that these waves of nations would continue until Tyre was reduced to rubble. The scope and certainty of the prophecy against Tyre was absolute. No more city--no more people: only a bare rock to remind all who see or read about these things that the Lord is Sovereign.

Ezekiel 26: 7-14"For this is what the Sovereign LORD says: From the north I am going to bring against Tyre Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, king of kings, with horses and chariots, with horsemen and a great army. He will ravage your settlements on the mainland with the sword; he will set up siege works against you, build a ramp up to your walls and raise his shields against you. He will direct the blows of his battering rams against your walls and demolish your towers with his weapons. His horses will be so many that they will cover you with dust. Your walls will tremble at the noise of the war horses, wagons and chariots when he enters your gates as men enter a city whose walls have been broken through. The hoofs of his horses will trample all your streets; he will kill your people with the sword, and your strong

pillars will fall to the ground. They will plunder your wealth and loot your merchandise; they will break down your walls and demolish your fine houses and throw your stones, timber and rubble into the sea. I will put an end to your noisy songs, and the music of your harps will be heard no more. I will make you a bare rock, and you will become a place to spread fishnets. You will never be rebuilt, for I the LORD have spoken, declares the Sovereign LORD.

PROPHECY FULFILLED: 587-332 BC

The fulfillment of this prophecy started almost at once. Josephus, and other historians, report that the Babylon Empire began a siege of the city of Tyre in the year 587 BC and continued to press the pounding of the landside of the city for a period of thirteen years. The war against this fortified coastal port went on so long that many of the Babylonians went bald from wearing their helmets for such an extended period of time. (Isn't it interesting that trivia about bald soldiers would survive all these thousands of years.) The relentless pounding by the Babylonians finally, like waves of the sea, resulted in the capture and destruction of that part of the city that was on the coast. However, over these thirteen years of siege, the people of Tyre removed what they could from the city and carried it to safety on an island that was about a half mile off the coast: out of reach of the War worn Babylonians. Much of their great wealth and houses had to be abandoned because of the relentless battering that the Babylonians brought against them over the years. However, they continued their sea trade from their island fortification.

But now we recall that the prophecy called for waves of nations, and complete destruction: even down to bare rock on which fishermen would dry their nets. Long after Ezekiel had passed from the land of the living we continue to observe that Tyre has survived. At this point we see them living in relative safety on their island. The landside part of the city was reduced to rubble, but it was not scraped down to the bed rock as was called for. Be patient, God has another Nation to bring, like a wave, against this great city of commerce and cruelty. The timing is always in harmony with God's purpose for the welfare of humanity. "Justice and mercy are the foundation of His Throne".

In the spring of the year 334, Alexander the Great entered Asia with swiftness and power, just as Daniel the Prophet said he would. (We will talk more fully about

this man and the prophecies that concern him at a later time.) He brought with him a small, but well trained army of 35,000 troops with which he fully expected to defeat the Persian army of 600,000 seasoned warriors, and he was successful in doing just that. Then he moved south along the east side of the Mediterranean coast. Stopping first at Gordium and then moving on to Trye. He was aware that the Babylonians had spent thirteen years trying to get this work done but only managed to get half the job finished. Alexander, who was a brilliant tactician, observed all the rubble that had been accumulated as a result of the destruction of the landside part of the city. He saw in all this, a Gordian solution to the problem. This rubble was an asset. He began a seven month project of building a causeway out to that island by pushing that rubble into the sea. Alexander, and his relatively small band of men, managed to accomplish, in seven months, what the great Babylonian Empire could not do in a thirteen year siege. He scraped the rubble down to the bed rock: that same rock on which fisherman still dry their nets today: Just as the Prophet Ezekiel said would happen more than 250 years earlier.

4. ALEXANDER THE GREAT

THE MAN:

Philip, the king of Macedonia, was a powerful and creative military leader of his time. He had developed the phalanx, a formation of sixteen men deep with the first five ranks having pikes long enough to reach beyond the first rank. This formation of men and weapons brought a five to one advantage to the point of engagement. It would prove to be a great asset in warfare tactics of that time. However important this contribution might have been, it was totally eclipsed by the individual who first put it into action. He was King Philip's son Alexander, who would come to be known as Alexander the Great.

Philip had plans to invade Asia and make use of this innovative formation, however things did not work out the way he expected. In the year 336 BC he was assassinated while attending a festival in honor of his daughter's wedding. Consequently, his son Alexander became king in his place at the age of twenty. In spite of his youth, Alexander was extremely well prepared for this assignment in life. He was a natural leader and motivator of men, a skilled horseman, and intellectually gifted. All of which would play an important roll in his short but famous life.

As a youth, his father had secured for him a personal tutor by the name of

Aristotle, who had himself been a student of Plato. These are, as you no doubt recognize, the most famous Greek teachers and philosophers of all time. In a manner of speaking, his father had also given him another gift. A large powerful, but unruly headstrong horse. Philip was about to have the horse sold or destroyed because no one was able to ride or train him. Alexander asked his father if he could have the horse if he could ride him. The King agreed. Alexander and this horse with the bad temper and “ugly” face, became inseparable. He named him Bucephalus, which means, “bull headed”, or “ugly face”: He probably had what is commonly called a Roman Nose. Horses with this facial characteristic often have a powerful self will. The horse proved to be such a great asset in battle situations that Alexander actually named a city in his honor.

Alexander spent the next two years putting things in order in his own kingdom and continuing the planed invasion of Asia that his father had been working on when he was killed. For Alexander, a key motivation for this war was to export Greek ideas and culture which he had learned from Aristotle. The thought process of reason, and the Greek language that he would bring to the rest of the world would have a greater impact on the future than he could have possibly imagined at the time. The New Testament Scriptures, more than 300 years later, would be written in Alexander’s language. The noted historian Josephus says that Alexander attributes the timing of the invasion to a dream in which he was told, by people wearing garments the likes of which he had never seen, to take his army and go at once and that his victory was assured.

In obedient response to that dream: he took his army of 35,000 well trained men, along with his horse Bucephalus, and swiftly invaded Asia. He came with the full expectation of overpowering the Persian army of 600,000 seasoned troops. With the use of his father’s phalanx formation and his own innovative idea of mounted archers, he was able, through the combination of speed and intense fire power, to win the victory at Issus. However, Darius III escaped and returned to Susa to gather another army. Alexander did manage to capture Darius’s wife, children, and mother.

Alexander moved south along the eastern shore of the Mediterranean Sea to the city Gordium and he entered the Temple of Zeus where he was shown a complex knot which had been tied by Gordius the king of Phrygia. It was said that whoever could

untie this knot would be the next king of all Asia. Alexander paused for a moment, then drew his sword and cut the knot in half, thus the phrase: “a Gordian solution” was born to express the idea of a swift and decisive action that cuts to the heart of the matter. Swift and decisive are very appropriate descriptions of Alexander’s military tactics.

From here he moved south to Tyre and after a seven month siege he overpowered and destroyed that fortified city. Seven months may seem like a long time until you realize that the Babylonian Army had this same city under siege for thirteen years and was never able to completely overcome them. (More details of this engagement will be presented in the next two sections of prophecies and prophecy fulfilled). After a brief visit in Jerusalem, he goes farther south into Egypt and is greeted as a great liberator. He establishes the great city of Alexandria which would come to have a large Jewish population. Sometime later, around 250 BC, the Septuagint translation of the Old Testament into Greek would become part of the world famous library at Alexandria. Acts 18:24-28 identifies Alexandria as the city which Apollis had come from.

Alexander now goes back up into Persia, (present day Iraq), and defeats Darius III once again. Darius had managed to field another huge army and engaged Alexander near the ruins of that ancient city of Nineveh. Once again Darius was defeated by Alexander and his relatively small band of soldiers. Alexander pressed the borders of his new Empire farther and farther to the east until he reached India. Finally he returned to the city of Babylon with great plans to restore that world famous capital city to its former glory. Alexander would not win this one, for God, through Isaiah’s prophecy, had very different plans for the city of Babylon. In the year 323 BC, at the age of 33, a fever of unknown origin suddenly took the life of Alexander. His body was placed in a gold coffin and carried to Egypt. Within the space of fifteen years, all of his family had been systematically killed. Babylon was not to be restored!

THE PROPHECY:

Just about everybody who has any interest in world history knows about Alexander the Great, but very few realize that he was the subject of several Biblical prophecies. Daniel the Prophet, who lived several hundred years before Alexander,

wrote in his book of a dream that King Nebuchadnezzar had concerning the kingdoms that would be established after his Babylonian Empire. The dream and the interpretation of that dream are the subject of chapter two of Daniel's prophecy. The first kingdom, the Babylonians, are characterized as gold: The next would be the Medes and Persians who are presented as silver; The third is the Greek Empire founded by Alexander and it is identified as bronze; the fourth is the Roman Empire which is of iron and clay. During that fourth kingdom (the Roman Empire) a permanent Kingdom, not made by human hands would be established and it would endure forever.

Daniel 2: 44-46 "In the time of those kings, the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed, nor will it be left to another people. It will crush all those kingdoms and bring them to an end, but it will itself endure forever. This is the meaning of the vision of the rock cut out of a mountain, but not by human hands--a rock that broke the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver and the gold to pieces. "The great God has shown the king what will take place in the future. The dream is true and the interpretation is trustworthy."

In 552 BC, during the third year of King Belshazzar's reign, Daniel had a vision concerning Alexander and the Empire that he would establish several hundred years in the future. Alexander is pictured as goat with a single huge horn, coming from the west with such speed that he appeared not even to touch the ground. In Daniel's interpretation he says the shaggy goat is the king of Greece, (Alexander), and the large horn between his eyes is specifically identified as the first king of the Greek Empire, which Alexander was.

Daniel 8:5-8 As I was thinking about this, suddenly a goat with a prominent horn between his eyes came from the west, crossing the whole earth without touching the ground. He came toward the two-horned ram I had seen standing beside the canal and charged at him in great rage. I saw him attack the ram furiously, striking the ram and shattering his two horns. The ram was powerless to stand against him; the goat knocked him to the ground and trampled on him, and none could rescue the ram from his power. The goat became very great, but at the height of his power his large horn was broken off, and in its place four prominent horns grew up toward the four winds of heaven.

Daniel 8:20-22 The two-horned ram that you saw represents the kings of Media and Persia. The shaggy goat is the king of Greece, and the large horn between his eyes is the first king. The four horns that replaced the one that was broken off represent four kingdoms that will emerge from his nation but will not have the same power.

THE PROPHECY FULFILLED:

We have already spoken of the swift and sudden destruction that Alexander brought on the Empire of the Medes and Persians under the rule of Darius III. This happened just as the prophecy had declared. And we noted the sudden death of Alexander “at the height of his power”. But the prophecy in the Book of Daniel also says that when that great horn was broken, four horns would come up and would “represent four kingdoms that will emerge from his nation but will not have the same power”. That is precisely what happened as the Empire was divided among his four generals.

Several hundred years before Alexander, the Prophet Isaiah had spoken of the fate that awaited the great city of Babylon. Alexander’s grandiose plan to rebuild and restore to glory this famous city was not in harmony with God’s intentions and it would not come to pass. When Alexander set his mind to this task his life was suddenly ended. What awaited this formerly great city of Babylon has already been discussed.

Isaiah 13:19-22 Babylon, the jewel of kingdoms, the glory of the Babylonians' pride, will be overthrown by God like Sodom and Gomorrah. She will never be inhabited or lived in through all generations; no Arab will pitch his tent there, no shepherd will rest his flocks there. But desert creatures will lie there, jackals will fill her houses; there the owls will dwell, and there the wild goats will leap about. Hyenas will howl in her strongholds, jackals in her luxurious palaces. Her time is at hand, and her days will not be prolonged.

As noted before; when Alexander the Great came to the fortified city of Tyre on the eastern side of the Mediterranean he found that the population had all moved out to the island about a half mile off the coast. All that was left on the landside was rubble.

This pile of rocks and timber was the result of wave after wave of nations being brought against them just as the Prophet Ezekiel said it would. They were defiant, believing that if they could successfully resist the Babylonians for thirteen years they could certainly hold out against this small band of Greeks. To their great sorrow, Alexander was to be the final wave to be brought against the people of Tyre. He gathered the rubble from the destruction of the city and began a seven month project of building a causeway to the island. In the process of constructing this road he scraped the old city down to the bed rock: just as the Prophet Ezekiel said.

Ezekiel 26:4-5 They will destroy the walls of Tyre and pull down her towers; I will scrape away her rubble and make her a bare rock. Out in the sea she will become a place to spread fishnets, for I have spoken, declares the Sovereign LORD. She will become plunder for the nations,

Ezekiel 26:12-14 They will plunder your wealth and loot your merchandise; they will break down your walls and demolish your fine houses and throw your stones, timber and rubble into the sea. I will put an end to your noisy songs, and the music of your harps will be heard no more. I will make you a bare rock, and you will become a place to spread fishnets. You will never be rebuilt, for I the LORD have spoken, declares the Sovereign LORD.

He overpowered the fortifications of the island, killed 8,000 and sold the rest of the population (30,000) into slavery.

The historian Josephus (Book XI, Chapter VIII) gives us an account of what Alexander was doing while his troops were “road building”. During the seven month siege of Tyre, Alexander sent messengers to Jerusalem with a command that they should send men and supplies to help expedite this project. The High Priest replied that he had given an oath to Darius III and could not break that oath as long as Darius was still alive. Needless to say: Alexander was not pleased with this response and sent word back that he would soon come and show them who they should keep oaths to. When Jaddua, the High Priest, heard that Alexander was very angry and that he was on his way to Jerusalem, he was afraid, and didn’t know how he was going to meet this danger to himself and the city of Jerusalem.

The High Priest called the people together to make sacrifices and request the protection of God. After that: the High Priest reported that he had received instructions in a dream as to what they should do-- “That he should take courage, and adorn the city, and open the gates; that the rest should appear in white garments, but that he and the priests should meet the king in the habits proper to their order, without dread of any consequences, which the providence of God would prevent”.

Alexander gathered his troops and moved toward Jerusalem with full intent to completely destroy the city and all its inhabitants, just as he had done to Tyre when they greeted him with a similar attitude. As soon as the High Priest Jaddua was informed of the approach of Alexander he went out of the city in procession with the priests and the multitude of people, all dressed as God had instructed through that dream. When Alexander saw the procession and the garments of the priests, he halted his troops. And, much to the concern of his generals, Alexander approached the High Priest and his assembly all alone. The High Priest was wearing all the uniform of his office, which included the golden plate on which the name of God was engraved. Alexander approached, by himself, and did reverence to that Name and saluted the High Priest. The entire procession, with one voice, saluted Alexander and completely surrounded him. His men thought he must have lost his mind to act in such a way.

Of all his men, only Parmineo came up to him to inquire how all this came about and to ask why he should adore the High Priest of the Jews. Alexander’s reply was that he did not adore the High Priest but the God who gave him that office. And he went on to explain that he had seen that very person and uniform in a dream when he was in Macedonia, and in that dream he was told to make no delay, but to boldly cross the sea and he would be given dominion over the Persians. Seeing this person, in this uniform, and remembering that dream and the exhortations that I was given; I believe that this army is under Divine conduct and victory over Darius III is certain.

After giving his right hand to the High Priest, he entered the city in the company of all the other priests. When they went up to the Temple, he offered sacrifices, in accord with the instructions of Jaddua the High Priest. Alexander was pleased when the Book of Daniel was shown to him, wherein Daniel declared that one of the Greeks should destroy the Empire of the Persians. He understood that he was the person intended by this prophecy. The next day he inquired what favors they would ask of

him. The High Priest asked if they might be free to enjoy the laws of their forefathers and might pay no tribute on the seventh year. They also requested the same privileges for the Jews who were living in Babylon and Media. Alexander granted all that they requested.

Consider once again what the Prophet Daniel said about this man they came to call Alexander the Great. Hundreds of years before Alexander even drew his first breath, Daniel told of his swiftness, great power, conquests, and even of his early death. Daniel even spoke with total accuracy concerning the division of his empire.

Daniel 8:5-8 As I was thinking about this, suddenly a goat with a prominent horn between his eyes came from the west, crossing the whole earth without touching the ground. He came toward the two-horned ram I had seen standing beside the canal and charged at him in great rage. I saw him attack the ram furiously, striking the ram and shattering his two horns. The ram was powerless to stand against him; the goat knocked him to the ground and trampled on him, and none could rescue the ram from his power. The goat became very great, but at the height of his power his large horn was broken off, and in its place four prominent horns grew up toward the four winds of heaven.

Daniel 8:19-22 He said: "I am going to tell you what will happen later in the time of wrath, because the vision concerns the appointed time of the end. The two-horned ram that you saw represents the kings of Media and Persia. The shaggy goat is the king of Greece, and the large horn between his eyes is the first king. The four horns that replaced the one that was broken off represent four kingdoms that will emerge from his nation but will not have the same power.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL PROOFS

The people, the times, the places, and the events that are recorded in the Scriptures are real and accurate. The value of archaeology is that it is one of those tools, or witnesses, that testify to the validity of the Biblical accounts. Archaeological proofs are certainly very interesting, like the pre-scientific proofs that we looked at earlier, but they are secondary to that which is established by prophecy. The superior place of prophecy in the process of claims and proofs has already been discussed. The scriptures are not intended to be a science, or archaeology text book. However, when a people, like the Hittites, are identified in the scriptures, you can know with certainty that they were a real people. Even when noted historians, as well as others who would like to detract from the validity of the Scriptures, say that the Hittites must be a people of myth because they could find no other record of their existence outside Biblical references. The same can be said about other great cities and empires. In spite of Scripture and early secular histories concerning the great city of Nineveh; many individuals ridiculed the existence of that City and the Assyrian Empire because they could not locate it. Other men, who believed the Scriptures, took a different slat on things and used the Biblical accounts as a tool to help them locate and identify many places and peoples from ancient times. The whole area of study called Archeology is a relatively new field of investigation, getting its primary start in the middle of the 1800's.

1. A LOST PEOPLE AND A LOST CITY:

Long ago, the Hittite people passed from the scene of the living and now they only exist as history. For a while they were a forgotten people, just like the city of Nineveh, except for Biblical references. And soon Bible critics began to ridicule the scriptures for presenting the Hittites as a real nation of people, or Nineveh as a real capital city of a real Assyrian Empire. The accusation was loudly proclaimed that they were no more than a myth....simply made up by the writers of the Scriptures. The great city of Nineveh, like the Hittites people, were lost to that world.

Archaeology is a tool, or witness, that serves to confirm the claims made by the scriptures. For some reason, archeologist seem to dig up interesting proofs of the validity of Scripture at the very height of criticism of the Bible.

Around the year 1811; an agent of the East India Company, Claude James Rich, while living in Baghdad, developed an interest in some inscribed bricks that a friend brought in from the site of the ancient city of Babylon. Mr. Rich spent a week or two charting the mounds of the city and digging up a few tablets which he took back to Baghdad with him. About the year 1820 he also visited the city of Mosul and spent a good four months sketching the mounds that he could see just across the Tigris River. He had reason to believe that what he had discovered was the lost city of Nineveh, the capital of the great Assyrian Empire. The second largest mound, (which covers about 40 acres and nearly 100 feet high), was called, by the local population, “Yunas” Mound, which means **Jonah**. They said it contained the tomb of Jonah. We know that the Prophet Jonah was sent by God, about 780 BC, to warn the city of Nineveh about her cruel ways. This was a clue that would help unravel the mystery. He collected a great quantity of tablets and inscriptions, but no one was able to read them because the language had gone out of use many years ago.

Jonah 1:1-2 The word of the LORD came to Jonah son of Amittai: "Go to the great city of Nineveh and preach against it, because its wickedness has come up before me."

In 1835, Sir Henry Rawlinson, a British officer saw a huge isolated rock rising about 1700 feet out of the plain; it was located around 200 miles north east of Babylon. On the face of this rock,(The Behistun Rock), 400 feet above the road was a carving. He investigated and found it to be an inscription made in 516 BC by order of Darius, the king of Persia. The lengthy account was given in three languages; Persian, Elamite, and Babylonian. It took about 18 years to collect and decipher all the information. Using the known Persian language as a key, they were able to unlock the mysteries of those ancient languages and , at last, be able to read all those tablets and engravings that were being unearthed in Nineveh and Babylon.

Sir Layard, a famous English archaeologist, uncovered the palaces of five of the Assyrian Kings while digging in the ruins of Nineveh. One of those Kings, Assurbanipal, had a library that contained about 100,000 books. It seems that this King of the so called “mythical” city of Nineveh, had a great interest in archaeology and history. The material he had preserved reached back in human history about 2000

years before his own time. He had researched and preserved records going all the way back to include the times of Abraham. The discovery of this library, in a city that the critics said did not exist, is considered to be the single greatest archaeological discovery of all time. Trust and discover!

With this newly acquired ability to translate those ancient records came a world of information about the Hittites. Those, so called, mythical people, it turns out, were a very real and active group indeed; carrying on business and political agreements with the Assyrians and other people of their time in history. Along with volumes of other day to day commercial records are detailed political treaties for a period of time from 1480 to 1300 BC. Thanks to archaeology, we now know a great deal about the life and times of a people who the critics thought were a myth.

This great library, belonging to King Assur-banipal, was found in the palace of Sennacherib, who ruled that Assyrian Empire from 705-681 BC. This palace was uncovered by Layard, Rassam, and Rawlinson in 1852-54. As an Assyrian king, from the great city of Nineveh, this man would have been considered a myth by those same critics. However, thanks to the uncovering of his own personal records, we have his account of the war that he was engaged in with King Hezekiah. From his account we can see that political spin is not a new art form. He tells the truth, but not the whole truth. Sennacherib tells the story from his perspective..."I shut him up like a caged bird within his royal capital, Jerusalem". This was certainly true; however, he does leave out the part about how he was unable to take the city of Jerusalem, or even shoot a single arrow against it. He does not speak of the fact that the war was brought to a sudden end with the loss of 185,000 of his troops in one night.

II Kings 19: 32-36 "Therefore this is what the LORD says concerning the king of Assyria: "He will not enter this city or shoot an arrow here. He will not come before it with shield or build a siege ramp against it. By the way that he came he will return; he will not enter this city, declares the LORD. I will defend this city and save it, for my sake and for the sake of David my servant." That night the angel of the LORD went out and put to death a hundred and eighty-five thousand men in the Assyrian camp. When the people got up the next morning--there were all the dead bodies! So Sennacherib king of Assyria broke camp and withdrew. He returned to Nineveh and stayed there.

Archaeology is another witness to the fact that these are real people, real events, and real times that are recorded in the Scriptures for us.

From 1922-34, under the leadership of the University Museum of Pennsylvania and the British Museum, an extensive archeological excavation of the city of Ur took place. One of the interesting projects was the uncovering of a residential area of the city from the time of Abraham. This involved homes, shops, schools and that sort of thing. What they found were thousands of tablets, business documents, and receipts; all of which make it clear that reading and writing were relatively common place in those ancient times, just as they are today. In one school room they uncovered 150 school exercise tablets with math, medical, and historical texts along with tablets teaching several different languages. This certainly dissolves the theory which some critics put forward that writing was very rare in those early times. It was on the basis of this misconception that some critics said that Moses, who came even later in history, could not have written the material that the scriptures ascribe to him. As a highly educated individual in the house of the Pharaoh of Egypt, he was certainly able to write down the things that God told him to. God did not tell him to trust these things to oral traditionsX he told him to **write** them down. In the New Testament, Steven even comments about the education and communication skills of Moses. *Moses was educated in all the wisdom of the Egyptians and was powerful in speech and action.*

God said write:

Exodus 17:14. Then the LORD said to Moses, "Write this on a scroll as something to be remembered and make sure that Joshua hears it, because I will completely blot out the memory of Amalek from under heaven."

Moses wrote:

Exodus 24:3-4 When Moses went and told the people all the LORD's words and laws, they responded with one voice, "Everything the LORD has said we will do." Moses then wrote down everything the LORD had said. He got up early the next morning and built an altar at the foot of the mountain and set up twelve stone pillars representing the twelve tribes of Israel.

2. A FAMINE IN EGYPT DURING JOSEPH'S TIME:

We want to focus on one particular facet of the Biblical story of Joseph and the time he spent in Egypt. The Egyptian Pharaoh had experienced a series of troubling dreams for which he sought an explanation. None of his wise men were able to interpret the dreams. At that time, the chief cupbearer remembered that a young Hebrew, by the name of Joseph, had correctly interpreted the dreams that he and the former chief baker had experienced while they were in prison. On the basis of this information, Pharaoh sent to the prison for this thirty year old Hebrew named Joseph, and this is what he said to him as recorded in (Genesis 41:15-16). *Pharaoh said to Joseph, "I had a dream, and no one can interpret it. But I have heard it said of you that when you hear a dream you can interpret it." "I cannot do it," Joseph replied to Pharaoh, "but God will give Pharaoh the answer he desires."* In this answer given by Joseph we are exposed to his humble character as he takes no personal credit for this ability to interpret dreams, but rightly identifies God as the source of this knowledge.

Pharaoh goes on to recount the dreams that he had experienced and Joseph explains them along with the fact that God has revealed to Pharaoh what he is about to do. He also tells him that the reason he experienced the dream in two different forms was to understand that the matter has been firmly decided by God, and that God will do it soon. Joseph goes on boldly to explain to Pharaoh what he should do with this information that has so graciously been given to him by God.

Genesis 41:17-31 Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, "In my dream I was standing on the bank of the Nile, when out of the river there came up seven cows, fat and sleek, and they grazed among the reeds. After them, seven other cows came up--scrawny and very ugly and lean. I had never seen such ugly cows in all the land of Egypt. The lean, ugly cows ate up the seven fat cows that came up first. But even after they ate them, no one could tell that they had done so; they looked just as ugly as before. Then I woke up. "In my dreams I also saw seven heads of grain, full and good, growing on a single stalk. After them, seven other heads sprouted--withered and thin and scorched by the east wind. The thin heads of grain swallowed up the seven good heads. I told this to the magicians, but none could explain it to me."

Then Joseph said to Pharaoh, "The dreams of Pharaoh are one and the same. God has revealed to Pharaoh what he is about to do. The seven good cows are seven

years, and the seven good heads of grain are seven years; it is one and the same dream. The seven lean, ugly cows that came up afterward are seven years, and so are the seven worthless heads of grain scorched by the east wind: They are seven years of famine. "It is just as I said to Pharaoh: God has shown Pharaoh what he is about to do. Seven years of great abundance are coming throughout the land of Egypt, but seven years of famine will follow them. Then all the abundance in Egypt will be forgotten, and the famine will ravage the land. The abundance in the land will not be remembered, because the famine that follows it will be so severe.

The dreams, the interpretation of those dreams, the prophecy concerning exactly what was coming in the stream of time are all wonderful subjects and certainly worthy of examination. But my focus is on one interesting fact, and that is that famines are a very rare occasion in Egypt. In fact when severe famines occurred in that area of the world, other groups of people would migrate to Egypt as a place of refuge from such conditions. A famine of many years would be an extreme rarity and would likely be worthy of recording in the history of a nation, and that is precisely what took place in strange sort of way.

Brugsch, in his book, "Egypt under the Pharaohs", tells of an inscription on the tomb of a man named Baba, a governor of the city of El-Kab, south of Thebes, erected in the 17th Dynasty, which is contemporary with the 16th Dynasty in the north, under which Joseph ruled. The inscription indicated that he did for that city what Joseph did for all of Egypt. This was for Baba, such a significant achievement in his life that it was worth having it written on his tomb. The inscription is as follows: "I collected corn, as a friend of the harvest god. And when a famine arose, lasting many years, I distributed corn to the city each year of the famine."

Brugsch goes on to say: "Since famines in Egypt are of the very greatest rarity, and since Baba lived about the same time as Joseph, there remains but one fair inference: That the many year famine in the days of Baba are the seven years of famine under Joseph." The "Tomb Raiders" have brought us another interesting piece of archeological evidence.

3. BRICKS MADE OF STRAW:

The archaeologist Navill, in 1883, and Kyle in 1908, confirmed that through an

examination of the brick used at Pithon, in Egypt; it was determined that the lower course of brick were filled with good chopped straw; the middle course with less straw, and that was primarily stubble pulled up by the root; and the upper course of brick was of pure clay, having no straw whatever. This is another brick in the great wall of archeological confirmation of the Biblical accounts of the way things were, and how and why they happened that way.

Exodus 5:4-19 But the king of Egypt said, "Moses and Aaron, why are you taking the people away from their labor? Get back to your work!" Then Pharaoh said, "Look, the people of the land are now numerous, and you are stopping them from working." That same day Pharaoh gave this order to the slave drivers and foremen in charge of the people: "You are no longer to supply the people with straw for making bricks; let them go and gather their own straw. But require them to make the same number of bricks as before; don't reduce the quota. They are lazy; that is why they are crying out, 'Let us go and sacrifice to our God.' Make the work harder for the men so that they keep working and pay no attention to lies." Then the slave drivers and the foremen went out and said to the people, "This is what Pharaoh says: 'I will not give you any more straw. Go and get your own straw wherever you can find it, but your work will not be reduced at all.'" So the people scattered all over Egypt to gather stubble to use for straw. The slave drivers kept pressing them, saying, "Complete the work required of you for each day, just as when you had straw." The Israelite foremen appointed by Pharaoh's slave drivers were beaten and were asked, "Why didn't you meet your quota of bricks yesterday or today, as before?" Then the Israelite foremen went and appealed to Pharaoh: "Why have you treated your servants this way? Your servants are given no straw, yet we are told, 'Make bricks!' Your servants are being beaten, but the fault is with your own people." Pharaoh said, "Lazy, that's what you are--lazy! That is why you keep saying, 'Let us go and sacrifice to the LORD.' Now get to work. You will not be given any straw, yet you must produce your full quota of bricks." The Israelite foremen realized they were in trouble when they were told, "You are not to reduce the number of bricks required of you for each day."

4. WALLS OF JERICHO:

After forty years in the wilderness and the death of Moses, God speaks to Joshua concerning the help that He would give the people as they enter the promised land. Their first great conflict would be the taking of the walled city of Jericho. He explains

to them just exactly how to go about this, as well as what they are to do after the overthrow of the city. They are warned that all that is in the city is to be devoted to the Lord and that Rahab and those in her house are to be spared.

Joshua 6:1-5 Now Jericho was tightly shut up because of the Israelites. No one went out and no one came in. Then the LORD said to Joshua, "See, I have delivered Jericho into your hands, along with its king and its fighting men. March around the city once with all the armed men. Do this for six days. Have seven priests carry trumpets of rams' horns in front of the ark. On the seventh day, march around the city seven times, with the priests blowing the trumpets. When you hear them sound a long blast on the trumpets, have all the people give a loud shout; then the wall of the city will collapse and the people will go up, every man straight in."

Joshua 6:17-18 The city and all that is in it are to be devoted to the LORD. Only Rahab the prostitute and all who are with her in her house shall be spared, because she hid the spies we sent. But keep away from the devoted things, so that you will not bring about your own destruction by taking any of them. Otherwise you will make the camp of Israel liable to destruction and bring trouble on it. All the silver and gold and the articles of bronze and iron are sacred to the LORD and must go into his treasury."

Dr. John Garstang excavated the ruins of Jericho from 1929-36. He found pottery and other evidences that the city had been destroyed about 1400 BC. This coincides with the Biblical timing of Joshua. The fact that the walls collapsed, or fell down flat, so that every man could walk straight in, was also confirmed by Garstang. He says that the wall was double, two walls being fifteen feet apart; the outer wall being six feet thick, and the inner wall about twelve feet thick, and both thirty feet high. He says that the wall was not particularly well built, having a foundation of four inch thick brick of one to two feet long and laid in mud mortar. The walls were linked together by houses built across the top. This finding also confirms the account that Joshua gave us concerning Rahab's house as it was described in Chapter 2:15. *So she let them down by a rope through the window, for the house she lived in was part of the city wall.*

The archeological study found that the walls fell outward and down the hill,

dragging the inner wall and the houses with it, the streak of bricks gradually getting thinner as you move farther down the slope. The foundation walls of the palace, four courses of stone high, remained in place but tilted outward also. Dr. Garstang added that there are indications that the walls could have been shaken down by the force of an earthquake.

He also found great layers of charcoal, ashes, and wall ruins reddened by fire. The outer wall suffered the most. Houses along side the wall were burnt to the ground. The stratum generally was covered with a deep layer of black burnt debris, under which there were pockets of white ash overlaid with a layer of fallen reddish brick. This finding is in harmony with chapter 6:24: *Then they burned the whole city and everything in it, but they put the silver and gold and the articles of bronze and iron into the treasury of the LORD's house.*

Under the ashes of the fallen walls, in the ruins of the store rooms, an abundance of food stuffs, wheat, barley, dates, lentils; all turned to charcoal by the great heat. Under normal circumstances these things would have been taken by the conquering army. This is evidence that they refrained from taking anything for themselves just as they were warned. *Joshua 6:17 The city and all that is in it are to be devoted to the LORD.*

THE INESCAPABLE CONCLUSION OF BASIC LAWS OF SCIENCE AND REASON

WHAT SHALL WE DO?

The question now is: what shall we do with what we have learned through the process of **early personal experiences**, the application of the observable **fundamental scientific laws**, the **principle of cause and effect**, and the basic processes of reason? Knowledge only becomes wisdom when it is rightly put into practice; or acted upon. The very function of knowledge is to give direction of choices in life. One of the basic principles that we learned, from early experience, is that life is quantitative and consequently time is of the essence. The old expression is: “time and tide wait for no man”. Someone once said:”There is a tide in the affairs of men, when taken on the flood, leads on to victory”.

In this voyage of life, some men just lay at anchor and read about the places they wish to go. Their minds are filled with knowledge. They make extensive plans, searching the charts and reading many books. But they fail to act on that store of knowledge and consequently the tide of time overtakes them and all those mighty plans never come to fruition. They have spent an entire precious life and have made no progress or contribution toward any goal. Wasted time and wasted life. Others make no plans at all. They act with great zeal, but they are void of knowledge; they simply pull up anchor and let the winds, tides, and currents drift and toss them aimlessly about. There are many rocks and reefs waiting for such careless mariners of life. Their voyage is no more than a shipwreck in search of disaster. When time has ebbed away they find that their life was as senseless as a rubber duck that had been cast adrift on a storm tossed sea. Knowledge without zeal is useless.....zeal without knowledge is fatal. The very purpose of intimidation is to cause one to act without knowledge.

Most of us find ourselves somewhere between these extremes. We have acquired some knowledge through the process of attitudes, actions, and consequences; but not near enough to equip us to make all the wise choices needed in life. This process is time consuming and time is in limited supply. The “hard knocks” of consequences can sometimes be devastating. Cruising without a chart is dangerous business. When our own foolish choices bring hard consequences we often blame God. We sometimes fail to remember that the freedom to choose brings with it the

responsibility of consequences. Listening and learning accelerates the accumulation of knowledge and is not nearly as painful or slow as learning by the “school of hard knocks”. The learning process only takes place when we recognize need beyond that which we can supply. The condition of humility is a prerequisite motivation in the process of learning. When we think we know everything it becomes impossible for us to learn anything.

Proverbs 19:2-3 It is not good to have zeal without knowledge, nor to be hasty and miss the way. A man's own folly ruins his life, yet his heart rages against the LORD.

The first, and primary thing, that we have learned through life and time is that knowledge is vital in our quest to “love life and see good days”. As we examined the first principles of life we found that we came into this world equipped to succeed in this quest by a clear understanding that we are dependent on forces outside ourselves, and that need is met in infancy and childhood, by an organization called family. In this relationship we are taught the basics of cause and effect, discipline, communication, and the bond of love. This organization is designed to shepherd and teach us under the shelter of civil authority, and bring us gently into the fold of God’s family.

In order to equip ourselves to make wise choices, we have examined the questions of where we came from, the condition we are in now, and the direction we want to take in order to “love life and see good days”. We examined the power, intellect, and attitude of that force which brought the universe, and ourselves, into being. We researched Biblical claims and proofs concerning the identity of the creative force of the universe, of which we are a part.

We have demonstrated the existence, character, and identity of God through that which he has created. He has communicated, through his word and actions, his love and desire for the well being of humanity. No one will arrive in that safe harbor by chance...only those who are **taught**, and have **listened** and **learned** will **come** to Him. The validity, compassion, and reliability of His word has been demonstrated through that age old process of claims and proofs.

Romans 1:20 For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities--his eternal

power and divine nature--have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse.

John 6:44-45. "No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him, and I will raise him up at the last day. It is written in the Prophets: 'They will all be taught by God.' Everyone who listens to the Father and learns from him comes to me.

There is an evident opportunity and responsibility to know the words of the God who cares about us, created all things, knows all things, has all power, is omnipresent, and the source of all Scripture. All the answers to man's quest to "love life and see good days" are to be found within the communication of God's word. God's own order in his creation has shepherded and brought us, by reason and humility, to that state of readiness and openness of mind to hear and learn. We have been given, by the grace of God, the answer book of life. Not just some of the answers, but all of the answers... "everything we need for life and godliness". God is the exclusive source of all that is good, consequently anything that we seek which can be defined as good must come exclusively from God. We need not search beyond his word for anything good.

II Peter 1:3-4. His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.

Colossians 2:2-4. My purpose is that they may be encouraged in heart and united in love, so that they may have the full riches of complete understanding, in order that they may know the mystery of God, namely, Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. I tell you this so that no one may deceive you by fine-sounding arguments.

James 1:16-18 Don't be deceived, my dear brothers. Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows. He chose to give us birth through the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of all he created.

CHAPTER VI. KNOWLEDGE

1. WARNINGS ABOUT KNOWLEDGE:

No progress toward any goal can be made without knowledge which it is a fundamental block in the foundation of faith. Ignorance is one of the most dangerous forces in the universe. What we don't know certainly can, and probably will, hurt us. Parents, while teaching their children, spend a good portion of time protecting them from dangers which the child has not yet attained a full understanding of. Don't talk to strangers, don't run with scissors, don't play in the street, don't touch the electric wall socket, and on and on it goes. Knowledge is not only about the facts but it is also about the reliability of the source from which we learned those facts. We may not understand the full ramifications of the instructions not to play in the street, but we obey those instructions because we trust the source based on past experience. Trust and obey is a sound approach to life both physically and spiritually. The more we know, the better equipped we are to make wise choices in life; and the more capable we are in avoiding the pitfalls of ignorance. Through knowledge we have greater access to the condition we seek: *"to love life and see good days"*.

Every day we are exposed to severe examples of the consequences of ignorance and pride. The magnitude of these consequences can rise all the way to death both physically and spiritually. Failure to pursue understanding will bring certain destruction and we will not even be able to reap the reward of learning from our mistakes, because we are still in the dark as to the cause and effect of the condition we find ourselves in. **There is no excuse for ignorance and there is no escape from its consequences.**

Hosea 4:6. my people are destroyed from lack of knowledge.

Isaiah 5:13-14. Therefore my people will go into exile for lack of understanding; their men of rank will die of hunger and their masses will be parched with thirst. Therefore the grave enlarges its appetite and opens its mouth without limit; into it will descend their nobles and masses with all their brawlers and revelers.

2. THE SOURCE OF KNOWLEDGE:

We have seen, and clearly understand, the necessity of knowledge in our quest to “*love life and see good days*”. To comprehend and fully appreciate the purpose of life we must find, and expeditiously access, this vital resource called knowledge. Because of the urgency, and limitations of time, it is important to know both where to search and where not to waste our precious time. We have already determined from the reliable resource of Scripture that: *His divine power has given us **everything** we need for life and godliness through our **knowledge** of him who called us by his own glory and goodness.* Consequently, we understand that the knowledge we seek comes from God and not from man. This is further established by the words of the Prophet Jeremiah: 10:23 *I know, O LORD, that a man's life is not his own; it is not for man to direct his steps.* If it is not in man to direct his own steps, we must look elsewhere for direction.

Chapters 38 and 39 of the book of Job present a conversation that God is having with Job to demonstrate that man is dependant on God for understanding and direction because we do not have experience, understanding, or power that is comparable to that of God. These principles are put to Job in a series of questions like the one noted below.

Job 38: 2-5 "Who is this that darkens my counsel with words without knowledge? Brace yourself like a man; I will question you, and you shall answer me. "Where were you when I laid the earth's foundation? Tell me, if you understand. Who marked off its dimensions? Surely you know! Who stretched a measuring line across it?"

Solomon, the wisest of men, identifies that knowledge begins with our attitude toward God. Our prerequisite first step toward attaining this vital resource of knowledge, by which the course of life can be profitably directed, is dependent on our respect for God as **God**.

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

3. THE REWARD OF KNOWLEDGE:

We have seen the disastrous consequences of failure to acquire knowledge before taking action. And we have discussed the source of this vital resource and now our focus is turned to consider the benefits of knowledge. The reward of knowledge is not only that it prevents stupid errors and terrible consequences, but that it generates great positive benefits to those who possess and employ it.

By knowledge we have access to the keys of life, both physical and spiritual: without it we are locked out and all that awaits is death and sorrow as we stumble about in darkness; without purpose or direction. Through knowledge we know where we came from, we understand our present condition, we know why we are here, and where we want to go, as well as how to get there. God's grace and peace are brought to mankind through the knowledge of God and of Jesus. Through that knowledge, by God's own design, we are supplied with everything we need for life and godliness. Not some things, but **everything** we need. There is no need, or purpose, to look outside of a knowledge of God and Christ to obtain grace and peace, or an understanding of life and godliness. God's word is absolutely sufficient to supply all that we need.

The profitability of the practice of godliness is not confined to the future life but is useful in this present world in which we now physically exist. The reward of a knowledge of God and Christ is profitable for this present life and the life to come.

II Peter 1:2-3 Grace and peace be yours in abundance through the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord. His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness.

I Timothy 4:7-9 Have nothing to do with godless myths and old wives' tales; rather, train yourself to be godly. For physical training is of some value, but godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come. This is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance

Knowledge gives another great gift; the comfort and peace of mind concerning the outcome of this world in which we presently live. The certainty of justice and

mercy. Through knowledge we have confidence in the future and we can look forward with great and positive expectations concerning the time when all things will be brought to judgement. Paul expressed that confidence in these words...*I know whom I have believed, and am convinced that he is able to guard what I have entrusted to him for that day.*

Peter spoke of the comfort and motivation that a knowledge of the judgment should bring to the believer in this fashion.

II Peter 3:10-14 But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare. Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming. That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat. But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness. So then, dear friends, since you are looking forward to this, make every effort to be found spotless, blameless and at peace with him.

Knowledge empowers right attitudes and actions, which we are assured by Scripture will result in certain and positive consequences. Without knowledge there is no real hope; it is a fundamental prerequisite to any meaningful life, both in the physical and spiritual realm. The pursuit of knowledge requires motivation, and a willingness to spend the time and to apply the mind. This level of motivation is bound up in understanding the negative consequences of failure, as well as the positive fruits of knowledge.

II Peter 1:10-11 Therefore, my brothers, be all the more eager to make your calling and election sure. For if you do these things, you will never fall, and you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

CHAPTER VII. TRUTH

In our quest to “love life and see good days” we have come to understand that all the answers are available through God’s Truth. And that a knowledge of God and his Word are critical to the attaining our desired goal. Truth is the positive objective of knowledge. In a first grade math class when the teacher asks for the answer to the problem: $2+2=$ ___; she is not in search of all the wrong answers but the only true and correct answer. When we are searching for lost keys, we are not nearly as concerned with where they are not as we are with where they truly are. In order to come to a clear understanding of how a certain event took place; our justice system calls on the witness to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. Once truth is defined it will clearly identify all other incompatible answers as error.

An accurate appraisal of an objective goes a long way toward accomplishing a goal. Consequently, we understand that we are not just in search of knowledge, but our objective is to obtain knowledge of the truth. Since understanding truth is our goal we must be able to define what it is that we are in search of. If we can not recognize truth we will not know when we have found it.

1. THE VALUE OF TRUTH:

Truth is supreme in value; whatever effort is required to attain a knowledge of the truth is worth the time and effort: we can never, under any circumstances, afford to sell or relinquish that treasure. Through our knowledge of the truth we are given the keys of this life and the life to come. Through our understanding of truth we are shown the way to break the bonds of sin and death. The knowledge of truth is the difference between life and death. It is a worthy objective of knowledge.

Romans 6:20-23 When you were slaves to sin, you were free from the control of righteousness. What benefit did you reap at that time from the things you are now ashamed of? Those things result in death! But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves to God, the benefit you reap leads to holiness, and the result is eternal life. For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

John 8:31-32 To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, "If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."

Proverbs 23:23 Buy the truth and do not sell it; get wisdom, discipline and understanding.

2. WHAT IS TRUTH ?

Some individuals think that the word “truth” is a nebulous term that defies definition and therefore can not be fully understood or defined. Something shrouded in a great and cloudy mystery and beyond the ability of an individual to comprehend. You may hear them say, in a high toned philosophical voice,.....What is truth? The truth is that there is nothing complex or difficult about this word over and above any other. Truth is no different from other words...it is defined by how it is used and its characteristics. Because of the surpassing value of truth we want to examine more closely the ways the term is used and the basic characteristics of the concept of that word truth.

A. Three basic uses of the term truth:

a. As a character trait:

“Barbara is a true friend”...meaning genuine and dependable..

b. As an absolute:

“The truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth”:

.... meaning pure and complete, not contaminated; as H₂O is defined as true or pure water.

c. Real... as opposed to copy, shadow, counterfeit ,etc.

In the Hebrew letter the law is identified as not being the true realities but only a type, or shadow, of that which was to come.

Hebrews 10:1-4 The law is only a shadow of the good things that are coming--not the realities themselves. For this reason it can never, by the same sacrifices repeated endlessly year after year, make perfect those who draw near to worship. If it could, would they not have stopped being offered? For the worshipers would have been cleansed once for all, and would no longer have felt guilty for their sins. But those sacrifices are an annual reminder of sins, because it is impossible for the blood of

bulls and goats to take away sins.

The scriptures use many types, or shadows, to lead us to the true realities that are revealed in Christ. Melchizedek is presented, in Hebrews chapter 7, as a shadow of the reality of the true King and Priesthood of Christ. We also see the lamb as a type of the true sacrifice of Jesus. The lawgiver Moses, as a type of Christ the true lawgiver. As Joshua leads the children of God into the promised land he is also seen to be a type, or shadow, of Jesus who is leading God's people into the true promised land of heaven. Now that the Light has arrived, the shadows have passed away.

Colossians 2:16-17 Therefore do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink, or with regard to a religious festival, a New Moon celebration or a Sabbath day. These are a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ.

Shadows and types are intended to point to that which is, in fact, real and true. On the other hand, counterfeits are intended to appear to be real and true, but are deceptions and consequently worthless. The positive power of truth is the very reason that Satan is so violently opposed to it and seeks every means of preventing a person from knowing and /or acting in accord with the truth. The very essence of his whole being is as a great deceiver and consequently his native language is described as lies. There is in fact no truth in him.

John 8:43-44 Why is my language not clear to you? Because you are unable to hear what I say. You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father's desire. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies. Yet because I tell the truth, you do not believe me!

B. Characteristics of truth:

a. Truth is always consistent with all other truth:

Apparent contradictions exist only when we don't know the whole truth. This characteristic is a useful tool in determining the validity of any statement. A simple test of a conclusion is whether it is in harmony with known simple truths. It is also a valuable Bible study tool in understanding any area of Scripture that we may find

difficult. Knowing that the understanding we come to must be in harmony with all clear and known Bible truths simply because all truth is in harmony with all other truth. The test of consistency in testimony has always been common in legal proceedings because of this nature of truth. This was a problem for the chief priests, elders and teachers when they were looking for evidence against Jesus so they could lawfully put him to death. Mark writes of this event in the following reference.

Mark 14:53-59 They took Jesus to the high priest, and all the chief priests, elders and teachers of the law came together. Peter followed him at a distance, right into the courtyard of the high priest. There he sat with the guards and warmed himself at the fire. The chief priests and the whole Sanhedrin were looking for evidence against Jesus so that they could put him to death, but they did not find any. Many testified falsely against him, but their statements did not agree. Then some stood up and gave this false testimony against him: "We heard him say, 'I will destroy this man-made temple and in three days will build another, not made by man.'" Yet even then their testimony did not agree.

When there is a genuine variance both can not be true. However, both can, and often are, in error. All truth is in harmony with all other truth: it is a characteristic that defines what is and what is not true.

b. Truth is always narrow:

There is always a great verbal chatter about being broad minded which I find disturbing because the very character of truth, which we have determined to be of greatest value, is extremely narrow minded. In every facet of its use it is found to be always consistent and always narrow. Consider first the subject of basic mathematics.

Mathematics:

$2+2=4$ no more and no less: that is the only true answer to that simple math question. Now that is narrow minded isn't it? If we had answered that question with a different number and informed the teacher that if she did not accept it as correct, she would be labeled as narrow minded, do you suppose she would have given us a passing grade. If mathematical truth is not narrow you need not ever count your change after making a purchase. You certainly need not worry about the accuracy of your bank balance when writing a check because basic math should be more broad minded. Such a concept is foolishness because we know that the characteristic of truth

is that it is always narrow.

Science:

At sea level pure water freezes at the point of 32 degrees and boils at the point of 212 degrees. If the water is less than 32 degrees it has already frozen and if it is more than 212 degrees it is already boiling. Now if you owned a car that was subject to overheating you might try reasoning with the water in the radiator about being more open minded about this boiling point. Or perhaps you are a farmer and you are concerned with your crops freezing: you might try to reason with the laws of nature, but I don't think this will do much good because scientific truth is, like all truth, very narrow.

Historical:

A given event took place in only one particular way. That is precisely why our legal system requires testimony to be the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. The whole purpose is to accurately reconstruct exactly what took place. Anyone who would suggest that an event actually took place in a variety of ways would likely find himself in an institution for the insane. But I suppose we could call him broad minded.

Geographical:

Places are where they are and not somewhere else. The geographical truth of where New York is in relationship to Tampa is a very narrowly fixed truth. If a person leaves Tampa Florida and expects to arrive in New York by traveling west, or perhaps south, depending on how he feel about it today, he will be sadly mistaken. All truth is narrow and is not changed by how sincere we may be in our belief.

Religion:

Truth in religion is just as narrow as it is in every other part of our existence. We can not change the truths of religion by how we feel emotionally, or even what we think or how we think. Truth in religion is just as firm and fixed as it is in matters of mathematics, science, historical events, geographical locations, or what ever subject you may consider. **Emotions don't change facts.**

TRUTH MUST BE DETERMINED BY A STANDARD

The conclusion that all truth is narrow is inescapable, but we must not think that all that is narrow is necessarily true. We know that all poodles are dogs, but all dogs are not poodles. How then are we to determine what is and what is not true? There must be a standard of measurement: we have such a standard in the affairs of our nation called the “standard of weights and measures”. By that standard we know that there are twelve inches in one true foot, and three feet in one true yard, etc. etc. etc. There is also a clear standard of truth in matters of faith. Through the basic process of claims and proofs the Scriptures have proved themselves to be true and accurate. Jesus specifically identifies that the Word of God is the Truth, and therefore the absolute standard by which all is measured.

John 17:17 Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth.

Not only do we see that the Word of God is the standard of truth; but it is also identified as the means of setting one apart for God’s purpose. John identified earlier, in his Gospel account, that this Word could set us free, and that we would be judged by that Word. Jesus said *"If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."*

John 12:44-50 Then Jesus cried out, "When a man believes in me, he does not believe in me only, but in the one who sent me. When he looks at me, he sees the one who sent me. I have come into the world as a light, so that no one who believes in me should stay in darkness. "As for the person who hears my words but does not keep them, I do not judge him. For I did not come to judge the world, but to save it. There is a judge for the one who rejects me and does not accept my words; that very word which I spoke will condemn him at the last day. For I did not speak of my own accord, but the Father who sent me commanded me what to say and how to say it. I know that his command leads to eternal life. So whatever I say is just what the Father has told me to say."

3. OBLIGATIONS TO TRUTH

A. Know the truth:

The clear and obvious first obligation to truth is to know it; for if you do not

know the truth you cannot derive any benefit from it nor can you possibly fulfill any obligation to it. A primary function of the Scriptures is to bring us to a knowledge of that truth. In Paul's letter to the Ephesians he says we can come to that knowledge by **reading...** *Ephesians 3:4-6* **In reading this**, then, you will be able to understand my insight into the mystery of Christ, which was not made known to men in other generations as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to God's holy apostles and prophets. This mystery is that through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus.

A primary function of a knowledge of the Word is that we may know the truth, and through that knowledge we are exposed to the way, or path, to freedom. John records these words of Jesus: "Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." A knowledge of the truth gives us an understanding of the power that God has made resident in that Word: the exclusive and universal power of God for the salvation of man. The clear and necessary implication is that salvation cannot be found anywhere else.

Romans 1:16 I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is **the power** of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile.

Knowledge of the Truth is a prerequisite to faith and action. Action without knowledge is always dangerous in any facet of life. There is an old saying that illustrates the universal application of this principle: "Look before you leap!" Proverbs speaks to this same truth in this fashion: *Proverbs 19:2* "It is not good to have zeal without knowledge, nor to be hasty and miss the way."

Paul was greatly distressed by the fact that his own countrymen acted with zeal that was not based on knowledge and such actions were destructive. He spoke of this in his letter to the Romans. *Romans 10:1-3* Brothers, my heart's desire and prayer to God for the Israelites is that they may be saved. For I can testify about them that they are zealous for God, **but their zeal is not based on knowledge**. Since they did not know the righteousness that comes from God and sought to establish their own, they did not submit to God's righteousness.

B. Believe the truth:

Knowledge must be joined to faith in order to become useful. We can have an extensive knowledge of the Scriptures from cover to cover, but if that knowledge is not coupled to faith it will remain nothing more than clinical, or scholastic, information. The very purpose of hearing the Word is to allow it to bring to life an active faith on our part. Faith is the product of hearing the Word and receiving it as the Word of God and not of men. Paul commended those at Thessalonica for just such an attitude toward the message which they received and he noted that it had resulted in an active faith on their part.

1 Thessalonians 2:13 And we also thank God continually because, when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but as it actually is, the word of God, which is at work in you who believe.

Romans 10:17 Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ.

To hear the Gospel without combining it with faith will make it of absolutely no value at all. The example and warning concerning this possibility is presented in the Hebrew letter in this fashion: *Hebrews 4:2 For we also have had the gospel preached to us, just as they did; but the message they heard was of no value to them, because those who heard did not combine it with faith.*

The necessity of arriving at the point of faith is clearly stated in the following verse. *Hebrews 11:6 And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.*

There are a great number of people, who do not wish to study, or conform their lives to the instructions of God's Word, yet they expect the reward of the faithful. The famous saying is: "It does not matter what we believe, just so we are honest". In order to accept that concept we must believe that a lie, honestly believed, would do as much good as the truth. Such a position is void of all rational thought. Just because you believe something --does it really make it so? If you honestly believe that $2+2=17$, does that make it so? Faith is vital, but it must be based on truth in order to be useful. Genuine and useful faith is the product of a knowledge of the Truth and not the result of our own emotions. There are as many emotions as there are people but there is only

one truth. *Proverbs 14:12* There is a way that seems right to a man, but in the end it leads to death.

Proverbs 3:5-6. Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight.

Proverbs 28:26 He who trusts in himself is a fool, but he who walks in wisdom is kept safe.

C. React to the truth:

To know the truth, to believe the truth, and to act on that belief is the only way to derive benefit from it. This is a universal principle. A response to faith is critical: **knowledge must precede faith, and actions must follow faith.** When actions do not follow, faith dies. It is as simple as that! James speaks of this principle in this fashion: *James 2:19-22* You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that--and shudder. You foolish man, do you want evidence that faith without deeds is useless? Was not our ancestor Abraham considered righteous for what he did when he offered his son Isaac on the altar? You see that his faith and his actions were working together, and his faith was made complete by what he did.

The whole concept is not complex. We are simply known by what we do; our faith is identified by our actions and attitudes. If there are no actions then there is no faith. If those actions are in error by content or attitude, it testifies to the nature of our knowledge and faith which has a cause and effect relationship to our actions. *Proverbs 20:11* Even a child is known by his actions, by whether his conduct is pure and right. Young children, while playing in the school yard, can be heard to say: “words are cheap-- prove it!” or “you talk a good game-- but the proof is in the doing”! Actions are the fruition of knowledge and faith; and those actions testify to the soundness and origin of their motivation.

Matthew 7:21. "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.

The very objective for our being here in this world has to do with successfully passing through the process of knowing the truth, believing the truth and acting on that

belief in a way that is compatible with God's purpose, not only for ourselves but for all mankind. Paul described that objective in the following simple statement he made to the Galatians ".....*The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love*". In this remark he identifies that both actions and attitudes must be in harmony with God's desire for humanity.

*Ephesians 2:8-10 For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith--and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God-- not by works, so that no one can boast.. **For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.***

*Ephesians 4:12-15 to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming. Instead, **speaking the truth in love**, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ.*

CHAPTER VIII. THE TOOLS OF LEARNING

A. SITUATIONS AND RESPONSIBILITIES:

In our quest to understand how to “*love life and see good days*”, or to “*have life, and have it to the full*”, we have come to a series of inescapable conclusions. These conclusions are rooted in a compatible assembly of scientific laws, simple observations of the world around us, the clear and rational process of cause and effect, and the age old tool of claims and proofs. The clear and inescapable conclusion is that God exists, He is powerful, intelligent, and caring beyond the limits of the human mind to even conceive of. He is identified as the God of the Bible through the process of claims and proofs and has made himself known to mankind through His Word and His creation.

A search for the source of answers to our quest has been narrowed to the Scriptures by a series of those claims and proofs which established the validity of the Bible. Those same Scriptures identify the inclusive nature of God and his word. In Genesis 1:1 God is identified as the creator of **all** that is, Hebrews 4:13 says he knows **all** things, Mark 10:27 identifies the fact that he has **all** power, Psalms 139:7-10 shows Him to be **all** present, and II Timothy 3:16 says that he is the source of **all** scripture. James goes on to make it clear that God is the exclusive origin of **all** that is good: *James 1:17. Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows.* And Peter tells us that: *(II Peter 1:3) His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness.* Paul writes to the Colossians about this exclusive and rich resource of wisdom and knowledge in these words: *Colossians 2:2-4 . My purpose is that they may be encouraged in heart and united in love, so that they may have the full riches of complete understanding, in order that they may know the mystery of God, namely, Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. I tell you this so that no one may deceive you by fine-sounding arguments.* Jesus himself said: “*I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.*”

When a man goes fishing he will require several things to come into concert in order to be successful in his quest to catch fish. One of those necessary prerequisites is

to know where the fish are. No matter how fine your fishing equipment may be, our you skill in the use of that equipment; If you don't fish where the fish are, you will not be successful in your quest. What we have found out, concerning the existence, character, and identity of God and the content of his word, is exactly where the "fish" are, not just some of the "fish", but **all** of the "fish". Now that we know exactly where the object of our quest is to be found, we need to discover how to use that valuable information. In order to extract and make use of those valuable "fish"; we need to acquire the tools of learning and develop skill in the use of those tools.

"By reason of time", there is an urgency about this quest the we, and all men, are involved in. Therefore, knowledge of, and skill in the use of those tools of learning are vital-- "time is of the essence". No rational man would undertake to dig the foundation of his house with a screwdriver when he owns a perfectly good shovel, nor would he attempt to drive a screw with a shovel when he has a screwdriver. We must understand, and appreciate, the tools that we have access to as well as how and when to use them to our advantage. We, ourselves, are a construction project upon which God has applied his tools to build something useful for mankind. *Ephesians 2:10. For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.* God's objective and ours are the same; consequently we should make some observations about some of those tools which he applies to mankind to obtain the end result that he seeks.

Through the nature of his creation he has provided situations and an infrastructure that are conducive to obtaining a knowledge of the truth. Paul's letter to the Colossians speaks of this relationship of physical existence and the purpose of Christ In the following way: 1:16 *For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; **all things were created by him and for him.***

From the moment we are born there comes an awareness in life that we are in a state of need; we have a dependence on forces outside of self. This awareness is a necessary prerequisite to any development of learning. Next we are introduced to the structure and love of family which is able to meet those needs. Within the structure of that relationship we are loved, sheltered, fed, taught and given opportunity to contribute to the welfare of the group. This process continues, in keeping with God's design, under the shelter of civil government as a protector of citizens and

administrator of justice. Paul spoke to the Romans about a need to respect and appreciate the function of civil government which God has designed for the benefit of individuals. *Romans 13:1-5* *Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. **The authorities that exist have been established by God.** Consequently, he who rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves. For rulers hold no terror for those who do right, but for those who do wrong. Do you want to be free from fear of the one in authority? Then do what is right and he will commend you. **For he is God's servant to do you good.** But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword for nothing. He is God's servant, an agent of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer. Therefore, it is necessary to submit to the authorities, not only because of possible punishment but also because of conscience.*

The manifold objective of the family is to instruct and care for all the individuals in that relationship and bring them all to maturity in the family of God. As human beings we recognize the absolute necessity for family and government for the survival of individuals. Not even in our wildest fictional tales do we speak of children surviving, much less thriving, without benefit of family. Even Tarzan had the apes, and Kipling's Jungle Book tale spoke of the family care that young Mowgli received from the wolves. There is no rational or reasonable expectation to survive outside the shelter of God's family,(the Church), than there is for an infant to survive without benefit of family.

God draws on these physical experiences and relationships to teach us about spiritual matters. Those individuals in the church are described as the children of God, and the church as the bride of Christ. As human beings, who have experience in these relationships that we can draw on to better understand our need, place, benefit, and function in the family of God. In order to enhance our concept of the level of cohesive bond that must exist in the family of God,(which is the church), he also describes it as a body. Body parts that are severed from the unit do not exist long in a separate condition. Those individual parts that refuse to participate in the overall function of the body soon lose their usefulness and often wither away. Hands that will not work, eyes that will not see, ears that will not hear, and on and on the list goes. There is a mutual caring between the parts that occurs through the common relationship with the head, which in the case of the Church, is Christ. All parts benefit in a joint

participation under the headship of Christ just as our physical body benefits from the joint participation of all of its parts under direction of the head. The idea that any part, or individual, can function on its own outside the relationship of the body is not within the realm of reason or possibility. The necessary cohesiveness of the body of Christ is brought to light by the following reference from the first letter that Paul wrote to those at Corinth: *I Corinthians 12: 12-27*. *The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ. For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body--whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free--and we were all given the one Spirit to drink. Now the body is not made up of one part but of many. If the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body," it would not for that reason cease to be part of the body. And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body," it would not for that reason cease to be part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would the sense of hearing be? If the whole body were an ear, where would the sense of smell be? But in fact God has arranged the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be. If they were all one part, where would the body be? As it is, there are many parts, but one body. The eye cannot say to the hand, "I don't need you!" And the head cannot say to the feet, "I don't need you!" On the contrary, those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, and the parts that we think are less honorable we treat with special honor. And the parts that are unpresentable are treated with special modesty, while our presentable parts need no special treatment. But God has combined the members of the body and has given greater honor to the parts that lacked it, so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it. Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it.*

These situations and relationships are all tools, the gifts of God, being used to help us in our quest to “Love life and see good days”. However, learning is also an individual responsibility; there are tools of learning that must be applied by each person in order to reach a point of understanding in any given subject concerning which a person may have an interest.

B. INDIVIDUAL PRINCIPLES OF LEARNING:

There are six basic sequential, cumulative, and interdependent principles involved in the learning process. **Motivation--Reaction--Concentration--Organization-- Comprehension--Repetition.** I first heard these six principles of learning enumerated in this fashion from a friend about forty years ago. I think that the source from which he received them was a booklet by a man named Earle West. That nomenclature of the process of learning always seemed a clear and simple presentation so I will make use of that terminology to outline our discussion.

1. MOTIVATION: (a desire to do something)

Laziness and ignorance are the great deterrents of motivation. These two heavy inhibitors are persistent and difficult to overcome; requiring constant diligence and awareness. Solomon speaks of the nature of these roadblocks to learning and progress in a number of proverbs.

Proverbs 13:4 The sluggard craves and gets nothing, but the desires of the diligent are fully satisfied.

Proverbs 14:23 All hard work brings a profit, but mere talk leads only to poverty.

Proverbs 25:14-16. As a door turns on its hinges, so a sluggard turns on his bed. The sluggard buries his hand in the dish; he is too lazy to bring it back to his mouth. The sluggard is wiser in his own eyes than seven men who answer discreetly.

Motivation is simply the desire to do something. Obviously, if we do not see the benefit in applying effort we will not spend the time or energy required. An object at rest tends to stay at rest. Many people express a desire to learn to play a musical instrument, some actually go so far as to purchase an instrument and instruction books, but they never move beyond that point because motivation has not reached the level of intensity required to move a person to action. **Motivation is the ignition and fuel of the learning process**, if the ignition is not strong enough we will not be moved to action. The fuel supply must be maintained or the whole process will stall. In the case at hand: the question is why should I spend the time and effort to understand God's Word. What are the benefits and consequences involved? The answer to those

questions are exactly what we have been discussing from the very beginning of this book. Motivation is the first and highest hurdle in the whole process of learning.

A comprehension of consequences is a primary tool of motivation. When we come to a true knowledge and understanding of both the negative and positive consequences involved we will have been exposed to the necessary power to move us in one direction or another. The following is an expression of that point of understanding: *Proverbs 24: 30-34 I went past the field of the sluggard, past the vineyard of the man who lacks judgment; thorns had come up everywhere, the ground was covered with weeds, and the stone wall was in ruins. I applied my heart to what I observed and learned a lesson from what I saw: A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to rest-- and poverty will come on you like a bandit and scarcity like an armed man.*

Knowledge and wisdom are the primary tools of motivation. Having an accurate comprehension of our present situation, as well as understanding the needs that we have to overcome those problems will go a long way toward fueling our motivation. Knowing where the answers to our quest are to be found should certainly move us to action.

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

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

2. REACTION: (response to motivation)

In the process of learning, reaction is the natural and sequential response to a strong motivation. Learning must be brought to the point of trust, or faith, in order to be of any real value. Knowledge that is not acted on is essentially useless. This point was clearly illustrated by the writer of the Hebrew letter in the following reference: *Hebrews 4:2 For we also have had the gospel preached to us, just as they did; but the message they heard was of no value to them, because those who heard did not combine it with faith.* This point was also previously discussed under the subject of responsibilities to truth.

All rational human beings desire to better their situation in life in one fashion or another. We all want to “*love life and see good days*”, but that desire will never come to fruition until we are motivated to the point of doing something about it.

Proverbs 21:25. The sluggard's craving will be the death of him, because his hands refuse to work.

3. CONCENTRATION: (attention of the mind)

Once we have been motivated to the point of action we must find a way to focus our minds on the task at hand. Solomon said: “*Apply your heart to instruction and your ears to words of knowledge*”. Our eagerness to learn and apply what we have been taught is directly related to the strength of our motivations. When concentration wavers it is an indication that we need to reexamine our motivations in this whole process--what are we doing and why are we doing it? A second contributor to the process of concentration of the mind on any subject has to do with study habits and environment. Provide for yourself good study conditions, these will vary from person to person; however, most people require a certain level of quiet and uninterrupted time. Being pleased and thankful for everything new that you learn will also encourage concentration. A certain gift of awe and wonder comes with every insight we are given through an increased understanding of the Word of God.

Proverbs 22:17-18. Pay attention and listen to the sayings of the wise; apply your heart to what I teach, for it is pleasing when you keep them in your heart and have all of them ready on your lips.

4. ORGANIZATION: (Understanding the parts in relation to the whole)

Organization is an indispensable tool in the process of learning. Having a knowledge of the parts without an understanding of the relationship of those parts is not only useless, it is dangerous, in that it will frequently foster wrong conclusions. A concept of the whole must precede any real understanding of the parts. The context of any thought is a vital part of comprehension. The successful process of learning always moves from the general to the specific. Surely you would not attempt to put a complex jig-saw puzzle together without ever looking at the cover of the box. The cover of that puzzle box gives you the concept of the whole into which those parts must exactly fit. Without that concept of the whole, you may become very familiar with the parts, but there is not much chance that you would ever be successful in

understanding the puzzle, and there is no doubt that the amount of precious time wasted on such a foolish approach would be shameful.

These principles of learning are not only sequential, cumulative, and interdependent: they are also universal in nature. Accurate learning about any subject always moves through this process. Many problems and misunderstandings have arisen over time by taking things out of context. It has been the cause of much error in understanding of the Scriptures. The degree to which one can get off target without the use of this principle of understanding the parts in relation to the whole is illustrated by the three following Scriptural references taken out of context. *Then he went away and hanged himself.* -- "*Go and do likewise.*" -- "*What you are about to do, do quickly,*" Those are all scriptures: will you follow those instructions? If not...Why not?

There is a ancient story, I believe it is one of Aesop's fables, dating from as far back in Greek history as 500 BC. In order to impress the reader with the importance of understanding the parts in relation to the whole, the fable tells of a group of blind men who are involved in trying to come to an understanding of what an elephant is. Each man is diligently involved in a detailed examination of a different part of that elephant. Because the men are blind they are working without benefit of an overview. There is, with in this presentation, the insinuation that those who search for understanding without the aid of an overview are themselves blind. At the end of the extensive examination of the elephant, each blind man is confident, by reason of hands-on experience, that he knows exactly what an elephant is like. The man who had hold of the tusks spoke with authority about elephants being hard and sharp. Another, who was in contact with those huge ears, said that elephants were not hard and sharp at all, he himself had discovered that they are in fact thin and floppy, like a great leaf of some sort. Another, having hold of a leg, responds that an elephant is more truly like a giant living tree trunk. And the story would go on from part to part, and in spite of the assembly of much detailed information, no true understanding of an elephant would ever come to light because the men were blind to the important principle of learning referred to as "understanding the parts in relation to the whole".

Hokusai is perhaps the most famous Japanese wood block artist of all time, he is certainly my personal favorite. In my estimation, he was to Japan what Norman Rockwell was to America. He told the stories of real life through his art work. He was born in 1760 to a lower middle class Edo Family in Japan and I doubt that he had ever personally seen an elephant. However, his wood block print of those blind men examining the elephant came to be hung on the wall of nearly every grade school in Japan for centuries. It was a valuable teaching tool to bring this basic principle of learning to life in the young minds that occupied those school rooms.

5. COMPREHENSION: (getting the idea)

Comprehension is simply getting the idea, or arriving at the point of understanding. It comes about as a natural consequence of the collective actions of the steps that preceded it. Motivation + Reaction + Concentration + Organization = Comprehension. Comprehension is contagious and carries within itself the very thing that will keep it alive, and that is to talk about and bring to remembrance all that we have come to a knowledge of. What we know and believe we will talk about. Therefore we understand that what we come to a clear knowledge of is not for us alone, but is to be shared in a spirit of joy with others. Paul stated this principle when writing to those in Corinth. *II Corinthians 4:13* It is written: "I believed; therefore I have spoken." With that same spirit of faith we also believe and therefore speak,

Ezra was a priest that came to Jerusalem from Babylon about the year 458 BC. He was committed to the study, keeping, and teaching of the Law. As a result of his comprehension of the Law he talked about it, and many others who heard him benefitted from that comprehension he had obtained. *Ezra 7:10. For Ezra had devoted himself to the study and observance of the Law of the LORD, and to teaching its decrees and laws in Israel*

In chapter eight of the book of Nehemiah, we see the results of Ezra's state of comprehension as the people ask him to read aloud from the Book of The Law of Moses. "...All the people assembled as one man in the square before the Water Gate. They told Ezra the scribe to bring out the Book of the Law of Moses, which the LORD had commanded for Israel. So on the first day of the seventh month Ezra the priest brought the Law before the assembly, which was made up of men and women and all who were able to understand. He read it aloud from daybreak till noon as he faced the square before the Water Gate in the presence of the men, women and others who could understand. And all the people listened attentively to the Book of the Law..... All the people could see him because he was standing above them; and as he opened it, the people all stood up. Ezra praised the LORD, the great God; and all the people lifted their hands and responded, "Amen! Amen!" Then they bowed down and worshiped the LORD with their faces to the ground. They read from the Book of the Law of God, making it clear and giving the meaning so that the people could understand what was being read. Then Nehemiah the governor, Ezra the priest and scribe, and the Levites who were instructing the people said to them all, "This day is sacred to the LORD your God. Do not mourn or weep." For all the people had been

*weeping as they listened to the words of the Law. Then all the people went away to eat and drink, to send portions of food and to celebrate with great joy, **because they now understood the words that had been made known to them.***

6. REPETITION: (review, review, review)

Unfortunately comprehension is not fully self sustaining. It must be maintained through the process of constant review. Only ignorance and darkness are free, if you wish to retain the treasures of understanding you must be willing to tend them with the process of review. The greater the value the more important the call to remember. The consequences and process of neglect are described to Hosea in these words: *Hosea 13:66. When I fed them, they were satisfied; when they were satisfied, they became proud; then they forgot me.*

“Use it or lose it” is an old and true saying which identifies the fact that the whole point of a knowledge of the truth is the employment of that knowledge. The genuine possibility of forgetting the value of what we have learned is very real, and the consequences are extreme. Early in the Scriptures we are warned not to forget those things we have learned and to be certain to pass that knowledge on to our children. *Deuteronomy 4: 9. Only be careful, and watch yourselves closely so that you **do not forget** the things your eyes have seen or let them slip from your heart as long as you live. **Teach them** to your children and to their children after them*

*Deuteronomy 11:18-21 **Fix these words of mine in your hearts and minds**; tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Teach them to your children, talking about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates, so that your days and the days of your children may be many in the land that the LORD swore to give your forefathers, as many as the days that the heavens are above the earth.*

Peter reminds us that the core purpose of both of his letters is to stimulate us to wholesome thinking through our memory of what we have been taught by the Prophets and Apostles. *II Peter 3:1-2 Dear friends, this is now my second letter to you. **I have***

written both of them as reminders to stimulate you to wholesome thinking. I want you to recall the words spoken in the past by the holy prophets and the command given by our Lord and Savior through your apostles.

The most important aspect of what we are called on to remember is the relationship we have to God through Christ. It is vital to be constantly aware of who Jesus is, what he has done for us, what he is doing for us now, and what he will do for us in the future. All aspects of this are rooted in the remembrance of the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus our Lord. In keeping with the example and command found in Scripture, his followers met together each first day of the week and partake of the bread and the fruit of the vine in remembrance of Jesus.

*I Corinthians 11:23 For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, "This is my body, which is for you; do this in **remembrance** of me." In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in **remembrance** of me." For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.*

REMEMBER THE PRINCIPLES OF LEARNING

- * MOTIVATION**
- * REACTION**
- * CONCENTRATION**
- * ORGANIZATION**
- * COMPREHENSION**
- * REPETITION REPETITION REPETITION REPETITION**

CHAPTER IX. BIBLE OVERVIEW

A. INTRODUCTION:

From our first breath to this very moment in time we have been engaged in a great Quest “to love life and see good days”. All avenues of rational thought have come into harmony with the fact that the answers to our quest are to be found within a knowledge and application of God’s revelations to mankind. Those revelations being specifically identified as his creation and his revealed Word, which Jesus, himself, defined as the truth. (*John 17:17 Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth*). The treasures to be unearthed within the pages of God’s Word are a clear understanding of what is good for us, as well as a comprehension of the consequences of following those teachings, or the results of a failure to listen, learn, and follow.

*Isaiah 48: 17-18 This is what the LORD says-- your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel: "I am the LORD your God, who **teaches you what is best for you**, who directs you in the way you should go. **If only you had paid attention to my commands, your peace would have been like a river, your righteousness like the waves of the sea.***

Encouragement and endurance are primary elements in the support of any quest that an individual may participate in. As every truth is revealed and confirmed it adds another strong block in the foundation of our faith, and within that faith is the victory that we are searching for. Every treasure that is unearthed in our quest becomes an increased motivation to continue that learning process. Paul tells us, in his letter to the Romans, *15:4 For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.*

Paul’s statement makes it clear that our search must be inclusive of both the Old Testament as well as the New because “**everything that was written in the past was written for our learning**”. By this statement we are instructed that our learning starts at the beginning of Genesis and will continue and built till we reach the end of the book of Revelation. This is in complete accord with the learning pattern of moving from the general to the specific. No part can be properly understood without an awareness of how it fits into the whole. There are many things about the New Testament that we can not possibly understand or appreciate without a knowledge of the Old Testament. Through our exposure to Old Testament law, history, poetry, and prophecy we can come to an awareness of man’s origins, conditions, actions, attitudes,

and consequences. We are also given an insight into God's values of justice and mercy. We see the track record of his patience and love as he deals with the nature of man. We can more fully understand the symbolisms like Christ as the Lamb of God, and we are more appreciative of the numerous fulfillments of Old Testament prophecies by Jesus....and the list goes on and on.

A word must fit into a sentence; a sentence fits into a verse; a verse fits into a paragraph, a paragraph into a chapter, a chapter into a book, a book into a period, a period into a dispensation, and so it goes on. In keeping with the tools of learning, our approach to the study of God's Word will proceed from the general and move toward the specific. The result of this approach is that we will come to an understanding of the parts of God's word in relation to the whole of his revelation to mankind. We do not need to be one of those blind men patting down some small part of an elephant with no hope of ever coming to any real comprehension of the nature of the critter.

B. GENERAL VIEW:

Our first consideration should be a clear view of a simple concept of the general content, purpose, and means of the Scriptures.

1. GENERAL CONTENT OF GOD'S WORD:

- The origin of man
- The fall of man
- The promise of God
- Salvation of man

2. GENERAL PURPOSE OF GOD'S WORD:

- To give grace and peace to mankind
- To help us understand the purpose of life and godliness
- To participate in the Divine nature
- To escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires

3. MEANS BY WHICH THIS WILL BE ACCOMPLISHED:

- Knowledge of God and Jesus
- God's glory, goodness, and promises

Individual remembrance
Eager participation in godliness
Examples and instructions

C. TIME FRAME:

Before creation to----->after judgment

The time frame covered by the Scriptures runs from before creation, as presented in the opening verses of the Genesis account, to a point when all physical existence will have been destroyed and judgement will have taken place, as noted in the last chapters in the book of Revelation. From before time till after time, from before death and sorrow till a time when death and sorrow will have passed away. *Revelation 21:4-5 He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away." He who was seated on the throne said, "I am making everything new!" Then he said, "Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true."*

D. TESTAMENTS:

As we move to the next stage in the development of our learning we see the division between the old Testament and the New. Next comes the books of that division. These books are then divided by the nature of content and finally to the specific books themselves. God’s Word follows a very orderly process of development and presentation. This clear structure helps to facilitate the location of specific information that a reader may be in search of.

Old Testament	New Testament
39 Books	27 Books
Law	Biography
History	History
Poetry	Letters
Prophecy	Prophecy

E. DISPENSATIONS:

It is also possible to make another basic point of division concerning the nature or order of rule that is referred to as dispensations.

Patriarchal
Genesis 1--->Exodus 14

Mosaic
Exodus 15---> John

Christian
Acts---> Revelation

F. HISTORY PERIODS RELATIVE TO DISPENSATIONS:

Patriarchal

Mosaic

Christian

a. Old Testament

1. Before the flood
2. After the flood
3. Patriarchal
4. Bondage

5. Wanderings
6. Conquest
7. Judges
8. United Kingdom
9. Divided Kingdom
10. Judah Alone
11. Exile
13. Between Testaments

2. Apostolic History

b. New Testament:

1. Gospel History

G. GENERAL OVERVIEW OF BIBLE HISTORY:

As we look at a general overview of bible history we are able to develop a concept of a time frame upon which we can organize the events that we read about by setting them in context. It is important to remember that many other people lived and many other events took place which are not recorded in these books, but these things were selected and written for our learning. Within each event and individual account is a gift of understanding that has been preserved for the welfare of mankind and is available to all who are willing to read and take to heart the gifts of God. *“Blessed is the one who reads the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear it and take to heart what is written in it, because the time is near”*. Not only should we see the flow and thread of events that are recorded for our welfare, but we must look at the nations and individuals who are involved in these situations. Observe the patterns of attitudes, actions, and consequences as they are revealed to us through God’s Word. If we are willing to learn from history and the examples of those who have gone before us, we will not have to experience the harshness of negative consequences that came to those who refused warning and instruction. We are not simply looking for a clinical knowledge of historical information which we can regurgitate at will; these things

were written for our learning and learning only comes to full fruition when it reaches application. By the things we learn in the Scriptures we will be able to choose firm paths and certain success on our quest to “*love life and see good days*”.

*Proverbs 3:1-7 My son, do not forget my teaching, but keep my commands in your heart, for they will prolong your life many years and bring you prosperity. **Let love and faithfulness never leave you; bind them around your neck, write them on the tablet of your heart. Then you will win favor and a good name in the sight of God and man. Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight. Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the LORD and shun evil.***

General Bible Overview and Time Line

			Old Testament		
	Creation			
		Sin			
		Flood			
2000 BC	Promise to Abraham			
		Egyptian Captivity			
1500 BC	Law to the Jews			
		Wandering			
		Promised Land			
	G	H	Judges		
1000 BC	E.....	E.....	United Kingdom		
935 BC	N.....	B.....	Divided Kingdom		
	T	R	Judah (south)	The Prophets	Israel (north)
	I	E		Elijah	875---850
	L	W		Elisha	850....800
	E			Joel	840...830
		P		Jonah	790...770
	P	E		Amos	780...740
	E	O		Hosea	760....720
	O	P		Isaiah	745....695
	P	L		Micah	740...700
721 BC	L.....	E.....	Assyrian Captivity of the North		
	E		Judah Alone		
				Zephaniah	639...608
				Nahum	630....610
				Jeremiah	626....586
				Habakkuk	606....586
				Obadiah	586
606 BC	Babylonian Captivity		
				Daniel	606....534
				Ezekiel	592....570
536 BC	Fall of Babylon & Rise of Medes and Persians		
			Return to Jerusalem		
				Haggai	
				Zechariah	
				Malachi	
400 BC	End of Old Testament History		
			New Testament		
4 AD	Gospels: Matthew, Mark, Luke, John		
			Content: Jesus: birth, life, death, and resurrection		
			Purpose: That we may believe.		
30 AD>T<.....	Acts:		
	C		Content: Beginning and spread of the church		
	H		Purpose: That we may become Christians		
51 AD	R.....	Letters:		
	I		Content: Church organization and Christian living		
	S		Purpose: How to live the life we are called to.		
	T	51-58	I&II Thessalonians , I&II Corinthians, Galatians, Romans		
	I	60-63	James, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Philemon, Hebrews		
	A	66-100	I&II Timothy, I&II Peter, Titus, I&II&III John, Jude, Revelation		
	N				

note: dates are approximate:

The prophets are arranged in chronological order to show their historical time frame relationship.

New Testament Letters are arranged in the approximate order of their writing...some dates are uncertain.

The following charts will expand on the time line, which we have just looked at, by showing the primary events, the key individuals, and identifying the scriptures that directly relate to that historical period. Please note that some of these dates are not firmly set and consequently vary somewhat from one historian to another.

I. PATRIARCHAL DISPENSATION: (God spoke directly to the fathers)

Time frame: From creation to the Red Sea crossing

1. Before the flood -----> After the flood

- a. Time reference: ?-----2348 BC
- b. Bible account: Genesis 1:1--8:13
- c. Key people: Adam, Eve, Cain, Able, Seth, and Noah
- d. Major events: Creation, man's fall, Cain and Able, Seth, and the account of Noah and the ark

2. After the flood----->call of Abraham

- a. Time reference: 2348 BC-----1921 BC
- b. Bible account: Genesis 8:10--11:26
- c. Key people: Noah, Ham, Shem, Japheth
- d. Major events: Noah after the flood, Noah's descendants, the tower of Babel

3. Patriarchal period: call of Abraham-----> Egyptian bondage

- a. Time reference: 1921 BC-----
- b. Bible account: Genesis 11:27---Genesis 50:
- c. Key people: Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph
- d. Major events: The Promise

4. Bondage: Egyptian bondage ----- >to exodus

- a. Time reference: -----1491 BC
- b. Bible account: Exodus 1:-----14
- c. Key people: Moses, Aaron, Miriam, Pharoah
- d. Major events: Israelites enslaved and oppressed, Moses to deliver, plagues and the delivery

II. MOSAIC DISPENSATION:

(God spoke to Moses who then spoke to the Israelite people)

Time frame: Red sea crossing>The cross of Christ

1491 BC.....>33 AD

5. Wanderings ...forty years

- a. Time reference: 1491 BC>1451 BC
- b. Bible account: Exodus 15-40, Numbers, Deuteronomy, Leviticus
- c. Key people: Moses, Joshua, Caleb
- d. Major events: Deliverance and organization of the people,
Manna, Law given, priesthood, tabernacle built, golden calf,
census, sacrifices, festivals

6. Conquest: From Jordan crossing to the death of Joshua

- a. Time reference: 1451 BC>1400 BC
- b. Bible account: Joshua
- c. Key people: Joshua
- d. Major events: Conquest and settlement of the land:
circumcision renewed, Passover celebrated, manna stopped, Jericho,
Ai, the central, south and north campaigns, failure to remove some
of the people, made alliances, division of land to the tribes.

7. Judges: From the death of Joshua to the anointing of Saul

- a. Time reference: 1400 BC.....>1095 BC
- b. Bible account: Judges, I Samuel 1-10, Ruth
- c. Key people: Deborah, Gideon, Samson, Samuel
- d. Major events: Cycles of peace and prosperity followed by a falling
away and oppression, and then deliverance. The people also want a
king so they can be like other nations.

8. United kingdom: From the anointing of Saul to Rehoboam

- a. Time frame: 1095 BC.....>975 BC
- b. Bible account: I Samuel 11-31, II Samuel, I Kings 1-11
See also: I Chronicles 11-29, II Chronicles 1-9, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon
- c. Key people: Saul, David, Solomon
- d. Major events: The reigns Saul, David, and Solomon

9. Divided kingdom: from Rehoboam to fall of Samaria

- a. Time frame: 975 BC> 722 BC
- b. Bible account: I Kings 12-22, II Kings 1-17
See also: II Chronicles 10-32, Jonah, Joel, Amos, Hosea, Isaiah, Micah
- c. Key people: Elijah, Isaiah, Amos, Hosea, Hezekiah
- d. Major events: Rise of prophets, Northern kingdom with 10 tribes, South with 2 tribes, idolatry takes root and grows especially with Ahab and Jezebel, idolatry checked by Jehu and ends with Assyrian captivity.

10. Judah alone: From the fall of Samaria to the fall of Jerusalem

- a. Time frame: 722 BC.....>586 BC
- b. Bible account: I Kings 12:-22:, II Kings 1:-25:
See also: II Chronicles 10-36, Nahum, Zephaniah, Habakkuk, Jeremiah
- c. Key people: Josiah, Jeremiah
- d. Major events: Worship of Baal, Moloch, stars and witchcraft: persecution of the prophets: revival under Josiah after he finds the Book of the Law in the Temple: Temple burned and Jerusalem destroyed.

11. Exile: From the fall of Jerusalem to the return under Jerubbabel

- a. Time frame: 586 BC.....> 536 BC
- b. Bible account: II Kings 25:
see also: Daniel, Ezekiel, Lamentations, Obadiah
- c. Key people: Ezekiel, Daniel

- d. Major events: Babylonian captivity, prophecies about Christ and the Kingdom, Jeremiah into Egypt, Nebuchadnezzar's dream, Daniel's friends in the furnace

12. Post exile: From the return to the close of Old Testament

- a. Time frame: 536 BC.....> 400 BC
- b. Bible account: Ezra
See also: Nehemiah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi, Esther
- c. Key people: Ezra, Nehemiah
- d. Major events: Cyrus of Persia allows the Israelites to return: rebuilding the Temple and the city of Jerusalem: Jews intermarry with others and neglect the Law.

13. Silence: Close of Old Testament history to the time of the Gospels

- a. Time frame: 400 BC.....> 1 BC
- b. Bible account: silent...(You must read secular history for an account of these times)
- c. Key people: Darius III, Alexander the Great, the Romans
- d. Major events: Golden age of Greece, Alexander the Great's spread of Greek language and culture: Roman laws, roads, civil rights. Septuagint translation, rise of Herodians, synagogues, and various sects of the Jews.

New Testament History

1. Gospel History: From Jesus's birth announcement to his resurrection

- a. Time frame: 1 BC.....>32 AD
- b. Bible account: Matthew, Mark, Luke, John
- c. Key people: Jesus
- d. Major events: Jesus's birth, ministry, temptation, transfiguration, choosing the twelve, sending them out, church-kingdom foretold, Lord's supper, betrayal, trial, crucifixion, burial, resurrection, ascension.

III. CHRISTIAN DISPENSATION:

2. Apostolic History: from Jesus ascension to after the end of time.

- a. Time Frame: 32 AD----->~
- b. Bible account: Acts through Revelation
- c. Key people: Jesus, Peter, Paul, John, Luke, and the rest
- d. Major events: The Church: beginning, spread, and instructions:
And a view of the future home of the saints.

Acts 1:8. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

* In "Jerusalem":

- a. Time frame: 32 AD-----> 38 AD
- b. Bible account: Acts 1-7
- c. Key people: Holy Spirit, Peter and the rest of the apostles
- d. Major events: Ascension, Matthias, Holy Spirit, Church, persecution,
Steven

* "Judea and Samaria":

- a. Time frame: 38 AD----->48 AD
- b. Bible account: Acts 8-12
- c. Key people: Saul/ Paul, Peter, Cornelius
- d. Major events: Eunuch, Saul, Cornelius, Antioch of Syria, James killed,
Peter in prison, Herod's death

* The "ends of the earth":

1. a. Time frame: 48 AD----->66 AD

- b. Bible account: Acts 13-28

See these letters also as they were written in that time frame and context: I&II Thessalonians, I&II Corinthians, Galatians, Romans, James, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Philemon, Hebrews,

- c. Key people: Paul, Timothy
- d. Major events: Paul's three missionary journeys and imprisonments in Jerusalem, Caesarea, and Rome

2. a. Time Frame: 66 AD-----> 100 AD
- b. Bible account: I&II Timothy, I&II Peter, I, II&III John, Jude, Titus, Revelation
- c. Key people: Paul, Peter, John
- d. Major events: Instructions for Church and individuals concerning elders, deacons, and the general understanding of the what and why of living the life we are called to. An encouragement to secure patient endurance and faithfulness.

“This calls for patient endurance and faithfulness on the part of the saints.”

Hebrews 6:10-12. God is not unjust; he will not forget your work and the love you have shown him as you have helped his people and continue to help them. We want each of you to show this same diligence to the very end, in order to make your hope sure. We do not want you to become lazy, but to imitate those who through faith and patience inherit what has been promised.

Now that we have completed our general overview of the scriptures, we are able to appreciate the parts in relation to the whole. It is time to look with a little more detail at specific areas of God’s word. Once we have completed this stage it will be time to move into an even more detailed approach of our study. However, we must never lose sight of the fact that the details must fit into the whole picture to be properly understood.

There are two primary methods of Bible study; the book method, which we are involved with here, and the subject method. There are benefits and drawbacks to each. The book method will require a great deal more time to be exposed to everything the scriptures have to say about any one particular subject. But the advantage is that you will be receiving that information on a given subject in the proper context; which is of vital importance in coming to an accurate understanding. On the other hand, the advantage of the subject approach is that you will have access to everything about a given subject in a relatively short amount of time. There is a place and use for both approaches but we need to be aware of the limitations of each. In view of the fact that the information was given to mankind in the book format and not the subject arrangement, we ought certainly to give the greater weight to that approach.

CHAPTER X.

INTRODUCTION TO THE GOSPELS MATTHEW-----MARK-----LUKE-----JOHN

I. MAJOR PURPOSE:

A. That you may believe:

An obvious paramount purpose of all four Gospel accounts is to establish faith on the part of the reader concerning the identity of Jesus. The purpose of that faith is to benefit the reader. John's Gospel, which we will talk about more fully later, goes on to state clearly that this is a primary purpose of his writing. *John 20:30-31 Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.* Luke begins his account with a statement of objective which includes the idea that we may know the certainty of the things we have been taught. *Luke 1:1-4 Many have undertaken to draw up an account of the things that have been fulfilled among us, just as they were handed down to us by those who from the first were eyewitnesses and servants of the word. Therefore, since I myself have carefully investigated everything from the beginning, it seemed good also to me to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, so that you may know the certainty of the things you have been taught.*

B. Example of manner of life:

The life that Jesus lived, as written in the gospels; his **attitudes, actions, and consequences** are recorded as a pattern for the life we are called to. *I Peter 2:19-24 For it is commendable if a man bears up under the pain of unjust suffering because he is conscious of God. But how is it to your credit if you receive a beating for doing wrong and endure it? But if you suffer for doing good and you endure it, this is commendable before God. To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps. "He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth." When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to*

him who judges justly. He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed.

C. Jesus's personal teaching :

Jesus teachings about the church, the mission of a follower, and the resurrection
Matthew 7:20-21 *Thus, by their fruit you will recognize them. "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. **Matthew 5:3-12** "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted. Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled. Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God. Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. "Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.*

II. WHY FOUR GOSPEL ACCOUNTS ?

Different audiences are reached more effectively by different approaches. This is not an uncommon idea in the art of communication. If you wish to speak effectively you must find out the common experiences and interests of those to whom you expect to speak or teach. This is the point at which minds are joined and can move forward together. You will some times hear the question.. "Are we all on the same page?" If you plan to go somewhere with a conversation everyone will have to be in the same boat. The use of parables also involves common experiences to teach spiritual matters. There are different points of emphasis in each of the Gospel accounts which focus on a particular type of audience. There may be many more reasons to have four different accounts, but this one is fairly clear. Some well educated speakers forget this basic principle and approach an audience of "ordinary folk" with a flood of polysyllabic profundities which only serves to hide the whole purpose of communication. Paul was a very highly educated man but he was always careful not to get in the way of the

message by the use of fancy words.

1 Corinthians 2:1-5. When I came to you, brothers, I did not come with eloquence or superior wisdom as I proclaimed to you the testimony about God. For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. I came to you in weakness and fear, and with much trembling. My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power, so that your faith might not rest on men's wisdom, but on God's power.

A. Example: Jesus speaks to a woman at the well:

John 4:13-15 Jesus answered, "Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life." The woman said to him, "Sir, give me this water so that I won't get thirsty and have to keep coming here to draw water."

B. Example: Paul at Athens:

Acts 17:22-23. Paul then stood up in the meeting of the Areopagus and said: "Men of Athens! I see that in every way you are very religious. For as I walked around and looked carefully at your objects of worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: TO AN UNKNOWN GOD. Now what you worship as something unknown I am going to proclaim to you.

1. Gospel of Matthew..... primary focus on the Jews

Matthew was an Apostle and a major thrust of his writing was to emphasize Jesus as the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies. Certainly this approach was most effective for Jews because they were already more familiar with the Old Testament prophecies. Obviously the Gentile reader was less informed about these Old Testament prophecies.

2. Gospel of Mark.....primary focus on the Romans

Mark puts a considerable emphasis on the power demonstrated by the miracles of Jesus, which would key into the preoccupation of the Romans with the whole idea of world power and rule.

3. Gospel of Luke.....primary focus on the Greeks

Luke was a Greek, as well as a medical doctor, and is also the author of the book of Acts which is a carefully structured writing.(as is observable from Acts 1:8). The fact that Luke was a Greek and addressed the letter to his Greek friend, Theophilus, is strong evidence that he was approaching the subject from the Greek, or orderly, perspective. The first four verses identify his intentions in the writing this account. Let's read these verses again.

*Luke 1:1-4 Many have undertaken to draw up an account of the things that have been fulfilled among us, just as they were handed down to us by those who from the first were eyewitnesses and servants of the word. Therefore, since **I myself have carefully investigated everything from the beginning**, it seemed good also to me to write **an orderly account** for you, most excellent Theophilus, so that you may know the certainty of the things you have been taught.*

4. Gospel of John.....effectively focuses on a universal audience.

John, who is also an Apostle, uses the age old process of claims and proofs to establish the credentials of Jesus. To this he adds the legal process of testimony of witnesses to the identity of Jesus. All of which have a primary focus of developing faith on the part of the reader. This objective of establishing faith in Jesus as the Christ is the common and universal theme of all the Gospel accounts.

***John 20:30-31** Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.*

When taken in total, the Gospel accounts focus effectively on all rational readers whether they are Jews, Romans, Greeks, or some other group. The common thrust is the establishment of faith, and once that is in place, the book of Acts will give direction as to what should be done in response to this faith in Jesus as the Christ.

III. THE GOSPEL OF JOHN:

CLAIMS.....WITNESSES.....PROOFS

that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

A. THE CLAIMS: John 1:1-5

*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. **Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made.** In him was life, and that life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it.*

1. Jesus is the “Word”
2. Jesus is eternal: There in the beginning
3. Jesus was with God
4. Jesus was God
5. All things made through Jesus
6. “In him was life, and that life was the light of men”
7. The light could not be stopped by darkness

B. THE WITNESSES: John 5:31-40

Four indisputable witnesses testify to the identity of Jesus and the validity of the opening claims of the Gospel of John. Those witnesses are John, the works that Jesus was doing, God’s personal testimony, and the Scriptures.

*"If I testify about myself, my testimony is not valid. There is another who testifies in my favor, and I know that his testimony about me is valid. "You have sent to **John** and he has testified to the truth. Not that I accept human testimony; but I mention it that you may be saved. John was a lamp that burned and gave light, and you chose for a time to enjoy his light. "I have testimony weightier than that of John. For the very **work** that the Father has given me to finish, and which I am doing, testifies that the Father has sent me. And the **Father** who sent me has himself testified concerning me. You have never heard his voice nor seen his form, nor does his word dwell in you, for you do not believe the one he sent. You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the **Scriptures** that testify about me, yet you refuse to come to me to have life.*

1. John, the first witness : *John 1:29-31 The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, "Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world! This is the one I meant when I said, 'A man who comes after me has surpassed me because he was before me.' I myself did not know him, but the reason I came baptizing with water was that he might be revealed to Israel."*

2. Works, the second witness: *For the very work that the Father has given me to finish, and which I am doing, testifies that the Father has sent me.*

3. The Father, the third witness: *Matthew 3:16-17 As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and lighting on him. And a voice from heaven said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased."*

4. The Scriptures, the fourth witness: *Isaiah 35: 5. Then will the eyes of the blind be opened and the ears of the deaf unstopped.*

C. PROOFS TO SUPPORT THE CLAIMS:

The Gospel of John records seven miracles which he did before his death, and one after his resurrection. Those seven miracles are directly related to the proving of the claims made in the opening remarks of the letter. If Jesus is the one through whom all things have been created, as was claimed, then he should be able to prove that by demonstrating his power over that which he has brought into being. That is precisely what these seven miracles demonstrate.....He has power over all seven aspects of physical existence....**matter, space, time, quantity, natural law, light & dark, life & death.**

**1. Water into wine..Chapter 2:1-11.....power over MATTER
Not just any wine...the best.**

**2. Healing the Nobleman's son: Chapter 4:46-54.....power over SPACE
The child was in another city.**

3. Healing the man at the pool: Chapter 5:1-18.....power over TIME

The man was an invalid for 38 years.

**4. Feeding the five thousand: Chapter 6:1-14.....power over QUANTITY
This was done with five small loaves and two small fish.**

**5. Walking on water: Chapter 6:16-21.....power over NATURAL LAW
Three to three and a half miles off shore in rough weather.**

**6. Healing the blind man: Chapter 9:1-41.....power over LIGHT & DARK
He was blind from birth.**

**7. Raising Lazarus: Chapter 11:1-44.....power over LIFE & DEATH
Dead and in the tomb for four days.**

D. THE REASON TO RECORD THESE MIRACLES:

*John 20:30-31 Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book.. **But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.***

CHAPTER XI.

THE BOOK OF ACTS

A. OUTLINE BY CHAPTER AND MAJOR EVENTS

As is common with most carefully written material, the major theme of the whole correspondence will be presented in the first few paragraphs. The author, Luke, identifies himself as well as the fact that he is addressing this letter to the same friend, Theophilus, that he sent his Gospel account to. A Greek medical doctor, writing to another Greek: it would be illogical to expect anything other than an orderly and sequential picture of events: and that is exactly what we have been given in this account of some of the acts of some of the apostles.

In verse eight of chapter one, Luke quotes Jesus's instructions to the Apostles about the pattern of witnessing that was to take place after they had received the Holy Spirit. This orderly progression, that would have its beginning in Jerusalem, was to spread to the ends of the earth. In this one opening verse we are given the tools to outline the whole correspondence: **Jerusalem....Judea and Samaria.....the ends of the earth.** What we are about to observe is not only the pattern of the spread of the Gospel invitation, but the clear pattern of approved response to that message. An inescapably clear purpose of this orderly account is that men may understand what they **must do** in response to a faith in Jesus as Lord and Christ.

Acts 1:8 But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

Acts 2:37-38 When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do?" Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."

I. “IN JERUSALEM”ACTS 1-7

Chapter

Major Events

1. Ascension of Jesus and choosing of Matthias
2. Baptism of the Holy Spirit and beginning of the Church
3. Crippled man healed at the beautiful gate of the temple
4. Peter and John arrested....believers help each other
5. Ananias and Sapphria...Apostles arrested...Gamaliel
6. Choosing of the seven....arrest of Steven
7. Steven’s defense and death

III. “IN ALL JUDEA AND SAMARIA”ACTS 8-12

8. Church scattered..Philip in Samaria..the eunuch
9. Conversion of Saul (Paul)...Peter raises Dorcas
10. Conversion of Cornelius
11. Peter’s defense of Cornelius’s conversion..Christian relief
12. Peter’s arrest and release

III. “TO THE ENDS OF THE EARTH”ACTS 13-28

13. Beginning of Paul’s first journey
14. First journey concluded....elders in every church
15. Dispute about circumcision and keeping the Law of Moses
16. Second journey...Philippi
17. Second journey continued..Thessalonica, Athens
18. Second journey concluded..Corinth, Apollos
19. Third journey..Ephesus..uproar over Demetrius
20. Third journey continued...first day of the week at Troas..Paul speaks to the elders of the church from Ephesus
21. Third journey concluded...arrive Jerusalem..Paul arrested
22. Paul’s speech on the stairs
23. Paul before the council..plot against him..moved to Caesarea
24. Paul before Felix
25. Paul before Festus...appeals to Caesar
26. Paul’s defense before Agrippa
27. Journey to Rome by ship.....the shipwreck
28. Paul in prison

B. SOME EXAMPLE OF CONVERSIONS IN THE BOOK OF ACTS

The chart on the previous page shows the spread of the Gospel message from Jerusalem into Judea and Samaria, and even to the ends of the world. Next we must consider the examples of the approved pattern of reception of that Gospel. Careful groundwork has been laid from the very beginning of God's revelation to man about the importance of following the given pattern and not to branch out on our own. Even from ancient times we find that Noah's behavior was approved on the basis that he did **everything** just as God had commanded him. *Genesis 6:22 Noah did everything just as God commanded him.* There are constant warnings from beginning to end about not adding or taking away from the instructions of God. *Exodus 25:9 Make this tabernacle and all its furnishings exactly like the pattern I will show you. Deuteronomy 4: 2. Do not add to what I command you and do not subtract from it, but keep the commands of the LORD your God that I give you.* The importance of this principle was stressed over and over again in the examples that have been preserved for us in God's word. We must give earnest heed to those things because they have been written for our learning. *Romans 15:4 For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.*

It is a clear, simple and rational principle that a saving faith is an obedient faith. James speaks of the uselessness of a faith that does not move an individual to correct actions. *James 2:14 What good is it, my brothers, if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save him?* In II Kings chapter five we are given, as an example, the account of Naaman and his problem with leprosy. He resisted clear instructions because he did not comprehend how obedience to such simple requirements could accomplish the great task of cleansing him from leprosy. Once he responded to simple reason and became obedient to those clear instructions, he was healed. Such examples from the past should help us to realize that it is not in man to direct his own steps, we must put our complete trust in God. *Proverbs 3:5 Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; If we do what those first century hearers of the Gospel message did, we will become what they became..... "Christians".*

Acts 11:26..... "The disciples were called Christians first at Antioch".

Jesus said: *John 14:15 "If you love me, you will obey what I command".* That is about as simple and straight forward as it can possibly be said. If you do not obey his

commandments you simply do not really love him. The instructions and the consequences of obedience to those instructions are clearly illustrated in the examples of conversions we are exposed to in Luke's account in the book of Acts. There is a universal collection of examples recorded for us here in this book. All responsible human beings fall within the bounds of these examples.....Jew or Gentile...male or female. The Gospel is for all. *1 Peter 3:18 For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God.* ”

THE PATTERN OF APPROVED RESPONSE TO THE GOSPEL

People	Heard	Believed	Repented	Baptized	Saved
Jews	2:14	2:37	2:38	2:38-41	2:38
Samaritans	8:5	8:6,12,13	Implied	8:12,13	Implied
Ethiopian	8:35	Implied	Implied	8:38,39	8:39
Saul (Paul)	9:4, 22:10	Implied	9:9	9:18 22:16	22:16
Cornelius	10:33	10:43	Implied	10:47-48	10:43
Lydia	16:13	16:14	Implied	16:15	16:15
Jailer	16:32	16:31	16:33	16:33	16:31
Corinthians	18:8	18:8	Implied	18:8	Implied

Romans 10:9-10 That if you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved.

CHAPTER XII. THE LETTERS

We have carefully observed the progression through the Patriarchs to the Mosaic Law. And now we are aware that the function of that Law was to lead us to Christ that we might be justified by faith. Now that faith has come and we have been baptized into Christ: What are we to do?

Galatians 3:24-27. So the law was put in charge to lead us to Christ that we might be justified by faith. Now that faith has come, we are no longer under the supervision of the law. You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.

The Gospel accounts provided claims and proofs concerning the identity of Jesus as the Christ. Continuing in a natural sequence; the book of Acts presented the approved pattern of response to that belief and the consequence of that action on the part of the hearer. *Acts 2:41 Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day.* The inescapable conclusion is that only those who accept the message and respond in obedience through baptism shall be added. It is appropriate to note that one does not “join” the Church; he is **added** as a result of faith and obedience in baptism. And it is also worth noting that the adding is not done by human committee, but by the Lord himself. *Acts 2:47".....And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved".* The use of the term saved indicates that the former condition was a state of being lost.

The difference, for the obedient believer, between his former condition and his present situation is pictured on the magnitude of the difference between life and death, darkness and light, without hope to wonderful expectations of an eternal home in heaven. In view of the fact that this is a completely new life, the believer must come to, and maintain, an awareness of who he was, in contrast to who he is now; and why he is here, as well as what he must be doing, and what situations and conflicts may be expected while engaged in the work assigned.

Colossians 2:12-13 having been buried with him in baptism and raised with him through your faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead. When you

were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your sinful nature, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins,

The epistles, or letters, were written to meet the needs of God's people in regard to the **who, what, why and how** of the new life that we have been called to by the Gospel. Because we have heard, believed, and responded in obedience to the Gospel, we are found in the very state that the epistles are focused on. Consequently, our greatest time and efforts in study should be directed toward an understanding of the instructions found in these letters. However, do not forget the elephant and the blind men; everything must be understood in the fabric of context. We can not hope to properly comprehend the epistles without a background understanding of the balance of the Scriptures.

Some of those letters are addressed to individuals, some to a specific congregation, and others have a more general address, but they all have a common goal of establishing patience endurance and faithfulness on the part of all of God's children.

*Hebrews 6:10-12 God is not unjust; he will not forget your work and the love you have shown him as you have helped his people and continue to help them. We want each of you to show this same diligence to the very end, in order to make your hope sure. We do not want you to become lazy, **but to imitate those who through faith and patience inherit what has been promised.***

Peter's first letter focuses on understanding who we are and what our purpose in life is while we remain among the living. *I Peter 2:4-5: As you come to him, the living Stone--rejected by men but chosen by God and precious to him-- you also, like living stones, are **being built into a spiritual house** to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. He calls on us to remember who we are as well as who we were: *I Peter 2:9-12 But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy. Dear friends, I urge you, as aliens and strangers in the world, to abstain from sinful desires, which war against your soul. Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us.**

Peter goes on to describe, in more detail, the inclusive nature of the charge to “live such good lives”. The scope of that call is without bounds and includes respect for civil authority, social and business relations, family structure and responsibility. And as he begins to bring this charge to a conclusion, he tells us that there is a clear purpose in this whole mission. The point is to bring our life to a place of being looked on with respect, (“that you may inherit a blessing”) or a condition of being well spoken of. And once in that position you must be ready to give an answer concerning why you believe what you believe. The question is not about what you believe, for that has already been proclaimed by your life. The question that we must be prepared to answer is: why you believe it? Is your faith by chance or choice? Do you believe because your mother told you or is your faith based on the evidences of God’s own creation and inspired word? (In some fashion this book is my answer, even if no one ever asks; I must be prepared to give an answer). With God’s help and teaching we will have learned to “love life and see good days”.

I Peter 3:8-12 Finally, all of you, live in harmony with one another; be sympathetic, love as brothers, be compassionate and humble. Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult, but with blessing, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing. For, "Whoever would love life and see good days must keep his tongue from evil and his lips from deceitful speech. He must turn from evil and do good; he must seek peace and pursue it. For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and his ears are attentive to their prayer, but the face of the Lord is against those who do evil."

The purpose of this book is not to get into a detailed study of individual letters, but simply to bring us to the point of being prepared to do so. The more we understand about the love of God, the greater our motivation to listen, learn, and put into practice the treasures of wisdom and understanding that he has made available to us in Christ.

Colossians 2:2-7. My purpose is that they may be encouraged in heart and united in love, so that they may have the full riches of complete understanding, in order that they may know the mystery of God, namely, Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. I tell you this so that no one may deceive you by fine-sounding arguments. For though I am absent from you in body, I am present with you in spirit and delight to see how orderly you are and how firm your faith in Christ is. So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live in him, rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with

thankfulness.

God has no needs, there is no hidden agenda in the instructions that he gives to man. We do not bring to God anything that he is lacking, for He does not have any need. All of what he teaches us is exactly what is best for **us**-- and He is the sole source of all that is good and his desire is for **our welfare**.

Acts 17:24-25 "The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by hands. And he is not served by human hands, as if he needed anything, because he himself gives all men life and breath and everything else.

Isaiah 48:17-18 This is what the LORD says-- your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel: "I am the LORD your God, who teaches you what is best for you, who directs you in the way you should go. If only you had paid attention to my commands, your peace would have been like a river, your righteousness like the waves of the sea.

CHAPTER XIII. TIME AND TIMING

**“Dost thou love life? Then do not squander time
for that is the stuff life is made of.”.....Ben Franklin**

A. TIME: “IN THE BEGINNING”

Time is the fabric of life, the calibration of our physical existence, the framework into which we must set the parts in order to grow and mature in our understanding of the whole of the gift we have been given when God blessed us with time in the realm of the living. Time is the medium in which we are taught the fundamentals of life through instructions, and experiences of cause and effect. In keeping with the principle of working from the general to the specific, which we talked about much earlier, the first few chapters of Genesis identify the major themes of the revelation of God to man. Time & timing; God & Satan; life & death; love & hate; good & evil; truth & deception; actions, attitudes and consequences, and etc., etc. All these subjects will be expanded on as the reader progresses through the accounts that have been recorded for our learning. Through exposure to God’s creation and his revealed word we are able to be equipped to make wise choices to the benefit of ourselves and all who touch our life, both present and future. Through the grace of God, we have each been given an opportunity to “love life and see good days”.

With the first three words of Genesis, (“In the beginning”), we are introduced to the overwhelming concept of **time**. We view the universe coming into being through an **orderly** sequential process which is described early in God’s revealed word. This orderly progression of creation moved through a series of six distinct periods of **time** described by the Hebrew word “yowm” which has been translated as “day”. The word is defined by a period of time bracketed by a heating and a cooling, which is not necessarily a 24 hour solar day as so many individuals would claim. And in fact they are not even necessarily of the same duration. We need not, and should not, press words beyond their linguistic and contextual definitions. The word “yowm” is of very broad possible understanding. The certainty of what God is telling us is that he brought the universe into being through six distinct **time** periods of heating and cooling. The point of importance is that **time** and physical existence came into being in an orderly creative process. As to the exact time frame of this process, we do not know: but one thing we do know is that **time** does not govern God, he governs **time**; it

is his creation and he will certainly use it to his own purpose.. *II Peter 3:8. But do not forget this one thing, dear friends: With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day. Matthew 19:26. Jesus looked at them and said, "With man this is impossible, but **with God all things are possible.**"* The manifold purposes of **time** and physical existence are certainly numerous and complex, but there is a sure and certain basic bond of purpose in all of creation that is expressed in this verse from Paul's letter to the Colossians. *Colossians 1: 16. For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; **all things were created by him and for him.*** By this verse we clearly understand that all creation is focused on the benefit of mankind through salvation. For it is clearly written: *Luke 19:10 "For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost."*

Time is a concept that we grow more keenly aware of as our own time progresses and the horizon of mortality comes into view. The greater our understanding of the quantitative nature of time the stronger our motivation to use it wisely. Time is precious and we diligently seek to instill this awareness in our children with that often repeated phrase:.. "don't waste time". In business contracts it is frequently written.... "time is of the essence"... when it comes to investments; timing makes all the difference.... "buy low and sell high". In life we say: .. time to get up, time to take a bath, time to brush your teeth, time to cook, time to eat, time to take out the trash, time to go to school, time to go to work, time to go home, time to go shopping, time to clean the house, time to go to church, time to remember, time to forget, time for supper, time for the dishes, time for the laundry, time to think, time to rest, time to sleep, etc. and etc., and finally time to start all over again in the cycle of time. Time governs much of life, but God governs time; it is a primary and powerful part of his creation and a major tool by which he works all things for the good of those who love him.

Romans 8:28 And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.

Time, like money and power, is quantitative and has great potential when properly used but also has an equal, but opposite, capacity for destruction when wrongly employed. Wisdom teaches time management; wasting time can have grave consequences. There is good reason for the urgency involved in the call to use time

wisely. The following proverb helps to illustrate this fundamental principle about the value of time and the consequences of carelessness.

Proverbs 24:30-34 I went past the field of the sluggard, past the vineyard of the man who lacks judgment; thorns had come up everywhere, the ground was covered with weeds, and the stone wall was in ruins. I applied my heart to what I observed and learned a lesson from what I saw: A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to rest-- and poverty will come on you like a bandit and scarcity like an armed man.

We are urged, by the wisdom of Solomon, to make the most of the time that we are given because the quality as well as the quantity of time is swiftly passing away and we must seize every opportunity that we are given. Life is moving quickly from dust to dust and soon our spirit will fly away back to God who made it. And in the end of the matter we must give an accounting of how we spent that precious and perishable gift of time that God has so graciously given us in this life.

Ecclesiastes 12:1-7 Remember your Creator in the days of your youth, before the days of trouble come and the years approach when you will say, "I find no pleasure in them"-- before the sun and the light and the moon and the stars grow dark, and the clouds return after the rain; when the keepers of the house tremble, and the strong men stoop, when the grinders cease because they are few, and those looking through the windows grow dim; when the doors to the street are closed and the sound of grinding fades; when men rise up at the sound of birds, but all their songs grow faint; when men are afraid of heights and of dangers in the streets; when the almond tree blossoms and the grasshopper drags himself along and desire no longer is stirred. Then man goes to his eternal home and mourners go about the streets. Remember him--before the silver cord is severed, or the golden bowl is broken; before the pitcher is shattered at the spring, or the wheel broken at the well, and the dust returns to the ground it came from, and the spirit returns to God who gave it.

Solomon, in his great wisdom, proclaims that there is a right time for everything that needs to be done. Not only time to carry out the activities that responsible individuals are required to accomplish, but those things must be set in priority sequence. There is obviously a critical order in the sequencing of our actions. To close the barn door is certainly important, but if you do so after the horse has already left the

stall; your actions become useless. It is not only time for actions, but the timing of those actions that are also of great importance.

Ecclesiastes 3:1-7 There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under heaven: a time to be born and a time to die, a time to plant and a time to uproot, a time to kill and a time to heal, a time to tear down and a time to build, a time to weep and a time to laugh, a time to mourn and a time to dance, a time to scatter stones and a time to gather them, a time to embrace and a time to refrain, a time to search and a time to give up, a time to keep and a time to throw away, a time to tear and a time to mend, a time to be silent and a time to speak, a time to love and a time to hate, a time for war and a time for peace.

In the process of timing, as Solomon noted, we are sometimes called on not to act. For some reason we seem to want to act when we should restrain ourselves and restrain ourselves when we should act. One of Satan's most effective tools is to intimidate us to action without knowledge, thus putting ourselves in a more vulnerable condition. *Proverbs 19:2. It is not good to have zeal without knowledge, nor to be hasty and miss the way.* During the Exodus when the Israelites came to the shore of the Red Sea and looked up to see Pharaoh's whole army closing in on them they were frightened and ready to scatter. But they were instructed to **stand still**, and to their credit, they obeyed that order. What seemed a certain catastrophe opened up to a great opportunity. They crossed over that Red Sea on dry ground, and their enemy was completely washed away. On the other hand, time and history give us another example, but this one is from the dark side of things. As recorded in I Samuel 13, King Saul, who was instructed to **wait** for Samuel to make the burnt offering and the fellowship offerings, was overtaken by fear and took it on himself to make the offerings against the instructions given him. The result of his actions, when he should have waited, was disastrous to himself and his entire family. Patience is a vital part of the Christian character that must be nourished by faith. *Hebrews 6:12. We do not want you to become lazy, but to imitate those who through **faith and patience** inherit what has been promised.*

B. MATURITY: THE OBJECTIVE OF TIME:

God has blessed each of us with the gift of time through which we have been given the opportunity to learn and grow to maturity, thus bearing fruit and becoming useful to ourselves and others around us. The sequential product of time and growth is

maturity. When a child is born he is weighed and measured. After a certain amount of **time** has passed he will be weighed and measured again in order to be assured that proper progress is being made toward maturity. Growth and maturity are the normal expectations of time and if it does not occur we should diligently seek the cause of this failure in order to make corrections. We clearly understand this critical function of time in the physical world and it is vital that we comprehend it in the spiritual realm of things. The writer of the Hebrew letter expresses his concern that time invested has not produced the level of maturity that should be expected. *Hebrews 5:12 In fact, though by this **time** you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the elementary truths of God's word all over again. You need milk, not solid food!*

1. Prophecies as a tools of time:

All things that occur within the fabric of time have some bearing on bringing about growth to maturity for those in the land of the living. This is especially true concerning prophecies which are a major tool employed by time to bring the reader to a fuller realization of the existence, character, identity, and care of God. It is abundantly clear that time is a necessary ingredient for prophecies concerning future events to function. This subject, as a proof of the identity of God, was discussed much earlier in this book. However, I would like to sight this early example from the opening chapters of Genesis. When Man was placed in the garden he was given certain clear and simple instructions.....*Genesis 2:17. but you must **not eat** from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it **you will surely die.***" When we reach the fifth chapter we note that the word "**died**" occurs over and over again, something like seven times in that one chapter. Repetition has a function to drive home a point with such power as to prevent forgetting a major lesson. Thus we see prophecies functioning as a tool of time to provide growth and bring us to maturity.

2. Examples are tools of time to teach and lead us to maturity:

Romans 15:4 For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope. In this verse we are given insight into the value of those events that are recorded in the pages of Old Testament history. These things are written for our learning. All through time, over and over again, the pattern of **Actions ...Attitudes...and Consequences** are recorded for our instruction and encouragement. In harmony with

all reason and rational thought processes: If we assemble right attitudes and actions we will generate positive consequences. And if we assemble wrong attitudes or actions we will certainly reap the consequences, just as the history of **time** has so clearly taught us. The author of the letter to the Hebrews has indicated that we are surrounded with a great cloud of witnesses for the very purpose of teaching us these things. *Hebrews 12:1-3 Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. **Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.*** Let us not waste the examples of those who have preceded us in the fabric of time. Consider with care the attitudes, actions and consequences that came to Adam and Eve, Cain and Able, Noah, Abraham, Lot, the people of Sodom, and that whole cloud of witnesses that call aloud from the pages of time in Old Testament history.

In Peter's second letter he calls on us to make just such an observation concerning proofs of consequences both from a positive as well as a negative view point. In order to demonstrate the inclusive scope of this principle he cites examples of angels, men, whole populations, and nations: there are no exclusions from the principle of attitudes, actions and consequences. History demonstrates the certainty of this principle and illustrates the power of God to accomplish his purpose in all these matters. How very blessed we are in that we don't have to discover these things by painful personal experience if we are willing to open our hearts and minds to the treasures preserved within the pages of God's revelation to mankind. To learn by instruction rather than consequences is not only swifter, it is much less painful and costly in terms of loving life and seeing good days.

*II Peter 2: 4-9 For if God did not spare **angels** when they sinned, but sent them to hell, putting them into gloomy dungeons to be held for judgment; if he did not spare **the ancient world** when he brought the flood on its ungodly people, but protected **Noah**, a preacher of righteousness, and seven others; if he condemned the cities of **Sodom and Gomorrah** by burning them to ashes, and made them **an example** of what is going to happen to the ungodly; and if he rescued **Lot**, a righteous man, who was distressed by the filthy lives of lawless men (for that righteous man, living among them*

day after day, was tormented in his righteous soul by the lawless deeds he saw and heard)-- if this is so, then the Lord knows how to rescue godly men from trials and to hold the unrighteous for the day of judgment, while continuing their punishment.

Time is the medium through which examples have been given to us for guidance and it is the means by which we are able to be useful to those who look to us for a pattern of life. Imitation is the primary avenue through which children learn and examples are always received with greater weight than words. “Your actions are speaking so loudly that I can not hear your words”. The obvious consequence of this truth is that we must learn to be imitators of the Lord so that the message will be presented as an example in our own life. *Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus:(Philippians 2:5)* We cannot be like the Father unless we know him and we cannot know him unless we learn his ways.

Ephesians 5:1 Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children

Proverbs 20:1 Even a child is known by his actions, by whether his conduct is pure and right.

1 Thessalonians 1:6-10 You became imitators of us and of the Lord; in spite of severe suffering, you welcomed the message with the joy given by the Holy Spirit. And so you became a model to all the believers in Macedonia and Achaia. The Lord's message rang out from you not only in Macedonia and Achaia--your faith in God has become known everywhere. Therefore we do not need to say anything about it, for they themselves report what kind of reception you gave us. They tell how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead--Jesus, who rescues us from the coming wrath.

3. Set priorities and learn the lessons of time:

“First things first”, “get your homework done before you go out to play”, “no TV until you get the dishes done and take out the trash”....and the list goes on and on. Early in life, as little children, we were exposed to this basic principle. We understand the necessity to prioritize our time in the ordinary things of life. The order of importance of activities is governed by the degree of awareness of consequences of our actions. When the consequences of our actions are not generating the results that we desire it is time to reexamine our value schedule. Consequences are a great gift from God through which we are continually guided toward positive goals. The prophet

Haggai said: *Haggai 1:3-11. Then the word of the LORD came through the prophet Haggai: "Is it a time for you yourselves to be living in your paneled houses, while this house remains a ruin?" Now this is what the LORD Almighty says: "Give careful thought to your ways. You have planted much, but have harvested little. You eat, but never have enough. You drink, but never have your fill. You put on clothes, but are not warm. You earn wages, only to put them in a purse with holes in it." This is what the LORD Almighty says: "Give careful thought to your ways. Go up into the mountains and bring down timber and build the house, so that I may take pleasure in it and be honored," says the LORD. "You expected much, but see, it turned out to be little. What you brought home, I blew away. Why?" declares the LORD Almighty. "Because of my house, which remains a ruin, while each of you is busy with his own house. Therefore, because of you the heavens have withheld their dew and the earth its crops. I called for a drought on the fields and the mountains, on the grain, the new wine, the oil and whatever the ground produces, on men and cattle, and on the labor of your hands."*

We put ourselves in a constant state of worry as to how we are going to meet our numerous responsibilities in this life. There is a proper order in the use of our time and God the Father will assist those children who are willing to learn and apply that knowledge. He rewards good choices and hinders those who resist instruction. He knows the full spectrum of our needs and is willing to guide us to success in this life as well as the life to come. Prioritizing our time is a key element in learning to “love life and see good days”. We are not on our own, God is our helper.... Time to stop worrying and start living.

*Matthew 6:25-34 "Therefore I tell you, **do not worry** about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more important than food, and the body more important than clothes? Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? Who of you by **worrying** can add a single hour to his life? "And why do you **worry** about clothes? See how the lilies of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? So **do not worry**, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For the pagans run after all these things, and **your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But seek first his kingdom and his***

righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.

4. Good times and bad times:

Some times bad things happen to good people and we ponder the purpose in God allowing such events to occur in the stream of time. We understand that there is, in this life, a great conflict going on between good and evil and those who practice righteousness ought not to be greatly surprised when they encounter oppression. This principle was clearly demonstrated in the life of Jesus, and those who follow in those foot steps ought not to be surprised when they encounter the same results. *I Peter 4:12 Dear friends, do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you.* When we experience such consequences in the exercise of righteousness we need to be aware that God is absolute “Sovereign” and will work all these things for the good of those who love him just as Paul wrote to the Romans. *Romans 8:28. And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.* When Paul was imprisoned he wrote to those at Philippi with this expression of understanding why such things were allowed to happen and the positive use that God has made of such events. *Philippians 1:12-13 Now I want you to know, brothers, that what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel. As a result, it has become clear throughout the whole palace guard and to everyone else that I am in chains for Christ.*

In the life of Joseph we observe many harsh and cruel events that happened to a good and faithful man. And the painful part of the whole thing was that the evil was initiated by the actions of his own brothers. However, we also are given some insight into why these things were allowed to happen the way they did. Joseph himself expresses his understanding in his own words as he speaks to his brothers after the death of his father. *Genesis 50:19-20. But Joseph said to them, "Don't be afraid. Am I in the place of God? You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives.*

In the fabric of physical existence there is a place for good times and bad times

in the process of bringing the righteous safely home. *Ecclesiastes 7:14* *When times are good, be happy; but when times are bad, consider: God has made the one as well as the other. Therefore, a man cannot discover anything about his future.*

5. The function of maturity:

Time is the soil in which growth takes place and maturity is the produce of growth. If we are willing to allow his word to have free course in our life, God will make something useful out of us. *Isaiah 64:8*. *Yet, O LORD, you are our Father. We are the clay, you are the potter; we are all the work of your hand.*

Ephesians 4:14-16 *Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming. Instead, **speaking the truth in love**, we will in all things **grow up** into him who is the Head, that is, Christ. From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, **as each part does its work.***

The point to which God is guiding and encouraging us through the course of time is when we are able to participate in the divine nature as well as escape the corruption that is in the world caused by evil desires. In that condition grace and peace will be ours in abundance. TIME and KNOWLEDGE of GOD and JESUS is the medium in which this whole process must come to fruition. Through time and instruction we are learning to participate in His divine nature: "*Be merciful, just as your Father is **merciful***". "*But just as he who called you is holy, so be **holy** in all you do; for it is written: "**Be holy, because I am holy.**"* "*A new command I give you: Love one another. As **I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.***"

II Peter 1:2-4 *Grace and peace be yours in abundance through the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord. His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. **Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.***

C. TIMING... “The Fullness of Time”

Timing is not only the calibration of existence, it is the sequencing, or order of things relative to each other. It is directly related to the concept of prioritizing, or putting things in proper order relative to purpose. There was a time and reason for the Egyptian bondage which Joseph explained. And there was an exact time involved in the freedom from that slavery as expressed in Exodus chapter twelve: *12:40-41 Now the length of time the Israelite people lived in Egypt was 430 years. **At the end of the 430 years, to the very day, all the LORD's divisions left Egypt.*** There is a reason and precision of timing related to the administration of mercy and justice which Revelation chapter 6:9-11 speaks of: *When he opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God and the testimony they had maintained. They called out in a loud voice, "How long, Sovereign Lord, holy and true, until you judge the inhabitants of the earth and avenge our blood?" Then each of them was given a white robe, and they were told to wait a little longer, until the number of their fellow servants and brothers who were to be killed as they had been was completed.* And there is a certainty in the process of consequences as noted by the prophet Nahum: *The LORD is slow to anger and great in power; **the LORD will not leave the guilty unpunished.** His way is in the whirlwind and the storm, and clouds are the dust of his feet.* There is even an exact timing for war as explained in Revelation 9:13-16 *The sixth angel sounded his trumpet, and I heard a voice coming from the horns of the golden altar that is before God. It said to the sixth angel who had the trumpet, "Release the four angels who are bound at the great river Euphrates." **And the four angels who had been kept ready for this very hour and day and month and year were released to kill a third of mankind.** The number of the mounted troops was two hundred million. I heard their number.*

There is a great focus on the orderly nature of the universe, we in fact set our clocks by the precision of God's creation. Our very existence is dependent on the precise timing of God's creative work. As we spoke of much earlier, we understand something about the creator by observing the creation. *“For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities--his eternal power and **divine nature--have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse**”.* God is a God of precise order concerning all things and most assuredly concerning the timing of the coming of Jesus. The prophet Daniel spoke of the events and political administrations that would come and go up to that exact time when Christ would come into this world. This event is the focal point of all time: past, present and

future. What was so special about this particular time in the history of man that God would send his son to save the world from sin and death at that precise time?

In Paul's letter to the Galatians he spoke of that event as a time that had fully come; indicating that it was a planned event that had come to pass exactly as designed. *Galatians 4:4. But when the **time had fully come**, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law,*. Christ came, as planned by God, at a time in history unlike any other. A point in time when he would provide the greatest impact on the people of the world.

There never was a time before, or since, that the political, intellectual, and religious situations had come together to form such a receptive condition for receiving and spreading the Kingdom of God. The merging of these particular situations would generate conditions of opportunity, understanding, and desire which are critical to opening the minds of men to the hearing of the gospel message that would be preached first in *Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.*" This was the strategic high point in the history of the world relative to God's objective of seeking and saving the lost. These things did not just happen by random chance. They are the subject of much of the prophecy that is revealed in Old Testament History.

I. POLITICAL SITUATIONS GENERATED OPPORTUNITY:

A. Civil Rights:

From the Babylonian to the Persian, Greek, and finally to the giant Roman Empire the concept of civil rights was evolving to the point that a citizen had a dependable measure of protection under the law. We observe both Paul and Silas making good use of their Roman citizenship while preaching the Gospel as recorded in the book of Acts. Under the protective umbrella of Roman civil law, Paul and Silas could travel throughout that whole Empire preaching the Gospel.

Prior to this situation, kingdoms and empires were, for the most part, regional in size and every political border was a life threatening hazard. The concept of civil rights ranged from none to undependable.

B. Political Peace:

The Roman Empire would be classed as a super power in the terms that would apply in our time. Because of there size and power there was no serious rival for world rule. The result of this condition was a situation of relative peace. A condition that did

not exist prior to this time. These conditions provided opportunity for the Gospel message to be proclaimed through out the whole empire without having to cross into politically hostile territory. No complications of border crossings.

C. Road System:

To further augment this opportunity we find an extensive network of roads being constructed throughout the Roman Empire to facilitate commerce and troop movements that were necessary to support such a huge economy. The Gospel message flowed right along with the troops and commerce to every corner of the Roman Empire.

D. Military Service:

In order to maintain an adequate standing army for an empire of this size the Romans enlisted provincials in military service. These soldiers carried their faith with them to the far reaches of the empire. Those Romans who were serving in areas where they had opportunity to hear and respond to the Gospel message would carry that conviction with them when they were transferred to another location. Men like Cornelius, a Roman Centurion, who eagerly responded to the gospel that was preached to him by Peter.

II. INTELLECTUAL CONDITIONS FOSTERED UNDERSTANDING:

Just as Daniel had prophesied, the Greeks overpowered the great Persian Empire. Alexander the Great, having been schooled by Aristotle, the famous philosopher and teacher, sought diligently to spread the Greek language, culture and respect for the process of reason, or logical thinking. The idea of elevating reason above emotions would equip the world to hear a gospel message that was rooted in a mental process of reason... "*Come now, **let us reason together**,*" says the LORD. ...The Greek culture and thought process took strong hold in the Greek Empire and continued to grow even stronger under the Romans. In the following references we see that Paul makes good use of reason to persuade those who were willing to think clearly with their minds.

*Acts 17:2-3 As his custom was, Paul went into the synagogue, and on three Sabbath days **he reasoned with them from the Scriptures**, explaining and proving that the*

Christ had to suffer and rise from the dead. "This Jesus I am proclaiming to you is the Christ, " he said.

*Acts 17:17 So he **reasoned** in the synagogue with the Jews and the God-fearing Greeks, as well as in the marketplace day by day with those who happened to be there.*

*Acts 18:4 Every Sabbath he **reasoned** in the synagogue, trying to persuade Jews and Greeks.*

*Acts 18:19 They arrived at Ephesus, where Paul left Priscilla and Aquila. He himself went into the synagogue and **reasoned** with the Jews.*

A. Language:

The Gospel was to be spread throughout the world. This universal message needed a universal language and that was exactly what was to be provided in this Koine Greek. More than three hundred years earlier Alexander and his armies carried this form of Greek language across the known world. Because of its precise clarity of meaning it soon took root in the business community and became the language of commerce throughout the empire. Even after the Romans took over as the dominate world power, this language remained and flourished as the universal language of business. A merchant in England could use this language to order merchandise from as far away as Egypt, Israel, North Africa, or any other place in the Roman Empire and be assured that his request would be clearly understood. The Old Testament had been translated into this language (The Septuagint) several hundred years earlier than the time when the New Testament was written. This was the original language in which the New Testament was also written. It is referred to now as a “dead language” because it is no longer used as a national language. As a result, the exact meanings and definitions of words remain unchanged from the time of writing. This fact is extremely valuable and important in preserving the exact meaning of the Scriptures. The medical community uses Latin, another dead language, for these same purposes.

B. Greek Culture:

By the time of the coming of Jesus, the Greek schools of philosophy had begun to decline because by man’s own wisdom they were unable to come to a knowledge of

the God that they knew must exist through simple observation of the world around them. In Paul's letter to the Romans he makes reference to this clear observation... *For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities--his eternal power and divine nature--have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse.* Reason and logic were eroding the various schools of philosophy as well as the practice of idolatry. The consequence of this action was to create an eager vacuum in the rational mind to come to know this God whose existence and character are declared by physical creation.

When Paul was in Athens he was invited to speak in the meeting of the Areopagus and he began his presentation of the Gospel by making note of the fact that the Greek people were still searching for God. So much so that they had an altar with this inscription: "TO AN UNKNOWN GOD."

Acts 17:22-27. Paul then stood up in the meeting of the Areopagus and said: "Men of Athens! I see that in every way you are very religious. For as I walked around and looked carefully at your objects of worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: TO AN UNKNOWN GOD. Now what you worship as something unknown I am going to proclaim to you. "The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by hands. And he is not served by human hands, as if he needed anything, because he himself gives all men life and breath and everything else. From one man he made every nation of men, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live. God did this so that men would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from each one of us.

III. RELIGIOUS SITUATIONS GENERATED A VACUUM OF DESIRE:

A. Gentiles:

The development of these huge empires of the Babylonians, Persians, Greeks, and now the world wide power of the Romans, had crushed the faith that various gentile nations had in their local gods. The result of the failure of these local gods and idols to protect them was to create a religious, emotional, and spiritual vacuum. This condition helped to open minds to the hearing of the gospel message.

B. Jews:

The Jews had their hope set on the coming of the Messiah that God had promised and whose kingdom had been prophesied by Daniel about five hundred years

earlier. They knew that four great Kingdoms would rise up in succession and in the time of the fourth Kingdom God would set up a Kingdom that would never be destroyed. They observed the passing into history of the Babylonians, Persians, Greeks, and now they were in that fourth Kingdom under the Romans. They were eagerly expecting and anticipating the coming of the Messiah and the Kingdom of God.

*Daniel 2:37-45 You, O king, are the king of kings. The God of heaven has given you dominion and power and might and glory; in your hands he has placed mankind and the beasts of the field and the birds of the air. Wherever they live, he has made you ruler over them all. You are that head of gold. "After you, another kingdom will rise, inferior to yours. Next, a third kingdom, one of bronze, will rule over the whole earth. Finally, there will be a fourth kingdom, strong as iron--for iron breaks and smashes everything--and as iron breaks things to pieces, so it will crush and break all the others. Just as you saw that the feet and toes were partly of baked clay and partly of iron, so this will be a divided kingdom; yet it will have some of the strength of iron in it, even as you saw iron mixed with clay. As the toes were partly iron and partly clay, so this kingdom will be partly strong and partly brittle. And just as you saw the iron mixed with baked clay, so the people will be a mixture and will not remain united, any more than iron mixes with clay. **"In the time of those kings, the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed, nor will it be left to another people. It will crush all those kingdoms and bring them to an end, but it will itself endure forever. This is the meaning of the vision of the rock cut out of a mountain, but not by human hands--a rock that broke the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver and the gold to pieces. "The great God has shown the king what will take place in the future. The dream is true and the interpretation is trustworthy."***

Political, intellectual, social, and religious circumstances had been all orchestrated and brought together in a way that had never happened before or since in the history of man. God has laid the groundwork and prepared the world for the planting of the seed of his word. The fullness of time had come.

Mark 1:15 "The time has come," he said. "The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!"

CHAPTER XIV. CHOICES

“choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve”

The first two chapters of Genesis establish the origin and nature of what God has created. He identifies, at least seven times, within the first chapter that the condition and nature of creation was good. Consequently we must understand that the beginning point of human existence was a condition of good. All that was right, good and pleasant in life was in the garden and God himself walked in that garden and talked with them. He was their God and they were his people. However chapter three marks a dramatic change due to the fact that man was given the freedom to choose, and in spite of clear instructions concerning consequences, made very poor choices. Bad choices, whether from ignorance or arrogance, results in bad consequences: it is just that simple. *“From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded; and from the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked”*.

Freedom is a gift from God through which man is privileged to participate and determine for himself what kind of future he is to have, both in terms of this present life and the life to come. True freedom to make choices does not exist unless there are genuine alternatives. In order for a choice to be made between good and evil, both must be capable of true existence. When an individual chooses to leave the light he generates for himself a place in the dark. *“This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: God is light; in him there is no darkness at all”*. Attitudes and actions are the mechanisms of choice and the generator of consequences.

Through God’s grace and the willingness of Jesus, a plan of salvation has been provided to mankind whereby men may be redeemed from his present state of separation from God and all that is truly good. Through this plan, which is empowered by the blood of Christ, we have the opportunity to learn how to “love life and see good days”; to come out of the darkness and back into the light. The horizon of the hope of man is no longer that lake of fire that has been prepared for the devil and his angels as described in the 20th chapter of Revelation. Revelation 21 opens with a general overview of the final home of the righteous. We see that it is a spiritual realm because all physical existence has been removed. The people are holy and live in the presence of God. This place has been prepared by God for his prepared people. No one comes into this city by chance. Sin and its family of evil are excluded because he has made all things new. Only those who are moved by “thirst” for righteousness to overcome the world will live in this city. The ungodly will not be found there. The first five

verses of chapter 22 describe life in that city from the perspective of purity, reliable source, and availability of spiritual water and food. Following this the subject turns to spiritual health, living conditions, government, employment, attitudes, ownership (belonging), mental perspective, light and time. These conditions are closely parallel to those that we observed in that garden described in Genesis chapter 2. This is the city toward which we have set the course of our life. If this journey is to be successful we will have to listen carefully to God's directions and choose our paths according to the map and not be misdirected by wrong choices. *Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding;*

*Revelation 21:3-5 And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for **the old order of things has passed away.**" He who was seated on the throne said, "**I am making everything new!**" Then he said, "Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true."*

The journey from where we are to where we want to go is paved with a long line of choices. God grants all men opportunity to make choices because through these decisions in life we are moved closer or farther away from the desired goal. One step at a time; that is the nature and function of choices. When we set out from home in our automobile to travel to a distant location, a city where we have never been before, we are keenly aware of the consequences of taking any wrong turns. At every cross road we take care to consult the road map so we will not get lost. We understand the concept of being hopelessly lost in this present world. How much greater is the danger of being eternally lost in the spiritual realm. Should we take any less care in choosing the course of our life? Choices always determine destinations.

God has given man, through history, example, and instruction, an understanding of the consequences of choices in life. He has blessed man with the freedom to choose and a clear understanding of the consequences of those choices. He has encouraged and assisted man in every way imaginable to make good choices. But in the end of the matter we judge ourselves by the choices we make in this life.

The following verses are excerpts selected from Moses's final speech to those who were in route to the promised land. We also are a people in route to the true promised land that was so clearly described for us in the closing chapters of the book

of Revelation. If these principles were important to them, they are all the more important to us. The idea of making good choices is not too difficult: the ingredients are knowledge, faith, and trust. Do we know him in whom we have believed and are we persuaded that he is able -- or shall we trust in ourselves for direction to that distant city that we have never seen, nor have any idea of its location, and the finding of which is a matter of life and death?

*Deuteronomy 30:11-15. Now what I am commanding you today is **not too difficult for you or beyond your reach**. It is not up in heaven, so that you have to ask, "Who will ascend into heaven to get it and proclaim it to us so we may obey it?" Nor is it beyond the sea, so that you have to ask, "Who will cross the sea to get it and proclaim it to us so we may obey it?" No, the word is very near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart so you may obey it. **See, I set before you today life and prosperity, death and destruction.***

*Deuteronomy 30:19-20. This day I call heaven and earth as witnesses against you that **I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Now choose life**, so that you and your children may live and that you may love the LORD your God, listen to his voice, and hold fast to him. For the LORD is your life, and he will give you many years in the land he swore to give to your fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.*

The choices and the consequences are inescapably clear to all rational beings. But why then is it that so few seem to find the way and even fewer stay on the right road of life? The problem has its root in the fact that there is a great force of evil and deception that is active in this present world and bent on the destruction of all that is good. It was through the work of this Serpent in the garden that evil was first allowed to come into this world. Sin, sorrow, tears, deception, death, and all that is the consequence of evil came into God's good creation through the work of Satan. Never underestimate the power of your enemy. Consider that the only thing in the whole world that was off limits to Eve was the fruit of that tree, and Satan was able to convince her that she needed that in spite of the sever warnings to the contrary. She was clearly aware of the warnings and even recited those instructions to Satan in the course of their conversation. Deception is his native tongue and he always appeals to men through the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life.

*1 Peter 5:6-10. Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time. Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you. **Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion***

looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that your brothers throughout the world are undergoing the same kind of sufferings. And the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast.

In Paul's letter to the Corinthians he voiced his concern for the Christians at Corinth that they might be led astray from Christ by the deception of Satan. The Devil is just as active, if not more so, as the time is slipping away and we approach the final judgment.

II Corinthians 11: 3 But I am afraid that just as Eve was deceived by the serpent's cunning, your minds may somehow be led astray from your sincere and pure devotion to Christ.

CHAPTER XV.

THE ADVERSARY

We have somewhat of an advantage over Adam and Eve in that there is a history of their disastrous encounter with the “Serpent” from which we can learn. They were apparently taken by surprise and were quite unaware of the “Serpent’s” hostile intentions. An important point that is made in this initial conflict is that ignorance does not, in any way, excuse one from consequences. And we also note that consequences have a wider impact than self alone. In all this we are introduced to a primary ingredient for victory in any conflict; physical and /or spiritual: **know your enemy**. We must understand his objectives, tactics, weapons, strengths, and limitations: The more clearly we comprehend these things about our adversary, the more successful we shall be in this great conflict. This is a life and death struggle; a combat situation between good and evil, and our success is pictured as dependent on putting on the **full armor of God**.

Ephesians 6:10-11 Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes.

We are first introduced to the Serpent in Genesis chapter three; in this encounter he is described as crafty, cunning, or subtle. However he has three other names by which he is called that help to define his character. In the book of Revelation he is described as a huge red dragon. Dragon is another form of serpent but what is added to that concept is the intimidation of the size of the creature and the color red which conveys the concept of power. The universal nature of the symbolisms of certain colors has to do with their physical characteristics; which is the result of God’s creation. It is not necessary to know why these colors have come to be used this way, but it is sort of interesting to me. The color red has the lowest, or longest frequency of the colors: this would be parallel to bass sounds. Consequently the color red projects to the human mind, because of its low frequency, the same authority as the deep voice of a drill sergeant. Because of this projected authority the color red is universally used where a strong statement of power and /or authority is needed: flags, traffic lights, brake lights, warning signs, etc.. Consequently the idea of this huge red dragon conveys tremendous aggressive power. Another name he goes by is “Devil”, which is a word that simply means to slander. This addresses another facet of his character. And finally, he is referred to as Satan which means adversary. And that is exactly what he

is toward mankind: he is the **enemy**.

A. THE GREAT DECEPTION:

Our initial contact with Satan is recorded in Genesis chapter three. The very first thing that we are told about the Serpent in the garden is that he is crafty, or cunning and subtle. This is one of the facets of his personality and perhaps his primary character trait. If his victim can be deceived into taking a wrong road in life on his own, he will be more likely to continue down that chosen path to his destruction without further efforts on the part of the deceiver; and perhaps even convince others to go with him. On the other hand, if the victim must be forced onto that wrong path by fear, oppression, or some other adversarial confrontation; he is more likely to seek an escape from his oppressor. Consequently we are warned by this example that deception will be a first line offensive move by our adversary the devil. The obvious counter measure against deception is knowledge of the truth. *"Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."*

1. Divide:

In those first five verses of Genesis chapter three we are shown the tools of Satan at work. The first of these is to separate the prey from the security of the group. This is a natural predatory approach that we observe in the wild animal kingdom; as well as in human warfare: divide and conquer. Jesus identified this fact in a phrase that is often quoted....*Luke 11:17 Jesus knew their thoughts and said to them: "Any kingdom divided against itself will be ruined, and a house divided against itself will fall.*

God has designed, and presented through his word, three specific groups for the welfare and defense of his people; the family, civil government, and the church. If Eve could be separated from the family unit, deceived, and then returned to that unit as an influence of corruption there was the potential to cause both to fall. This is in fact what came to pass. This was a clear calculated approach on Satan's part. He understood that the woman was specifically designed as a suitable helper to man and the influence of that bond was strong enough that the man was willing to leave father and mother for it. The right use of that bond produces a unit of great strength, but the wrong use results in disaster. He knows that a woman is a man's strength as well as his weakness. *Proverbs 18: 22 He who finds a wife finds what is good and receives favor from the LORD.*

Ecclesiastes 4: 9-12 Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their work: If one falls down, his friend can help him up. But pity the man who falls and has no one to help him up! Also, if two lie down together, they will keep warm. But how can one keep warm alone? Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken.

2. Misrepresent the instructions:

We discussed the subject of truth much earlier in this book. Truth is a clear and simple concept....in our legal system we are called on to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. The implication is that any additions or deletions from truth would void the validity of a statement. Satan is fully aware that we are dependent on truth as the key to our freedom and he must corrupt that weapon if he is to be successful in bringing humanity to full destruction. The first thing involved in overpowering the simple point of truth is to cloud the issue with polysyllabic verbiage. Solomon, in his wisdom, said: *The more the words, the less the meaning, and how does that profit anyone?*

*"Did God really say, 'You must not eat from **any** tree in the garden'?" In this exchange we observe that Satan first attempts to inject the idea that there was no freedom or goodness in this relationship and God was prohibiting them from eating from **any** tree in the garden. This was certainly a gross misrepresentation. It was a clear example of what happens when additions and /or subtractions are made to the truth. It becomes all together something else; it is no longer truth. When you change truth you destroy its very nature: either by addition and/or subtraction, Satan will attempt to change truth into something else which has no power. Many thousands of years later Paul wrote to the Galatians about this same problem of corruption of truth. *I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you by the grace of Christ and are **turning to a different gospel-- which is really no gospel at all.** Evidently some people are throwing you into confusion and are trying to pervert the gospel of Christ.**

*Mark 7:6-9 He replied, "Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you hypocrites; as it is written: "These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. They worship me in vain; **their teachings are but rules taught by men.**' You have let go of the commands of God and are holding on to the traditions of men." And he said to them: "You have a fine way of setting aside the commands of God in order to observe your own traditions!"*

The reader of God's word is warned early about adding or taking away from God's commands. And the closing book of Revelation warns once again about the consequences of changing any of God's instructions.

*Deuteronomy 4:2 **Do not add** to what I command you and **do not subtract** from it, but keep the commands of the LORD your God that I give you.*

*Revelation 22:18-19 **I warn everyone** who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: **If anyone adds anything** to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book. And **if anyone takes words away** from this book of prophecy, God will take away from him his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book.*

3. Deny consequences:

*The woman said to the serpent, "We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, but God did say, 'You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, **or you will die.**'"* No doubt Eve must have felt good about having remembered the instructions. But the battle was not, by any means, over. It is obviously not enough to have a knowledge of the truth if you are unwilling to act in harmony with that knowledge. A man who has knowledge of the fact that a hot stove will burn his hand if he touches it, and he goes on to put his hand on that hot stove, will certainly experience the same consequence as the man who is ignorant of that fact. Knowledge without faith is as useless as faith without actions. Satan was setting Eve up for the next wave of attack through which he planned to shake her faith in the power and character of God. *"**You will not surely die,**"* the serpent said to the woman. With these words the devil asserts that God either lied and /or is unable to carry out the consequences that he said would result from the eating of that fruit. When we reach Genesis chapter five we are overwhelmed with the constantly repeated phrase....***And he died.....And he died.....And he died.....And he died.*** The warning was true and the consequences certain....let us learn from the examples of that great cloud of witnesses that have gone before us as recorded on the pages of God's Holy Word. Don't get burned by lack of faith in the warnings that are so clearly set before us.

4. The Devil slanders God's motivation:

Following quickly behind the assertion that there are no consequences for sin,

Satan says: *"For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."* The name "devil", or "diablos" means slanderer and that is exactly what is going on here. The very root of faith is to believe in the existence of God as well as the fact that he is a rewarder of those who diligently seek him. *Hebrews 11:6 And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that **he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.***

All instructions given to man from God are purely for the good of man because God has no needs and consequently has no agenda beyond the welfare of humanity. This was a fact about the nature of God that Paul explained to those who listened to his address at the a meeting of the Areopagus in Athens. *"The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by hands. And he is not served by human hands, **as if he needed anything**, because he himself gives all men life and breath and everything else.* This principle was made clear to the reader of God's word very early in his revelation. *Deuteronomy 10:12-13 And now, O Israel, what does the LORD your God ask of you but to fear the LORD your God, to walk in all his ways, to love him, to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and to **observe the LORD's commands and decrees that I am giving you today for your own good?***

*Psalms 84:11-12 For the LORD God is a sun and shield; the LORD bestows favor and honor; **no good thing does he withhold from those whose walk is blameless. O LORD Almighty, blessed is the man who trusts in you.***

B. KNOW YOUR ENEMY:

As a consequence of reading from God's Word concerning the results of the encounter between the Serpent and Adam and Eve in the garden, we are aware of the fact that we have a very powerful and crafty adversary. The natural question that should arise from a knowledge of this dangerous situation is: what should we be doing to prepare ourselves for this conflict? The first, and clearly obvious action we must take is to be alert. Evidently Eve had no idea what this serpent was up to; she was apparently taken by complete surprise.

1. BE ALERT:

The first line of defense in any conflict is to be alert so that we will not be caught off guard by a sneak attack. The element of surprise is a powerful tool in any

form of warfare. The motivation for this level of attention is bound up in the understanding that we are the prey and the devil is the predator. Prey that is unaware of the approach of the hunter will certainly be invited for supper. If we fail in this elementary principle, death is certain. The ravenous nature of the creature that is hunting us is characterized as a wolf in one scripture, a lion in another, and finally as an enormous red dragon.

a. Wolf:

If we are alert and listen to the “good shepherd” he will guard us from the wolf. But if we fail to be alert to the danger, and wander from the flock we will certainly perish. Only the “good shepherd” is willing to lay down his life to protect those sheep who belong to him. Bound up in this Biblical reference is the understanding that we are not on our own in this confrontation, in fact if we were on our own, death at the hand of the predator would be a certainty. Our refuge from the wolf is in the sheepfold of Christ and there is no other place of safety. John recorded these words of Jesus concerning this relationship and the absolute safety of remaining in that “sheepfold”.

John 10:11-14 "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. The hired hand is not the shepherd who owns the sheep. So when he sees the wolf coming, he abandons the sheep and runs away. Then the wolf attacks the flock and scatters it. The man runs away because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep. "I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me--

The level of security in this relationship is absolute, no power is able to snatch us from the Father so long as we are willing to be alert and follow the shepherd.

*John 10:27-29 My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; **no one can snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all ; no one can snatch them out of my Father's hand.***

Romans 8: 38-39 For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

b. Lion:

There is no “in season” or “out of season” for a lion to hunt. He prowls around at will and hunts his prey with great skill and intimidates them into foolish behavior by his freighting roaring. The charge is not to be intimidated, by all this roaring, into moving out of the realm of safety. **Be alert and be self controlled.** The function of intimidation is to make you lose your self-control and do something that will expose you to danger.

*1 Peter 5:8-9 **Be self-controlled and alert.** Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that your brothers throughout the world are undergoing the same kind of sufferings.*

c. Enormous Red Dragon:

The character and powerful capacity of the devil is again symbolized for us in chapter twelve of the book of Revelation as an enormous red dragon. *Then another sign appeared in heaven: an enormous red dragon with seven heads and ten horns and seven crowns on his heads.* In addition to the size, color, and reptilian relationship to the serpent in the garden, we are given several other symbolic descriptions of our adversary. First we note that he is described as having seven heads. Seven is a number that is used symbolically to convey the idea of complete, and the head identifies the mental perspective, or mind-set. In these symbols we see that he is fully focused on the destruction of good. He is not distracted by anything. He has no other prey than Christians. The ten horns symbolically represent his great power. Anyone who has ever had an encounter with a bull, goat, or any other horned creature understands how the term “horn” came to universally symbolize power. The seven crowns are specifically identified as diadems, meaning political powers, as opposed to the idea of victory crowns. The meaning of this is that Satan will seek to corrupt civil power and direct it toward his objectives.

2. KNOW YOUR ADVERSARY:

With the concept in mind that the devil is like a hungry wolf, lion, or an enormous red dragon, all on the hunt for Christians; which is the only prey that he desires: we should be motivated to remain alert. However, being alert is only the first principle of defense; we must also be aware of the nature and methods of our predator. It is important to understand that the level of Satan’s motivation is related to his own self defense. For we, as followers of Christ, are joint participants with Jesus in the pursuit of the destruction of the Devil’s work. We are a problem to “darkness” because

we keep turning on the “light”.

a. Nature:

The nature of the devil and his followers is identified by their **actions**. This is a clear and uncluttered concept that Solomon spoke of with these words: *Even a child is known by his **actions**, by whether his conduct is pure and right.* John goes on to state that the devil has been this way from the very beginning, thus we see that **every** thought, intent, and motivation on his part has been evil from the very start....**there is no good in him**. Darkness is totally incompatible with light; they can not coexist. Light is always more powerful than darkness, when the two are brought together, light always overpowers the darkness. That is why we pay those electric bills every month...so we can drive out darkness with light. Once again the physical creation is teaching us something about the spiritual realm. The nature of God, as opposed to the nature of the devil, is pure light; there is no darkness in him..... *This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: **God is light; in him there is no darkness at all.***

*I John 3:8 He who does what is sinful is of the devil, because the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to **destroy the devil's work.***

*John 8: 42-47 Jesus said to them, "If God were your Father, you would love me, for I came from God and now am here. I have not come on my own; but he sent me. Why is my language not clear to you? Because you are unable to hear what I say. You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father's desire. **He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies.** Yet because I tell the truth, you do not believe me! Can any of you prove me guilty of sin? If I am telling the truth, why don't you believe me? He who belongs to God hears what God says. The reason you do not hear is that you do not belong to God."*

b. Methods: Divide, Divert, Deceive,....Death

In the opening pages of this chapter we talked about those things that are recorded in Genesis chapter three through which we observed the methods of the devil at work as the serpent in the garden. In the succession of events, the first thing we noted was the fact that the serpent **divided** Eve from her support system and **diverted** her focus away from all of what she was blessed with to the one thing in all the world

that she was told to leave alone. And finally he **deceived** her into thinking that there are no negative consequences of sin. Satan is able to bring this process to fruition through his crafty deceptive character: He comes to us camouflaged as a friend.....*Matthew 7:15-18 "Watch out for false prophets. **They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves. By their fruit you will recognize them.** Do people pick grapes from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? Likewise every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit.*

The tools, or weapons, that the devil brings to these conflicts are always the same. We saw them applied in the Genesis account and John speaks of them in this fashion: *I John 2:15-17 Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For everything in the world--the **cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does--comes not from the Father but from the world. The world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives forever.***

The lust of the eyes, lust of the flesh, and the pride of life.....These elements are clearly seen at work in the encounter between Satan and Eve in the garden.... *When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was **good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it.***

Another facet of the approach of Satan is to corrupt power that God has put in place for the welfare of his people. The Gospel has been identified as the power of God unto salvation. *I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is **the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile.*** Within the framework of that Gospel are defined the structure, power, and function of three specific relationships in which we exist. The family, civil government, and the church. The power that is vested in each of these relationships is designed by God to cooperate for the welfare of individual human beings. They function together in bringing individuals to a saved relationship and guard them through faith in that condition. Satan is aware that God has made power resident in these relationships for good and he seeks to divert that power from constructive purposes to destructive ends. There is great beneficial power in these relationships when properly administered, and consequently there is an equal capacity for destruction when that power is wrongly employed. This principle is clearly demonstrated by simple observation of the force of

fire. When the great power of fire is properly directed it can warm our homes, cook our food, generate electricity, and a whole host of other beneficial consequences. However, when the power of fire is misdirected it can destroy both property and lives.

3. RESPOND APPROPRIATELY:

We are in a high state of alert because of an awareness of the fact that we are being hunted by a powerful predator. The nature and methods of our adversary are clearly understood from past examples of his attacks. History, as always, is a great instructor. Our function in this world is not solely defensive in nature: we are “soldiers of the cross”, we have put on the **full armor of God** and that sword of the Spirit has an offensive purpose. As a military force we have objectives beyond self defense. The simplest form of that objective is to overpower evil with good.

Ephesians 6:13-18. Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints.

*Do not be overcome by evil, but **overcome evil with good**. Remembering what John said about Jesus, our commander: **The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work**. Peter writes extensively about the details of who we are, why we are here, and what we should be doing. This is a concept that can only be fully understood or appreciated through a verse by verse study of the individual epistles. Jesus has, through his death, burial, and resurrection; personally overpowered the big guns of our enemy which are identified as sin and death. **"Do not be afraid. I am the First and the Last. I am the Living One; I was dead, and behold I am alive for ever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and Hades.***

C. KNOW YOUR WEAPONS AND USE THEM WITH SKILL:

1. PATIENT ENDURANCE AND FAITHFULNESS:

The author of the Hebrew letter identifies the fact that patient endurance and faithfulness are key to overcoming our adversary. Revelation chapter thirteen also

speaks to the point that the magnitude of oppression the saints could experience calls for **patient endurance and faithfulness**. *He who has an ear, let him hear. If anyone is to go into captivity, into captivity he will go. If anyone is to be killed with the sword, with the sword he will be killed. This calls for patient endurance and faithfulness on the part of the saints.*

*Hebrews 6:12 We do not want you to become lazy, but to imitate those who **through faith and patience inherit what has been promised.***

Faith is, no doubt, the most elementary and overarching requirement if we are to be successful, both in terms of defense and offense in the army of the force for good. We are, in fact, defined as children of God through our attitude and actions in response to that faith. Paul, in writing to the Galatians, marks this principle as paramount with this simple phrase. ***The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love.***

Victory or defeat are bound up in this critical point. The power to deliver that necessary element of faith is found only through the hearing of the Word of God. It is not the result of an emotional experience or something that comes on you without effort on your part. ***Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ.***

I John 5:2-5 This is how we know that we love the children of God: by loving God and carrying out his commands. This is love for God: to obey his commands. And his commands are not burdensome, for everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith. Who is it that overcomes the world? Only he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God.

The central theme, or thought, of Revelation chapter fourteen is to present the means of securing “**patient endurance and faithfulness**”, which was identified in the previous chapter as the power by which we can overcome Satan’s attack. The chapter divides itself into three specific points: **Attitude. ..Knowledge...and Trust.**

1. Attitude: focus of the mind on: (Revelation 14:1-5)

- a. The Lamb: who he is, what he did, what he is doing
- b. Zion: The security in the stronghold of God
- c. 144,000: That qualified “cloud of witnesses”

2. Knowledge: Understanding that power of qualification: (14:6-13)

- a. Origin: from God
- b. Timing of presentation: Maximum effectiveness
- c. Identity: “Eternal Gospel”

- d. Availability: All who “live on the earth”
- e. Scope of presentation: “Loud” inescapable
- f. Content: Fear God, give Him glory, worship him as creator
- g. Motivational force of judgment: Both national and personal

3. Trust God: (14:14-20)

- a. Righteousness of God’s judgments: “white cloud”
- b. His capacity to carry out judgment: “sharp cycle”
- c. The timing of His judgments: “ripe”
- d. The double aspect of justice:

II Peter 2:9 if this is so, then the Lord knows how to rescue godly men from trials and to hold the unrighteous for the day of judgment, while continuing their punishment.

2. UNDERSTANDING THE ONLY LOCATION OF SECURITY:

There is only one safe place to be when the devil comes in search of those targets of opportunity and that is in the fortress of God. The security of God’s children is absolute in respect to preventing any outside force from taking us from that realm of safety. Jesus said: *I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; **no one can snatch them out of my hand.*** The psalmist speaks of the Lord as being a fortress: *Psalms 94:22 But the LORD has become **my fortress**, and my God the rock in whom I take refuge.* The prophet Jeremiah identifies the fact that it is not in man to direct his own steps and we know from Solomon’s proverbs that : *There is a way that seems right to a man, but in the end it leads to death.* These points taken in concert cause us to understand our complete dependence on the guidance and protection provided by God.

3. UNDERSTANDING THAT SECURITY IS CONDITIONAL:

Jude, a younger brother of Jesus, spoke of the need to contend earnestly for the faith due to godless men who are seeking to change the grace of God. After identifying the evil nature and actions of such men he goes on to identify just how the faithful are to carry out that charge to contend for the faith. The first point is that they must **remember** what the apostles said about such men, the second point of defense was to **build themselves up in the faith and pray. And then they are charged to keep themselves in God’s love.** The point that they are charged to keep themselves in God’s love indicates that it is possible to leave that realm of safety. Evidently an individual can be intimidated into being drawn off sides by a wrong response to evil men. We know that it is written: *Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with*

good. The basic message is the same: ***“this calls for patient endurance and faithfulness”***

*Jude 1:17-21 But, dear friends, **remember** what the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ foretold. They said to you, “In the last times there will be scoffers who will follow their own ungodly desires.” These are the men who divide you, who follow mere natural instincts and do not have the Spirit. But you, dear friends, **build yourselves up in your most holy faith and pray in the Holy Spirit. Keep yourselves in God's love as you wait for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to bring you to eternal life.***

That little word “if” conveys the point that our situation is always conditional. We will not be held against our will; only those who hunger and thirst for that relationship will remain in the realm of safety. The following words of Solomon speak to the conditional nature of our existence with God.

*Proverbs 2:1-5 My son, **if** you accept my words and store up my commands within you, turning your ear to wisdom and applying your heart to understanding, and **if** you call out for insight and cry aloud for understanding, and **if** you look for it as for silver and search for it as for hidden treasure, **then you will understand the fear of the LORD and find the knowledge of God.***

*I Corinthians 10:11-13 **These things happened to them as examples and were written down as warnings for us, on whom the fulfillment of the ages has come. So, if you think you are standing firm, **be careful that you don't fall!** No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it.***

4. UNDERSTAND THE END OF THE MATTER:

The conclusion of the war between good and evil is absolutely certain. We are blessed, through God's word, to view the end of the matter. We know the outcome and are consequently charged to wait patiently for God's timing for all these matters to be brought to a proper conclusion. We know the judge, the timing and conditions, who will be judged, where this judgment will take place, the basis of judgment, and even the final results. The conclusion of all things is certain: what remains is for each man to choose whom he will serve, then work and wait patiently; knowing that God is patient with us, not wanting any to perish. The harvest will come in due season: it is a

certainty. All the righteous are sealed, none shall be lost. On the other hand, “.....*the LORD will not leave the guilty unpunished.*”

Psalms 89:14 Righteousness and justice are the foundation of your throne; love and faithfulness go before you.

a. Judgment is a time of harvest or separation:

Matthew 25:31-34 "When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his throne in heavenly glory. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left. "Then the King will say to those on his right, `Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world.

Matthew 25: 41. "Then he will say to those on his left, `Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.

b. All things are subject to that judgment:

Solomon said, in the final verse of Ecclesiastes: *For God will bring every deed into judgment, including every hidden thing, whether it is good or evil.*

There will be no excuses or exceptions to this rule.

c. The judgment day:

What we know about the timing of judgment is that it will take place exactly when God plans for it to. Peter indicates that the exact time is unknown to any man for it will come like a thief. Timing is critical in any form of harvest and that is exactly what is going on in the case of judgment. Peter also speaks of those things that will coincide with that timing which help to clarify the fact that there are no do-over opportunities. All physical existence will pass away, consequently there are only two destinations available, the lake of fire or heaven. With this point in mind Peter asks the reader a simple question. *Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives.*

II Peter 3:10 But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare.

Without any exclusion; whether living or dead, great or small, all will stand before the throne of God to face judgment. That judgment will be according to what each person has done as recorded in their books. The individual will be held responsible for his own actions. The book of life will also be consulted and if anyone's name is not found in the book of life, he will be thrown into the lake of fire. There are some critical points being identified in this judgment scene. An individual is responsible for his actions in this life and these things are recorded in his own book and consequently have some bearing on judgment; the works that we have done are considered. However, no matter how good your works might have been, if your name is not found in the book of life you will not receive a positive result in your judgment.

Any rational being, knowing the importance of having his name appear on the pages of the book of life, would make certain that his name has been added to that book. The question that naturally follows is who does the adding and on what basis does that action take place? Acts chapter two identifies the attitudes and actions that precede the event of being added. And the one who does the adding is identified by these words: "... *And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved*".

Revelation 20:11-15. Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. Earth and sky fled from his presence, and there was no place for them. And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books. The sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them, and each person was judged according to what he had done. Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. The lake of fire is the second death. If anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.

CHAPTER XVI. ORDER

Order is a condition of logical or comprehensible arrangement of the separate parts of a group, and every true orderly situation indicates an intelligent causal force. This is a basic element of the universe which we discussed from the perspective of evidences much earlier in this book. At this point, as we are drawing everything to a conclusion, let us examine in summary some basic questions. If there is order in the universe, a point which we have asserted and demonstrated as true; then who is responsible for that order? What are his motivations, actions, and objectives in making things the way they are? In the observable cyclical nature of things, what should we anticipate will be the progression and outcome? How does this system work and why does it work the way it does? Evidently what we are asking for is an eternal perspective from God's view point as to why things are the way they are and what the purpose and outcome will be? We have already discussed the final judgment in the previous chapter. What we are looking at now is that collection of cyclical and orderly mechanisms that are designed to maximize the harvest of individuals who are to be rescued from sin and brought safely home to eternal salvation. That this is God's desire for man is clear from the following statement: *Do I take any pleasure in the death of the wicked? declares the Sovereign LORD. Rather, am I not pleased when they turn from their ways and live? (Ezekiel 18:23)* The level of God's desire to provide a way of salvation for man is clearly seen in the price he was willing to pay to make this possible.

A. Authority, Character, and Covenant of God: Revelation chapter 4:

The questions posed in the previous paragraph are carefully presented and answered in the book of Revelation starting with chapter four and progressing from that point. *Revelation 4:1* After this I looked, and there before me was a door standing open in heaven. And the voice I had first heard speaking to me like a trumpet said, "***Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after this.***" The door of heaven has been opened and John is called to come up there to view things from the eternal perspective of heaven. This is a vantage point that mortal man cannot take advantage of on his own. The great value of this heavenly perspective is that the end of the matter can be seen from the beginning and consequently we can observe all the parts of the puzzle in relation to the whole picture. Through this vantage point we are able to understand the order of things relative to God's objective of seeking and saving the lost. The stated purpose is that we may see what "***must take place after this***".

What John is to see is not what **might** take place; it is what **must** take place. The implication is that there is an exact, and dependable, cause and effect order and progression in the sequencing of things. We are able, through the viewpoint of heaven, to understand and make good use of this order and purpose.

The very first things that John was shown are described for us in the next few verses: *Revelation 4:2-3 At once I was in the Spirit, and there before me was a **throne** in heaven with **someone sitting on it**. And the one who sat there had the **appearance of jasper and carnelian**. A **rainbow, resembling an emerald, encircled the throne**.* The fact that there is a throne and someone is on that throne demonstrates that there is order and a sovereign ruler. The nature of that rule is symbolized by the ruler's appearance of jasper (diamond) and carnelian (ruby). The white color and physical strength of the diamond symbolizing strength and purity. The red color of the ruby presents the idea of authority and power. That emerald rainbow makes use of the symbolic message of the color green, which is peace. Green is used to convey that idea because of its dominant presence in the natural world around us. Consider the 23rd Psalm... *He makes me lie down in **green pastures**, he leads me beside quiet waters, .* The picture in this psalm is one of peace and security. The rainbow is a symbol of a peaceful covenant agreement that was used, and explained, in Genesis chapter 9:12-17.

A brief summary of what is seen in chapter four is the fact that God is the absolute sovereign of the universe, that he has the right and power to rule because he is the creator and sustainer of all things. The basis of his rule is righteousness and justice, the consequence of which is love and faithfulness. These same principles are presented by the Psalmist when he made the following remark: *Righteousness and justice are the foundation of your throne; love and faithfulness go before you.* (Psalm 89:14)

B. The Covenant, (the scroll), Empowered by Jesus: Revelation chapter 5:

*Revelation 5:1-3 Then I saw in the right hand of him who sat on the throne a **scroll with writing on both sides and sealed with seven seals**. And I saw a mighty angel proclaiming in a loud voice, "Who is worthy to break the seals and open the scroll?" But no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth could open the scroll or even look inside it.*

The scroll that we see in the opening verses of Revelation chapter five is the proclamation of the ruler that we saw in chapter four. The importance of the content is understood in the fact that it is in his right hand. The point that it has writing on both

sides indicates that nothing can be added: it is complete and full; lacking nothing. The seals are a mark of identity: (king's seal), and the act of sealing is a point of security. The number of those seals is seven, which conveys the complete level of ownership and absolute security of the content of the scroll.

A full search is made for someone qualified to open that scroll and put into effect the content of that proclamation. The consequence of not finding anyone qualified results in great sorrow on the part of John, for he knows that what is in the scroll is from God who demonstrates his love and faithfulness toward mankind. As long as the scroll is sealed there is no hope for man. Through Jesus's death burial and resurrection he qualifies himself to open the seals of that scroll and empower the content for the benefit of humanity. Great expressions of praise and thanksgiving arise from heaven and earth and they sing this new song: *"You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and **with your blood you purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation.** You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth."*

C. The Content of the Scroll Revealed and explained: Revelation chapter 6->

*Revelation 6:1-8 I watched as the Lamb opened the first of the seven seals. Then I heard one of the four living creatures say in a voice like thunder, "Come!" I looked, and there before me was a **white horse!** Its rider held a bow, and he was given a crown, and he rode out as a conqueror bent on conquest. When the **Lamb opened the second seal**, I heard the second living creature say, "Come!" **Then another horse came out, a fiery red one.** Its rider was given power to take peace from the earth and to make men slay each other. To him was given a large sword. When the **Lamb opened the third seal**, I heard the third living creature say, "Come!" I looked, and there before me was a **black horse!** Its rider was holding a pair of scales in his hand. Then I heard what sounded like a voice among the four living creatures, saying, "A quart of wheat for a day's wages, and three quarts of barley for a day's wages, and do not damage the oil and the wine!" When the **Lamb opened the fourth seal**, I heard the voice of the fourth living creature say, "Come!" I looked, and there before me was a **pale horse!** Its rider was named Death, and Hades was following close behind him. They were given power over a fourth of the earth to kill by sword, famine and plague, and by the wild beasts of the earth.*

These first four seals are bound together by the common symbol of the horse as an active messenger. The stated message of the entire book of Revelation is: "to show

his servants what must soon take place".(Revelation 1:1). The concept of understanding the order and outcome of the cycles of God's justice and mercy is what is being very carefully stated in these first four seals. The discussion in the book of Revelation that preceded this laid the foundational premise on which these seals are based. The discussions that will follow answers questions related to the timing of these cycles. It is important to note that the content of each seal is activated by the command to "*Come*". Timing is critical in any cyclical process, natural or manmade. Snow in summer would seriously impair the function of the weather cycle that a farmer depends on to produce crops. Improper timing in an automobile engine is a serious problem. The timing between a quarterback and his receiver is a critical factor in completing a forward pass. We clearly understand the central role that timing plays in all matters great and small.

THE ORDER OF THINGS

Seal #1. White Horse:.....good.....The power of good is activated:

Seal #2. Red Horse:....conflict with evil.. great conflict between good and evil:

Seal #3 Black Horse:.....oppression.....Evil actively oppresses good:

Seal #4 Green (pale) Horse:judgment..... Judgment by God against evil:

By God's design, and to achieve his purpose, the cycle of timed actions and consequences proceed in this fashion and result in the accomplishing of his purpose. Each action in this cycle provides an opportunity to make choices and each choice moves an individual one step closer to his chosen end. The consequence of each choice serves to encourage right choices and discourage wrong ones. A valuable asset in any cyclical process is that if you know what stage you are in at a particular time you also know "*what must soon take place.*" Based on understanding this cycle; those who are involved in the active practice of good should not be overly surprised when they suffer oppression from evil. Peter confirms that idea with these words from chapter four of his first letter: *Dear friends, do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you.* An individual who is experiencing oppression as the result of doing what is right is also able to look forward with confidence that God will apply justice in keeping with his primary objective of seeking and saving the lost.

When it is winter time you have confidence that spring will follow, and after that summer will come, and next the fall season will be upon us, round and round the cycle goes. There are numerous cycles within cycles: minuets in hours, hours in days,

days in weeks, weeks in months, months in seasons, and seasons in years and etc. etc.. By this illustration we are also aware that cycles do not simply go around in a stationary circle, they also move forward in the framework of larger cycles, all progressing in the fabric of time toward a final conclusion of things. I have seen a good number of annual cycles and those that I am experiencing now are a long way down the line of time from those of sixty seven years ago. By understanding God's cycles we have confidence in the outcome of all things because we can now comprehend what God is doing, why he is doing it, and *what must soon take place* in the order of things.

When the fifth seal is opened those who have suffered, and even died, for righteousness ask about the timing of justice against their oppressors. In this question they demonstrate their clear understanding of the message of those first four seals. The question they are asking is not **if** justice will be applied; it is **when** will justice be applied? They are inquiring about the timing of justice. The answer comes back that the first thing will be mercy toward the oppressed. Then they are informed that there is a time set for the administration of justice in their case but that time has not come yet. They are told to wait a little longer. This implies that there is a precision involved in God's timing. He has demonstrated, both by his creation and his revealed word, that he is precise in all matters of timing. What is taking place in this period of waiting is providing opportunity for individuals to consider the consequences of their actions and repent. In view of the fact that the oppressed must wait longer for justice; the sixth seal assures them that no guilty will escape and all the righteous are safely sealed unto heaven.

Consequences are structured in ever intensifying order as time and rejection of instruction progresses until there is no more room for mercy. This is the same approach a good parent uses to correct a child. The purpose of consequences is to be instructional and not harmful. Those who reject instruction bring the intensification of consequences on themselves. At the point of full rejection of instructions, justice will be allowed to be fully applied. Both personal and national consequences progress in that same fashion from light to personal and intense. Neither justice or mercy will be diminished by the purposeful delay in justice. The seventh seal presents, in greater detail, the elements of justice and mercy at work to accomplish God's objective of maximizing the opportunities for all men to be saved.

At the end of the book of Revelation we are shown the full conclusion of all things. The enormous differences of consequences between those who are willing to

hear and those who refuse instruction. *”Evil men and impostors will go from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived”*. From the very beginning God has called on us to listen to instructions and to understand the magnitude of consequences. The choices are ours and so are the consequences.

Proverb 4:10-15. Listen, my son, accept what I say, and the years of your life will be many. I guide you in the way of wisdom and lead you along straight paths. When you walk, your steps will not be hampered; when you run, you will not stumble. Hold on to instruction, do not let it go; guard it well, for it is your life. Do not set foot on the path of the wicked or walk in the way of evil men. Avoid it, do not travel on it; turn from it and go on your way.

PSALM 34

I will extol the LORD at all times; his praise will always be on my lips. My soul will boast in the LORD; let the afflicted hear and rejoice. Glorify the LORD with me; let us exalt his name together. I sought the LORD, and he answered me; he delivered me from all my fears. Those who look to him are radiant; their faces are never covered with shame.

This poor man called, and the LORD heard him; he saved him out of all his troubles. The angel of the LORD encamps around those who fear him, and he delivers them. Taste and see that the LORD is good; blessed is the man who takes refuge in him. Fear the LORD, you his saints, for those who fear him lack nothing. The lions may grow weak and hungry, but those who seek the LORD lack no good thing. Come, my children, listen to me; I will teach you the fear of the LORD. Whoever of you loves life and desires to see many good days, keep your tongue from evil and your lips from speaking lies. Turn from evil and do good; seek peace and pursue it. The eyes of the LORD are on the righteous and his ears are attentive to their cry; the face of the LORD is against those who do evil, to cut off the memory of them from the earth. The righteous cry out, and the LORD hears them; he delivers them from all their troubles. The LORD is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit. A righteous man may have many troubles, but the LORD delivers him from them all; he protects all his bones, not one of them will be broken. Evil will slay the wicked; the foes of the righteous will be condemned. The LORD redeems his servants; no one will be condemned who takes refuge in him.

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