

WHY WE BELIEVE

1 Peter 3:15 Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect.



Rev. Dr. Jerry Schmoyer
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WORDS ABOUT THE BOOK BY PASTOR MOSES

WORDS ABOUT THE BOOK BY
PASTOR ?????

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PREFACE

It is very important for Christians to know what we believe, but it's also important to know why we believe it. This book is about the reasons we believe what we believe. Apologetics, a favorite subject of mine, is the giving of proof for Christianity through reasonable arguments to justify our beliefs. Having studied this for years and taught it many times, I am thankful for the opportunity to put some of what I have learned into this book to benefit others.

Knowing why we believe what we believe is important for all Christians so that we can answer our own doubts as well as help others who have questions about our faith. Many leave the Christian faith because they don't know the answers to their doubts or questions. Some of these doubts may come from Satan, as when he attacked Eve in Eden with doubts about what God said. She didn't correctly remember God's Word, and so was easily deceived into acting on Satan's lies (Genesis 3:1-7). The result was sin entering the human race. Other doubts may arise from false teachings which exist both inside and outside the church. We must study to show ourselves "approved, as a worker who need not be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth" (2 Timothy 2:15). We must be prepared to defend the truth of His Word.

Perhaps some of you are very interested in this subject. You may be gifted and motivated to understand why you believe what you believe. This book is for you. Others of you may not be as interested, but it is important for everyone to know and be able to describe and defend their faith (1 Peter 3:15). This book is for you as well.

INTRODUCTION

Matthew 22:37-40 Jesus replied: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ (Deuteronomy 6:5) This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ (Leviticus 19:18) All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.”

Jesus commanded us to “Love the Lord your God with all your . . . mind” (Matthew 22:37). We know we must love Him with our whole heart and soul, but we often don’t think about loving Him with our mind. Jesus exemplified what it meant to love God with “all your mind.” He had no doubt about God and His truth. He totally believed it all. He was the most intelligent person who ever lived, so there must be good intelligent proof for what He believed. He commands us to believe as well.

All Christians, but especially pastors and leaders, are commanded to be able to explain and defend their faith. 1 Peter 3:15 says, “Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you the reason for the hope that you have.” The Greek word translated “give an answer” is ‘apologia’ and means to defend a position or action. As Christians, we must be able to defend our beliefs and show why they are true. These include being able to show evidence to others who ask how we know God exists, the God we worship is the one true God, the Bible is true and the only inspired book, Jesus is God, and that angels, Satan, demons, heaven and hell exist.

Knowing the answer to these questions, helping you to better understand, explain, and defend your faith is what this book is about. Faith is believing in what we don’t see (Hebrews 11:1). Do not think because we cannot see what we believe means there isn’t good reason to believe it. There is, and this book will help you understand why what we believe is true.

It’s important you believe these things, but it’s also important why you believe them. If you believe them because your parents, pastor or church believe them, that isn’t good enough. You need to believe them because you choose to, because you study them and their implications and make up your own mind. Down in your own heart, in the very depths of your soul, you need to know beyond a shadow of a doubt these are true and they are what YOU believe. That’s the only kind of faith that will carry you through what you will face in life.

Knowing God’s truth will set you free from doubt and fear (John 8:32). Your beliefs determine your actions (Proverbs 23:7), so knowing His truth and believing it fully is the key to living in obedience.

God gives us all the proof we need to believe everything His Word tells us. However, He doesn’t give us enough evidence to force someone to believe who doesn’t want to, and neither does this book. God doesn’t make it possible to win every argument with those who don’t want to hear the truth. But there is plenty of proof for those seeking with an open heart and mind. We have sufficient reason to believe God exists and He is the God of the Bible. We have proof that the Bible is indeed His Word and that Jesus is God, come to earth to pay for our salvation and resurrected from the dead. We have evidence that angels, Satan and demons exist, but that God is greater than them all. We can know beyond a doubt that Jesus is the only way of salvation and those who accept this gift will never lose it, but will spend eternity in heaven with him. We also know that those who reject Him will spend eternity in hell. We must not only know these things are true, but we must also know why they are true. This book will help you better understand the evidence that supports the Christian faith.

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

When you read this book you should always start by praying for God to help you learn and remember what you read (John 14:26; 16:13). Stay in an attitude of prayer throughout. These are God's wonderful, precious truths you are dealing with; they are not to be taken lightly. Ask for insight when you need it. Request understanding. Pray to remember and recall what you have learned when you need it. Thank and praise God for new truths or things that impress you in a deeper way.

Take your time as you read. Pause to think about what you are learning. Reread important sentences. Underline and take notes in your book. Write down things to remember on a separate piece of paper. You can use these notes to review what you learned as well as to teach it to others.

After you finish a chapter, pause a moment to decide if you believe what you read. Do you believe it because YOU believe it with all your being? You can't believe these things just because others believe them, you have to commit to them yourself. They can't just be something you agree with in your head, they must be what you commit to with all your heart and soul. Think about what you read and make it your own belief.

When you are done reading, think about all you have learned. Read over your notes. Do it every few days for several weeks to make sure you know and remember what you have written. That way it will become part of you so you can recall it when talking with others or facing doubts that come to your mind.

Keep this book handy as a resource you can turn to when questions arise. Read other books or websites about this subject so you can continue to learn and grow. If you have questions or suggestions, or would like to share something you have learned, I would love to hear from you. Write me at Jerry@Schmoyer.net. For more information about this subject and others, go to our website, India.ChristianTrainingOrganization.org. You can find much good information there which you can use and share with others.

I. GOD

Everything we believe starts with faith in God. How can we know that He really exists, that He created everything and that the God we worship is the only true God? Does He have a plan for our lives? Let's look at these important, foundational truths one by one.

1. GOD REALLY EXISTS

The fact that God exists makes all the difference in the world! A person's whole world view is built on what he believes or doesn't believe about God.

IS THERE A GOD?

What difference does it make to you if there is a God or not? If there is a God, then He created us and is in authority over us. If there is no God, we are in authority and there is no absolute right or wrong. Yet we know there must be a God. Something inside tells us this, but how can we know that what we believe is true?

WE CAN'T PROVE GOD BY THE BIBLE

We can know for sure if there is a God. However, we can't prove God by the Bible until we establish that the Bible is the true, inspired Word of God (chapter 5). The Bible never once tries to prove the existence of God. It always assumes God exists. There are other ways to prove the existence of God.

WE CAN PROVE GOD BY THE EVIDENCE

ALTERNATIVES ARE INADEQUATE

One proof for believing in the existence of God is that the alternatives to believing in God are not adequate to account for life around us. Some say mankind made up the myth of God to use as a crutch for those who are weak. A few would actually say the idea of a God is harmful because, as they say, it takes away human responsibility. The truth is that it is easier to prove God exists than that He doesn't exist! **Atheists** say God doesn't exist, but that is impossible to prove.

Let me explain it this way. Which is harder to prove, that black cats do exist or that they don't exist? To prove they do exist all you have to do is find one black cat anywhere any time. However, to prove they don't exist means you must search every space in the universe where a black cat could possibly be to prove that there are none there. The Russian Cosmonauts went into space and came back saying, "There is no God. We didn't see Him." But they didn't go into every corner of the universe and look in every dimension, so they can't make that statement. To make the statement that there is no God, one must have all knowledge (be omniscient). It's impossible to say there is no God. One can say that he doesn't believe there is a God. That is a true and accurate statement. But, believing something doesn't determine the truth. One can believe they don't have to pay taxes, but that doesn't change the absolute truth that taxes must be paid. So, atheism can deny God exists but can't prove it.

Agnosticism says that if there is a God, He is unknowable; we cannot know God or anything about Him. But that statement actually proves we can know something about Him: that He is unknowable. How can anyone possibly prove we can't know God? That is an opinion.

Theism states that God exists and we can know Him. It is the only rational, defensible position to take. God is 'provable.' We must admit we cannot prove God by the scientific method, however, neither can anyone prove scientifically that Napoleon existed. There is nothing of either of them to handle, to put under a microscope. No one now alive has seen either of them. Yet, there is plenty of evidence to prove the existence of each one. There is logical, rational proof that there is a God. These are **fingerprints** of God, marks of His existence that He leaves for us to find. Fingerprints are proof that someone has been at a certain place. In a court of law, they are proof enough of the guilt of a person. Even if no one saw the person, his fingerprints prove he had been there. God has left fingerprints behind to show us His existence. These are some of the main ones:

ARGUMENTS FOR THE EXISTENCE OF GOD

1. THE COSMOLOGICAL ARGUMENT is based on cause and effect. There must be an uncaused **cause** for every effect. No **effect** can be produced without a cause that is outside it and greater than it. That book on your table proves there was someone who made it, for it wouldn't have been able to make itself. The same is true of the world around us. This is also true of our emotions. Animals don't

have emotions like we have. Where did they come from if not from God? Everything must have a source. There must have been someone beyond and greater than us to create them. The universe needed a first cause to begin its existence. It also needs a first cause to continue its existence today.

Motion in the universe also proves there must be a God. Nothing can move itself; an external agent or force is required. There must be a Being who is the ultimate source of all motion in the universe, or it couldn't have gone from non-motion to motion by itself. If you close your eyes and open them to see a ball rolling across the floor you will rightly assume something or someone started the movement of the ball. It didn't start on its own for it is unable to start itself.

Everything in nature is **interrelated** and absolutely dependent on the other. There must be a Being who is totally independent of and above this to start it all.

Everything is moving away from **perfection**, breaking down. The second law of thermodynamics states this. This winding down (entropy) points back to a starting time and shows things moving away from perfection. This, too, points back to God.

2. THE TELEOLOGICAL ARGUMENT is based on order and design. No one would ever think a wristwatch could come into being on its own. We assume there was an intelligent designer behind it. For this world to just 'happen' would be like the dictionary resulting from an explosion in a print shop! The fact that there is **order** in the universe points back to Someone causing that order (Hebrews 11:3). **Design**, too, shows there is a God. Whatever is made requires a designer (Romans 1:20). Creation is stamped with beauty and design to show us God (Psalm 19:1).

For example, the earth is in just the right spot to receive the correct amount of heat from the sun. If the earth were a little closer to the sun it would burn, if further from the sun everything would freeze. Similarly, if the rotation of the earth around the sun was any faster or slower, if the revolution on its axis was faster or slower, or if the tilt of the earth was any greater or less, we would freeze or melt. We could analyze the human eye, the brain, or any of thousands of other organisms and in each of them find intricate detail beyond what we can imagine or what chance could have ever produced.

The world around us clearly shows the fingerprints of God. Romans 1:20 says: "For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and godhead." "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament shows His handiwork." Psalm 19:1

3. THE ANTHROPOLOGICAL ARGUMENT uses the existence of our **moral nature** to point to God. Where did our moral nature come from? Surely our possession of it argues for the existence of a moral governor to whom man feels accountable and responsible. All people everywhere at all times have had moral standards. All people always have known there is a right and wrong (Romans 2:14-15). Were the Nazis guilty of any wrongdoing even though they didn't break the laws of their own country? Everyone instinctively knows they are because we are all aware of a higher law that is written in the conscience of each and every one of us.

In addition, the moral values we hold inside are not always rewarded in this life. Something inside man cries that there must be reward for good and punishment for evil. All men long for justice. Where did this desire come from? Even more, when will it be fulfilled? This, and the basic belief in life beyond this life that all people have always held point to a power and force beyond man that will reward good and punish evil beyond this life. We all know inside there must be something more to life than just these years on this earth. Where did this restlessness and awareness come from if there was nothing there to meet it?

4. ONTOLOGICAL ARGUMENT simply states that man everywhere in all time has naturally known there is a power greater than and outside himself that he has worshipped. Satan has counterfeited this and taken the worship for himself, but it is natural for all people to worship something, and that is from God.

5. THE SUBJECTIVE INNER AWARENESS ARGUMENT points out that those who are God's children know inside there is a God. It can't be put under a microscope, or even described, but there is a confident inner awareness that there is a God (Galatians 4:6) deep within us that gives an assurance beyond the need of external proof that there is a God who loves and cares. Where does this come from if not from God Himself?

IMPLICATIONS FROM THE EXISTENCE OF GOD

If there is this strong, conclusive proof of God, then **WHY DO SO MANY PEOPLE REJECT THE IDEA OF GOD?** The reason is that if man admits there is a power greater than himself, then it only stands to reason that he is accountable to that power. If there is a God, man is responsible to find what God would have of him and then obey it. However, man wants to be his own god and not submit to anyone. Thus, it isn't because of a lack of evidence that man rejects the idea of God, but because of self-centered presuppositions. In order to live life for himself and continue in his own prideful and selfish existence, man must deny God. To admit to a God means man then must obey His will and direction or face the consequences. Man doesn't want to do either. He thinks that by denying there is a God he exempts himself from accountability to that God. However, saying God doesn't exist doesn't make it so. Even convincing ourselves completely He doesn't exist does nothing to remove Him from existence. In doing so, man is gambling with his own eternal destiny, putting it on the line for a few short years of self-centered indulgence.

If God exists, there are **absolutes** in the world, and we are responsible to follow them. He has a daily plan for us and a set of rights and wrongs to which we must adhere. It is not up to us to decide what we want to see as right or wrong. He has already decided, and we are accountable according to His measuring scale, not ours.

If there is a God there is a **plan and purpose** for everything. We cannot meet our own needs, solve our own problems or make our own decisions as if there is no God. Worry, fear, and control are not allowed or necessary. We are to live a life of faith and trust.

Finally, there is an **eternal plan** as well. This life is not all there is. Eternity (heaven or hell) is the destiny of everyone. Eternal separation from God or eternal bliss in God's very presence are the future prospects of every human being.

Do you believe God exists? Do you believe for yourself, not because others around you believe it? Do you believe it with your whole being, not just as an intellectual fact in your head? There are tremendous implications if you believe this or if you don't. If you believe, then you recognize your accountability to God and responsibility to learn about Him and follow Him.

2. GOD CREATED EVERYTHING

We have shown that God exists, but how do we know He created everything? The Bible tells us He created it all in six 24 hour days about 6,000 to 10,000 years ago. However, those who reject the reality of God say everything just came about by chance. In chapter 5 we will see that the Bible is

God's Word, so based on that we believe God is the creator. He says He is! But what about those who reject the Bible as God's Word? How can we answer their claims that everything evolved? Let's look at proof from science and reason that believing God created everything makes more sense than believing it came by chance.

Evolution says the planet and stars are the result of a big explosion of compressed, rotating protons and neutrons. That is believed by faith, for there is no scientific proof (i.e. facts that cannot be interpreted any other way, eyewitness account, etc.). It still doesn't answer the bigger question: where did matter come from to begin with? Evolution is a faith system based on 'chance' as its god. The Bible says there is a God who created all out of nothing, and that He completely finished creation on the 6th day; it is no longer going on. The Second Law of Thermodynamics agrees, saying that energy tends toward entropy.

Evolution says that life began by chance as a single cell from non -living matter. This, too, is accepted by faith. By chance the necessary chemicals would have to come together with the right temperature and moisture so atoms would turn into amino acids and polypeptides which join together to become a protein molecule. The chance of this happening is one in 10 to the 321st power! Then, millions of these would have to occur in exactly the same way while somehow 150 different chemicals would have to be included in them, DNA would have to develop, etc. What are the chances of that? It is a system based on faith. The Bible says God instantaneously created life by speaking. That makes much more sense.

Evolution teaches that all organisms have developed from simpler forms of life. Again, there is no conclusive proof. Mutations are referred to, but they are very rare and bring about harm to the survival of the species. Natural selection does occur, but it is very limited and not proven to have begun any new life forms. In fact, there are many exceptions to evolution. These include electric eels, porpoises and bats, warm-bloodedness, pyloric gizzards, flying fish, special climbing feet on some, gliding, special eyes and tails, wings, the seahorse, hummingbird, butterfly, frog, and jellyfish. Many things today couldn't have come about gradually but must have been full-formed from the start for the species to survive. A woodpecker with its special bill and feet, cross-braced skull, etc., had to be a finished unit to live on. Missing part of its attributes would have kept it from surviving. The Bible says God created separate groups of living organisms ("Genus"), each to reproduce "after its kind" ("Species").

Evolution says man is the ultimate result of the process of evolution. Again, there is no final proof; it is an interpretation of information based on one's presupposition. God says man is superior and separate from animals. How could love, hate, fear, conscience, and hope of eternal life evolve? Animals don't have these, only human beings. Where did these immaterial traits come from?

Then what about the scientific 'facts' used to prove evolution? What about the fossil record and strata layers, disappearance of dinosaurs and these kinds of things? I believe there is a better scientific interpretation and explanation for these than evolution. I believe that during Noah's time there was a worldwide flood where water a mile deep covered the earth for a year. At normal processes fossils are formed slowly, but with this cataclysmic activity (earthquakes, volcanoes, continents drifting, etc.) everything happened much faster. It is like Superman squeezing coal into diamonds in a few seconds. Smaller creatures sunk to the bottom, creating the fossil record. All was compressed and formed into rock quickly due to the tremendous pressure of water a mile deep for a year. The canopy was gone (Genesis 7:11). The earth's climate changed from tropical to that similar

to what it is today. Ice formed suddenly on the caps of the earth and there was no longer enough vegetation for dinosaurs, so they died out. The Bible clearly says that God did this.

Why does man reject God as creator? **Because if evolution is true there is no need for God** or salvation. If man is descended of monkeys, there is no need of a Savior for there is no sin, no basis for moral values, and no responsibility to anyone but one's self; the Bible is untrue and Christianity is false; man can do as he wants with no accountability. In pride, man seeks to run his own life and destiny. That is the real reason evolution continues to be so popular today

What about you? What do you put your faith in? You either believe in a God who is in charge and direct control of everything or you don't. If you don't, your faith is in chance happenings with man as his own 'god.' If this is your choice, more is riding on it than your view of the origin of life in the past. Your whole future is riding on it, too. Your eternal destiny is at stake if you assume there is no God and you are wrong. Better make sure! Just say, "God, if you are real I ask that you somehow reveal yourself to me. Show me if you exist, help me know the truth inside if I am wrong. If you're there, let me know!" Be open. He won't force you, but He will speak to the extent you are willing to listen. Remember, eternity is at stake. Watch what you put your faith in!

3. OUR GOD IS THE ONLY TRUE GOD

We have seen that God exists and that He created everything. But how do we know the God we worship, the God revealed in the Bible, is the only true God? How do we know He is the One who created the world? What about the claims of other religions that their god or gods are the true ones? How can we answer them?

PROOF FROM THE BIBLE

The Bible tells us that there is only one God and He is the one revealed in the Bible (James 2:19; Isaiah 45:2-12; Deuteronomy 4:39; 6:4-5; Jeremiah 10:10; Psalm 83:18; John 17:3; Mark 12:32). For us who believe the Bible is God's Word (see chapter 5) that is enough proof, but what do we tell those who don't see the Bible as the final authority from God? How do we show them that our God is the only true God?

PROOF FROM REASON

Common sense tells us that there can be multiple supernatural powers, like angels and demons, but there can only be one God. By the very definition of the word 'God,' which means sovereign over everything, there can only be one God, because if there were two or more then none would have final, total control. If there are 2 or more gods than neither of them is really 'God.'

Therefore the gods of all the world religions cannot all be God, only one can be sovereign over all. No religion can claim to have more than one god, for if they do they admit that none of them are sovereign over everything.

PROOF FROM COMPARISON

We can agree there is only one true God. But how can we know which one is really God? Let's compare them to what we've seen about the God who exists and created everything. Which one meets the characteristics we've seen the true God has?

We saw in chapter one that God has revealed Himself in nature and in His creation. He is the designer, the One in sovereign, total control of everything. He spoke and it came into existence. He created a world of beauty, color, taste, sound and pleasure because He cares about us and wants us to enjoy His creation. He also wants us to know and have a relationship with Him for He built into everyone the idea of a supreme being and a natural desire to find and know Him. Everyone worships something – that need in all mankind must have come from somewhere and that could have only been from God.

He also built into man a sense of justice, fairness and of punishment for wrongdoing. Animals don't have that, only human beings. These couldn't have started with us, but must have been put into man from the beginning by God. This also implies there will be a time when all injustice is removed, evil punished and everything will be fair and right. The true God must have these characteristics to impart this sense into us.

In addition we are also created with a capacity to love, something else that is nowhere in the animal kingdom. The source of love must have been with the One who created us. An important characteristic of God therefore is love. God is not distant and unremoved, He is involved with us in a personal way.

It's also built into us to look for something more than what this life has to offer. There is an emptiness in all people that only God can fill. "Is this life all there is? There must be more, there must be something after this!" It's built into man to look for a life beyond this life. There must be a God to meet these needs.

So to summarize, the God we see is a personal, sovereign God who created a world for man, the height of His creation, to enjoy. He wants to have a relationship with man. He has set absolutes of right and wrong. He is a just God who will punish evil but also a God of love who cares for His people. He has a wonderful future destiny for the people He created. Now let's compare that to the gods of different religions.

CHRISTIANITY has a God exactly like this revealed in the Bible.

JUDAISM has the same God as revealed in the Bible, but they only use the Old Testament. They reject Jesus as the Messiah, yet Jesus clearly claims to be God (see chapter 7). Therefore they only accept part of the true God.

ISLAM worships Allah, but Allah is not the same as our God. He is entirely different. Allah was one of many gods worshiped by Muhammad's Quraysh tribe. Allah was one of the names for the moon god who was married to the sun goddess. The Muslim flag today features a crescent moon that still recognizes this fact. In fact, Abraham was called out of Ur (meaning "moon-city") in order to follow God's call (Genesis 11:27-32). Abraham had to leave the place of moon worship in order to follow God. The god Allah was an Arabian idol that sat in the Kabah with many other idols until Mohammed made Allah his number one god.

Some say Allah and our God are the same, just with different names. However, they have entirely different characteristics. Our God is knowable and personal while Allah is unknowable and impersonal. Our God cannot change or go against His nature. For example, our God cannot lie. Allah can do anything he wants with no limitations. He is capricious and changes his mind. He has no feelings towards man and doesn't personally enter human history. Allah provides no savior or intercessor. He shows no grace or mercy. Those who follow him are on their own and not assured of his help or acceptance. He does not come near meeting the qualifications of being the true God of love, justice, care and truth.

HINDUISM has many, many gods. Anything and everything can be a god. Brahma is impersonal, formless, abstract and without attributes. These do not even come close to a sovereign God of love and justice. This could not be our loving, caring, sovereign creator God.

NEW AGE focuses on man himself as god, the belief being each person has a higher consciousness within themselves, a part of the god force is within all of us. This falls short of God being all-sovereign as revealed in His creation.

SIKHISM believes in a god who is sovereign, omnipotent, personal and beyond time. This god is seen more as a force present everywhere in everything, not as a personal, just god who is also loving.

TAOISM sees the moral and physical order of the universe, the path of truth which heaven itself follows, as the absolute 'god' over all. However, this power is not believed to be eternal.

SHINTOISM does not believe in one god but many superior beings in the universe, that nature uniquely reveals the supernatural and so is sacred.

ZOROASTRIANISM teaches that there are 2 Great Beings in the universe. One is good, beautiful and true but the other is evil, ugly and destructive.

WICCA believes in many gods centered on the god and goddess which are believed to be seen in various forms.

BUDDHISM does not believe in a personal god. Buddha never claimed to be god, but taught there is a god-like force in everyone.

JAINISM does not recognize a personal god, just the world force around us. There is a series of ascetic sages presented who should be revered and worshipped above all else.

CONFUCIANISM has little belief in the supernatural and so focuses on social and political structure in this life. It teaches there is an ethical principle of order which is impersonal but guides all things.

So we can see that only the God of the Bible is personal, sovereign, caring, just and loving. None of the other gods come anywhere near to those characteristics. Yet many people follow them because there is a counterfeit supernatural power behind them. That power is Satan, the one who wants to be worshipped instead of God. He puts his power behind these other religions and receives their worship (1 Corinthians 10:20-21; 2 Corinthians 11:13-15; 1 Timothy 4:1-3; Ephesians 2:1-3; Revelation 20:3). Make no mistake, there is power behind the other gods, but it is from Satan and his demons (for more about Satan and demons see chapter 17).

Since this world is under Satan's control, there is much opposition to God and His truth as revealed in the Bible. Satan is behind this world system (2 Corinthians 4:4; John 14:30; Matthew 4:8-9). When we as Christians tell others that our god is the only true God (John 14:6) there is often rejection and sometimes persecution. Most people will not mind us believing in our God as long as we let them believe in theirs. But when we tell them we are right and they are wrong difficulties start. Darkness doesn't want light, for light removes darkness.

4. GOD HAS A PLAN FOR OUR LIVES

It is important to know that God exists and is the God of the Bible and the only God there is. But that really doesn't make any difference in our lives unless He reaches out to us. Does He have a plan and purpose for each of us? How can we know for sure?

PROOF FROM REASON

If God is sovereign over everything then that includes us and our daily lives. If He is a God of love who created us and cares for us then it only stands to reason that He has a purpose for doing this. Each of us is uniquely made for a reason. God, as our Father, has plans and dreams for His children like any loving parent does. Since He is perfect all His plans for us are also perfect.

PROOF FROM OUR HEART

We know that everything that happens is not by accident or chance. Inside our hearts we know there must be a plan, a purpose to life. This need for significance, meaning and purpose in life built into each of us must come from something greater than us and outside us. God created us to need that, in order that He may fulfill it in each of us.

PROOF FROM THE BIBLE

The Bible tells us that God has a perfect plan for each and every one of us (Jeremiah 29:11; Psalm 40:5). We can find deep comfort, encouragement and peace in knowing this. He created each of us different from everyone else. He loves us and proved it by paying for our sins on the cross. In good times we can thank Him for His perfect plan. In hard times when we don't see His plan or purpose clearly, we can trust Him because we know all is part of His plan whether we see it or not (Romans 8:28) and that He Himself and all He does is perfect.

II. THE BIBLE

We have seen proofs that a personal, just, loving, sovereign God who created everything exists and that the God of the Bible is the true God. We have seen from His creation some of His traits and characteristics, but in order to fully understand and follow Him we must know much more. Has God revealed Himself and His will for us? Is the Bible that revelation? Let's look at proof that the Bible is God's inspired Word for us today, and the only true Word of God.

5. THE BIBLE IS TRUE

Has anyone ever challenged you about how you know the Bible is true? What do you say when they state that anyone could write a book and in it claim inspiration? No one doubts that the Bible claims to be inspired by God, but so do other 'holy' books. How do we know the Bible is the one true book from God to man? There is a lot of proof. (Many thanks to "Evidence That Demands a Verdict" by Josh McDowell for his excellent book and insights into this subject. It is a book I highly recommend.)

Starting with the acceptance that there is a God (chapter 1), it is then reasonable that God would reveal Himself to man. God has revealed important characteristics about Himself in creation such as His sovereignty, love, and justice. But that doesn't give us enough information to really know Him. For man to really know God **it is necessary for God to reveal Himself to man**, for man could never find God without God making the first move. If God has truth to reveal, if man is accountable, and if God wants a relationship with man then that must start from God's side. Not only is this

necessary, **it is also possible for God to reveal Himself to man**. Were He really God it would be totally within His possibility to communicate truth to us and keep it accurate down to our day. That would not be too hard for Him at all. Thus we know that a revelation from God to man is both necessary and possible. But is the Bible that revelation? The evidence shows it is.

1. THE ORIGIN OF THE BIBLE SHOWS IT IS FROM GOD

The Bible is unique in that it was written by 44 men over 1,500 years. These men did not know each other. Most (but not all) were Jews, but they came from very different backgrounds and cultures. Some were educated, others not. Some were kings, others shepherds. One was a doctor, another a tax collector and still another a shepherd. These men lived on three different continents: Asia, Africa and Europe. Moses wrote in the desert of Sinai, Paul wrote in a prison in Rome, Daniel wrote in exile in Babylon and Ezra wrote in the ruined city of Jerusalem.

In addition, the Bible was written under many different circumstances. Some wrote during war (David, Joshua), others during times of sorrow (Jeremiah, Nehemiah) and still others in prison (Paul, John). They wrote for different reasons. The prophets warned of coming judgment for sin, the Gospel writers were showing Jesus as God come to earth, Paul and Peter wrote to encourage new believers and Moses wrote to record history.

Their writings covered hundreds of topics, yet no writer contradicts another. The whole book remains united in all it says. Imagine 44 men from vastly different backgrounds and places writing over a period of 1,500 years and all agreeing on everything they write about theology, history, science, ethics and every area of life. What are the chances of all agreeing on everything? The only explanation is that there must have been One Author behind it all – God Himself.

2. THE CONTENT OF THE BIBLE SHOWS IT IS FROM GOD

It has been correctly stated that the Bible isn't a book man would write if he could or could write if he would. Let me explain.

If men were writing a book they wanted others to believe they would not say that everything was created by nothing (Hebrews 11:3). 'Nothing' is a state mankind has never known. All other religions developed an explanation for the origin of the universe that made sense to their followers at the time. No one would say everything came from nothing unless it was true and unless God Himself was inspiring what was being written.

If the men who wrote the Bible were just making up a new religion on their own they wouldn't make God sovereign and in absolute control (1 Chronicles 29:11; Isaiah 43:7) while all mankind can do is submit to His will and serve Him (Revelation 4:11). All other 'holy' books focus on man and build up man, not God.

Another thing man inventing a religion would not say is that there is only one God. Monotheism is unheard of except in the Bible and the religions that come from it: Judaism, Christianity and Islam. All other religions are polytheistic, they believe in more than one god. Scholars tell us that man started by imagining many gods and gradually let the more powerful ones conquer the less powerful. The Bible says there is one God from the very beginning. The Jews themselves struggled to accept this, as seen by the golden calf and other idols they often worshipped. God had to command them to worship Him alone (Exodus 20:1-6). They believed in many gods and had to be taught there was just one true God.

The Bible speaks clearly and in detail about other subjects man wouldn't make up on his own. The **Trinity** is something impossible to understand and not a teaching that many men over hundreds of years would all come up with on their own. Why would they write something that others wouldn't understand and would reject if they wanted their religion and book to be accepted?

The same is true of **sin**. Why would they say everyone is sinful and there is nothing anyone can do to please God (Romans 3:23; 6:23)? Only the Bible says there is no way for man on his own to reach God, it is only by His grace and mercy that He reaches us (Ephesians 2:8-9). The Bible says God has absolutes to which we are all accountable but which we cannot meet on our own.

Then there are subjects the Bible writers spoke authoritatively about over the centuries. These include **angels, Satan, demons, heaven and hell** (1 Corinthians 2:9-12; 2 Corinthians 5:8; Luke 16:19-31; Revelation 19:20-21). How could so many men say the same thing without knowing each other? They couldn't or wouldn't all make up the same things if they weren't true. And if they were true, how would these various writers know these things? God revealing them and directing their writing is the only answer.

Clearly the Bible is not a book man would write if He could or could write if he would. Yet there is even more proof the Bible contains information no man could have ever known.

3. THE PROPHECIES OF THE BIBLE SHOW IT IS FROM GOD

The Bible is filled with hundreds of specific prophecies which have come true in the past. There is no way man could have guessed at these things with any kind of accuracy. For example:

Ezekiel 26, which was written in 587 B.C., predicted the destruction of Tyre, a city made up of two parts: a mainland port city, and an island city half a mile off shore. Ezekiel prophesied that Nebuchadnezzar would destroy the city, many nations would fight against her, the debris of the city would be thrown into the ocean, the city would never be found again, and fishermen would come there to lay their nets. In 573 B.C., Nebuchadnezzar destroyed the mainland city of Tyre. Many of the refugees of the city sailed to the island, and the island city of Tyre remained a powerful city. In 333 B.C., however, Alexander the Great laid siege to the island city of Tyre. Using the rubble of mainland Tyre, he built a causeway to the island city. He then captured and completely destroyed the city. Today, Tyre is a small fishing town where fishing boats come to rest and fisherman spread their nets. The great ancient city of Tyre to this day lies buried in ruins exactly as prophesied. If we were to calculate the odds of this event happening by chance, the figures would be astronomical. No, it was not by coincidence. ("Evidence that Demands a Verdict" by Josh McDowell)

There are nearly one hundred prophecies made about Jesus in the Old Testament, prophecies such as His place of birth, His life, His rejection by the nation of Israel, how he would die and so on. All these prophecies were made hundreds of years before Jesus ever came to earth. Because of the accuracy of the prophecies, many skeptics have believed that they must have been written after A.D. 70—after the birth and death of Jesus and the destruction of Jerusalem, thereby trying to deny that they are even prophecies. However, in 1947 the Dead Sea Scrolls were discovered. These scrolls contained the book of Isaiah and other prophetic books. When dated, they were found to be written from 120 to 100 B.C., well before Jesus was born. Some say these prophecies were fulfilled by chance, but the odds against this would be exceptionally large. It would take a greater leap of faith to believe in them happening by chance than in the fact that Jesus is God and these prophecies are divinely inspired.

Experts in probability mathematics have come up with these statistics concerning the following prophecies:

- 7 prophecies against Tyre in Ezekiel 26:3-4,7-8,12,14,21 coming true: 1 in 7.5×10^7
- 5 prophecies against Samaria in Hosea 13:16 & Micah 1:6 come true: 1 in 4×10^4
- 5 prophecies against Gaza & Ashkelon in Amos 1:8, Jeremiah 47:5, Zephaniah 2:4-7: 1 in 1.2×10^4
- 3 prophecies against Moab & Ammon in Ezekiel 25:3-4, Jeremiah 48:47; 49:6: 1 in 10^3
- 9 prophecies against Edom in Isa 34:6-15, Jeremiah 49:17-18; Ezekiel 25:13-14; 35:5-7:1 in 10^4
- 8 prophecies against Babylon in Isa 13:19-22; 14:23; Jeremiah 51:26,43: 1 in 5×10^9
- 9 prophecies about Jerusalem in Jeremiah 31:38-40: 1 in 8×10^{10}
- 7 prophecies about Palestine in Lev 26:31-33; Ezekiel 36:33-35: 1 in 2×10^5
- 9 prophecies about Petra & Edom in Isa 34:6-18; Ezekiel 25:13-14; 35:5-7:1 in 2×10^5
- 4 prophecies about Thebes & Memphis in Ezekiel 30:13-15: 1 in 10^3
- 4 prophecies about Nineveh in Nahum 1:8,10; 2:6; 3:10,13,19: 1 in 10^2

The probability of these 11 prophecies coming true is 1 in 5.76×10^{59} ! This is almost impossible to visualize. Suppose this number were silver dollars. There would be enough to fill 10^{28} suns! Or think of it like this. In the universe there are about 2 trillion galaxies, each containing about 100 million stars. From our 5×10^{59} we could make all of the stars in all of the galaxies 2×10^5 times! Only one silver dollar in all of these stands for the chance a writer could have guessed all these prophecies correctly! Even more astounding is the fact that these are only 11 separate prophecies. There are literally hundreds and hundreds of others which have already come true. (For more information about this see "Evidence That Demands A Verdict" by Josh McDowell).

4. THE HISTORICAL ACCURACY OF THE BIBLE SHOWS IT IS FROM GOD

Archaeology is the study of past people and civilizations based on evidences for their existence found in the ground where they lived. William F. Albright, one of the greatest archaeologists ever, said, "The Bible's incredible historical memory has been many times validated by the process of discovery. No archaeological discovery has contradicted a Biblical reference." Nelson Glueck, a renowned Jewish archaeologist, states that no archaeological discovery has ever controverted a biblical reference. Dr. William Albright, who was probably the foremost authority in Middle East archaeology in his time, said this about the Bible: "There can be no doubt that archaeology has confirmed the substantial historicity of the Old Testament. At this time, the number of archaeological discoveries that relate to the Bible number in the hundreds of thousands." (for more information see "Evidence That Demands a Verdict" by Josh McDowell)

Time and time again archaeology has found the Bible to be completely true and totally accurate. People, events, locations and customs have been verified over and over. One example is the Hittite nation. The Bible says they were a powerful force from about 1750 BC to 1200 BC (Genesis 15:20, 2 Samuel 11, and 1 Kings 10:29). However nothing was known of them from any other source than the Bible, so Bible critics said they were an invention of the imagination of the Bible authors. Then about a hundred years ago archaeologists digging in Turkey discovered the capital city of the Hittite empire. They found a huge library with thousands of tablets and discovered the greatness and power of this empire. The Bible had been right all along.

Another example is the city of Jericho. The Bible tells about how the walls fell down for Joshua and the Jews to conquer the city, but many said that was a myth. Archaeological discoveries at the site of Jericho now fit in perfectly with the Bible record.

There is no other ancient book that is so well supported by archaeological evidence as the Bible. More are being uncovered all the time. This alone might not prove that the Bible is inspired, but it does show the accuracy of the Bible when it was written and how it has carried down to us today. If miracles, such as Jericho's fall, are validated by archaeology, that is further proof that they happened. We know that only God can do miracles.

The greatest miracle of all, the resurrection of Jesus from the dead, is proclaimed by the Bible. Proving that miracle is further proof of the inerrancy of the Bible. We will look at that proof in chapter 10.

5. THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE BIBLE SHOWS IT IS FROM GOD

Often the accuracy of the Bible as we have it today is questioned. Doubters say it has been changed since it was written and there is no way we can prove what we have today is what was written many years ago. They are wrong, there is proof.

One of the strongest proofs is the number and exactness of the ancient copies of the Bible which we have today. There are 1,700 manuscripts of the Old Testament, and the oldest is about 100 years after it was first written. They all say the same thing. There is only one minor difference for every 2,000 words, and none of them affects any point of truth or theology. The recent discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls contained Old Testament manuscripts 1,000 years older than any that had been found before, yet there was no difference between them and what we had before they were discovered!

For the New Testament there are 13,000 manuscripts. The oldest portion was copied about 10 years after the original was written. In them there is only one minor difference in every 200,000 words, and again none that affect any teaching or doctrine. Portions of Scripture have also come down in many different languages as quoted in the works of hundreds of authors. They, too, confirm the accuracy of Bible.

This does not prove that God inspired the Bible, but it does show that what we have is an exact copy of what was originally written. It also shows the special care God is taking to make sure His Word comes down to us the same as it was written. For other ancient books scholars are glad to have several copies, even hundreds and hundreds of years after the original. The great amount of trustworthy proof of the Bible shows it is indeed special and protected by God.

6. THE SCIENTIFIC ACCURACY OF THE BIBLE SHOWS IT IS FROM GOD

We are all well aware of how quickly scientific truth changes as new discoveries are made. Often scientific books are outdated before they are even finished being printed. That is not true of the Bible, though. The Bible spoke accurately of scientific truths thousands of years before man 'discovered' them, while the very writers often believed the opposite of what they were writing. For example, the Bible says the life of the flesh is in the blood (Leviticus 17:11) yet until recent times doctors bled people to cure them. The Bible says the physical world is basically non-physical in its ultimate essence (Hebrews 11:3; Colossians 1:16-17), something no human writer could or would have guessed at. The Bible has always said the earth was round (Isaiah 40:22), rotates (Job 38:12,14), has gravity (Job 26:7), and the whole solar system orbits in the universe (Psalm 19:16). These are all facts science has just 'discovered' recently. Man believed the moon was greater than

the earth for many centuries, but the Bible says opposite (Genesis 1:16). Even atomic energy and its result is found in 2 Peter 3:10-12 (the Greek word means to "loose" or "set free" as what happens when atoms are released). The laws of thermodynamics are in the Bible, too: #1 (Genesis 2:1-2; Hebrews 4:3,10) and #2 (Psalm 102:25-27; Hebrews 1:10-12; Romans 8:20-22). There are hundreds of other examples as well.

7. OTHER PROOFS SHOW THE BIBLE IS FROM GOD

Other lines of evidence could be shown to support the Bible as well. For example, the preservation and regathering of the **nation Israel** after 2,000 years is proof of the greatness of the Bible. It has never before happened, nor was it ever thought possible to happen, for a group of people to survive 2,000 years without a homeland yet stay a separate cultural unity. That has happened with the Jews. Where are the Ammonites? Philistines? Hittites? The Jews still exist and are now back in their homeland, truly a sociological miracle!

Then there is the **literary value** of the Bible. It has been the best-selling book of all time and withstands centuries of attacks by those trying to destroy it. How could such unlearned men write such a surpassing piece of literary genius beyond their own ability? The Bible far exceeds the intellectual and moral qualifications of other books being written in its time such as the Talmud (Jewish), Apocrypha (Christian) and Koran (Islamic). The living quality of the words of the Bible, reaching to all ages and social positions of people for century after century, show its uniqueness. The Bible is deep enough for the most gifted scholar to spend a lifetime in one small portion of it and never get out all there is, but also simple enough for a young child to read and understand. One of the greatest truths expressed is just 7 monosyllables, each 3 letters or less: "You in me and I in you" (John 14:20). The Bible stories are never hurried or cramped, neither are they drawn out and boring. The Bible does not gloss over the sins of its heroes, neither does it overemphasize them. The values and opinions of the individual writers are not the focus, just the story they are telling. The Bible continues to be alive and fresh generation after generation.

One more proof, a very subjective one, is that the **Holy Spirit affirms to our spirit** that the Bible is the Word of God. As Christians, we just 'know' it is God's book. We have assurance deep down inside us that we can trust and follow the Bible.

These are all very good reasons to believe the Bible is God's Word. As I said at the beginning, it is very necessary and very possible God would reveal His truth to mankind through a book. Write down the reasons given which seem strongest to you so you can remember them and use them when talking to someone about why you believe the Bible is God's Word. It's very important to understand and believe this, for if the Bible isn't God's Word, then nothing else in the rest of the book will be true either! But if it is, then everything it says is accurate and trustworthy.

If there is this great body of evidence, **why do so many deny the Bible as being God's Word?** Let me answer that with a story. Many years ago, while on a visit to England, a wealthy man was fascinated by a powerful microscope. He looked through its lens to study crystals and the petals of flowers. He was amazed at their beauty and detail. He bought one and took it home. He thoroughly enjoyed using it until one day he examined some food he was planning to eat for dinner. It was his favorite food and he loved it. He discovered tiny living creatures were crawling in it. He didn't know what to do. Finally he concluded there was only one way out of this dilemma: he smashed the microscope to pieces. He didn't want anything to interfere with his pleasure. That is what man tries to

do to the Bible when it shows up his sin. Like bugs under a rock run from the light when the rock is turned over, so man in sin runs from the light of God's truth about him.

Do you believe The Bible is God's inspired Word for us today? Do you believe for yourself, not because others around you believe it? Do you believe it with your whole being, not just as an intellectual fact in your head? There are tremendous implications if you believe this as well as if you don't. If you believe then you recognize your accountability to know and follow the Bible in all you do. That is a great privilege but also an awesome responsibility.

6. THE BIBLE IS THE ONLY INSPIRED BOOK

We've established the Bible is inspired by God. But has God also inspired other books? What about the books other religions use? Are they true as well? If so, we may be missing something by not studying them, or they may say something we like better than what the Bible says. How do we know the Bible is the only inspired book from God to man?

PROOF FROM REASON

We have seen that our God is the only true God (chapter 3). Since that is true, then other religions' gods cannot also be true. If their god is false, so is their book about him.

PROOF FROM THE BIBLE

The Bible is true as we've seen in chapter 5. Where the Bible teaches it is the only inspired book from God (Revelation 22:18-19), it also is teaching there are no other true books. God only had one Son (John 3:16) who came to earth only once to die for mankind (Romans 6:10; 1 Peter 3:18). Only the Bible tells us that story and that Jesus is the only way of salvation (John 14:6), thereby teaching that none of the other books have the way of salvation. What good are they without that?

PROOF FROM COMPARISON WITH OTHER BOOKS

When we compare the Bible with the holy books of other religions, we can see that they all can't be true, for they contradict each other and say very different things about god, sin, man and his relationship to God. None of the other books are 100% true in everything they say about science, history, morality, etc., like we saw is true of the Bible. None of the other books brings about the kind of changed lives and healthy culture that the Bible encourages. Look at the histories and the current living conditions and standards of the people who follow the other books, and you'll see how God has blessed those who have followed Him and His Word.

CHRISTIANITY has the Bible, which we just saw has a lot of evidence showing it is inspired by God (chapter 5).

JUDAISM honors the Hebrew Bible, but not the New Testament or anything about Jesus. Many Jews reject the inspiration of the Bible and only see it as a book of Jewish traditions.

ISLAM follows the Koran, which some put on an equal place with the Bible. The Koran is about 1,300 years old. Unlike the Bible, the Koran was created by one person, the prophet Mohammed. He recited it, and his scribes wrote it down. Both the Bible and the Koran claim to be divine revelations. Both books claim to have been accurately preserved through the centuries. The Koran was written about 550 years after the New Testament and affirms the Bible as the word of God, but says the Koran is more recent, therefore it must be superior. There are many factual and historical

inaccuracies in the Koran. There is doubt Mecca even existed when Islam is claimed to have started. There is much factual evidence to question the character and motives of Mohammed himself. In his book, Mohammed speaks very disparagingly of women, saying they have half of the mental acumen of men, and that the inhabitants of Hell will be for the most part women because they are ungrateful to their husbands. The Koran allows for wife beating, so how could it ever have originated with God?

The Koran says Jesus is not God (5:17, 75), was not crucified (4:157), did not rise from the dead and was not the son of God (9:30). The Bible says salvation is by grace through faith (Ephesians 2:8-9), but the Koran says it is by sincerity and works (3:135; 7:8-9; 21:47; 49:14; 66:8-9). There are no miracles and no fulfilled prophecies in the Koran. The Koran says Abraham sacrificed Ishmael and that Alexander the Great was a Muslim who worshipped Allah. However, Alexander lived hundreds of years before Muhammad started Islam. With all these differences, it is not possible for both books to be true: only one can be true. The truth of the Bible has been proven many times over.

Mohammed himself has said, "I have fabricated things against Allah and have imputed to him words which he has not spoken." (Al Tabari, The History of Al-Tabari, vol. 6, p.111). He also admitted to having mistaken the words of "Satan" for those of Allah (Ibn Ishaq, Sirat Rasul Allah, pp.165-166). How can anything else he has said be trusted?

HINDUISM looks to the Vedas, Upanishads, Brahmanas and other special writings as their authority. They speak of a God who is impersonal and undefinable. They say the world was born in a golden egg which lived one year then divided into 2 parts which became heaven and earth. They say sin is ignorance, not something done against deity. The Bible says man dies once (Hebrews 9:27), but Hindu scriptures say man goes through successive cycles of deaths and rebirths called reincarnations. These teachings are totally contrary to the Bible, so both cannot be true. The god they describe is much different than the God the Bible describes (chapter 3). These books cannot be God's inspired books to us.

BUDDHISM has no one scripture. They have collections of stories and legends about Buddha, some of which were added by Buddha's followers after his death. They do not claim to be inspired and faultless, and they contradict much of what the Bible says.

CONFUCIAN writings say nothing about worshipping a god, confessing sin, or seeking forgiveness. They encourage the readers to be hard working, modest, sober and thoughtful. It is not given by God to man.

MORMONISM has a book, the Book of Mormon, which they claim is equal or even superior to the Bible. Since the original writing of the book, there have been thousands of changes and alterations to eliminate very poor grammar and clear contradictions. A lot of it has been copied word by word from the King James Bible. Despite all the changes, there are still many errors and false prophecies. It denies the deity of Jesus by making him a man like us who worked His way to becoming a god. It also teaches that everyone can earn a degree of deity as Jesus did. Objective scholars all agree the Book of Mormon is not a book that shows any signs of being written or preserved by God.

For all these reasons we can be assured that the Bible is God's Word, his only Word to mankind. Since that is true, it is important for us to appreciate this divine revelation. We must study and learn its truths and be able to correct those who live and believe in error.

III. JESUS

The Bible is true and the God of the Bible is the only true God. We have sufficient proof of those things. But what about Jesus? Our faith rests on our belief of Jesus being God Himself who came to earth, lived a perfect life, died for our sins on the cross and came back to life. If this is true our faith stands, but if it isn't true we have nothing. How can we be sure of these things?

7. JESUS IS TRULY GOD

There is no question that the man Jesus lived on earth 2,000 years ago. No one disputes that fact. Many historians of his day wrote about him. History proves his existence. Ralph Waldo Emerson has said, "The name of Jesus is not so much written as plowed into the history of the world." The question is not if He lived, but if He is God. Let's look at the proof that He is indeed God. (Many thanks to "Evidence That Demands a Verdict" by Josh McDowell for his excellent book and insights into this subject. It is a book I highly recommend.)

JESUS' CLAIMS PROVE HE IS GOD

Many will admit Jesus was a great man, a fine teacher and a wonderful moral example. But He Himself claimed to be God (John 8:58; 17:5; 10:30; 5:18; 4:25-26). He claimed to be equal with God the Father (Matthew 28:19; John 5:17-18; 12:45; 13:20; 14:1, 9) and one with God (Matthew 4:7; Luke 4:12; 8:39; John 10:30, 36-38; 17:11, 21-22; 20:28). He said He was sent by God (John 4:34; 5:37; 7:16, 28-29; 8:16; 9:4; 11:42; 14:24; 16:28; 17:18, 23) and was the Son of God (Matthew 16:17; 22:42-45; Mark 12:35-37; 14:61-62; Luke 20:41; John 9:35-37; 22:69-70).

Jesus was called God and Lord (John 1:1-18; 20:28; Romans 9:5; Titus 2:13; 2 Peter 1:1; Isaiah 40:3; Matthew 3:3; Mark 1:2; John 8:58; 18:5-6). He, like God the Father (Psalm 19:14, 28:1, 42:9, 61:2, 62:2, 71:3, 78:35), claimed to be the Rock (Matthew 7:24-26 and Luke 6:46-49). Both are called Shepherd (Psalm 23; Ezekiel 34; John 10). Bridegroom is another name used for both God the Father (Isaiah 49, 54; Jeremiah 2, Hosea) and Jesus (Mark 2:19, Matthew 9:15; Luke 5:34-35).

In addition, Jesus claimed the attributes of God (John 8:42; 16:15). He claimed to have all knowledge (omniscience, Matthew 11:21-22; Luke 10:13), all power (omnipotence, Mark 14:61-63; Luke 22:69-70; John 2:19, 10:18; 11:25-27) and to be everywhere at once (omnipresence, Matthew 18:20; 28:20). Like God, He said He could forgive sin (Mark 2:5,9,10; Luke 5:20-21; 7:48-49). He claimed the same authority God has (Matthew 7:21-23; 28:18) and the same honor (John 5:22-23). He even said He existed before the world was created (John 8:58; 17:5).

When someone claims to be God, that must be taken seriously. He can no longer be just a good teacher or fine example. Claims of deity must be dealt with. When someone says that they are God, then they are either a liar, or they are a lunatic and think they are God, or else they really are the Lord God. Those are the only options.

He couldn't have been a liar or lunatic because He lived the purest, most influential life ever. How could He have had the impact He has had if he was dishonest or out of His mind? Consider what Historian Phillip Schaff has to say: "How, in the name of logic, common sense, and experience, could an imposter that is a deceitful, selfish, depraved man have invented, and consistently maintained from the beginning to end, the purest and noblest character known in history with the

most perfect air of truth and reality? How could He have conceived and successfully carried out a plan of unparalleled beneficence, moral magnitude, and sublimity, and sacrificed His own life for it, in the face of the strongest prejudices of His people and age?"

JESUS' FULFILLED PROPHECIES PROVES HE IS GOD

God gave many prophecies about the Messiah to make sure they recognized Him when He came. Consider these prophecies and their fulfillment:

1. Born of the seed of woman: Genesis 3:15; Galatians 4:4, Matthew 1:20
2. Born of a virgin: Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 1:18,24-25; Luke 1:26-35
3. Son of God: Ps 2:7 (1 Chronicles 17:11-14; 2 Samuel 7:12-16), Matthew 3:17; 16:16 (Mark 9:7)
4. Seed of Abraham: Genesis 22:18 (12:2-3); Matthew 1:1; Galatians 3:16
5. Son of Isaac: Genesis 21:12; Luke 3:23,34 (Matthew 1:2)
6. Son of Jacob: Numbers 24:17 (Genesis 35:10-12); Luke 3:23,34 (Matthew 1:2; Luke 1:33)
7. Tribe of Judah: Genesis 49:10; Luke 3:23,33 (Matthew 1:2; Hebrews 7:14)
8. Family line of Jesse: Isaiah 11:1, 10; Luke 3:23,32 (Matthew 1:6)
9. House of David: Jeremiah 23:5 (2 Samuel 7:12-16; Psalm 132:11); Luke 3:23,31 (Matthew 1:1)
10. Born at Bethlehem: Micah 5:2; Matthew 2:1 (John 7:42, Mt 2:4-8; Lk 2:4-7)
11. Presented with gifts: Psalm 72:10 (Isaiah 60:6); Matthew 2:1,11
12. Herod kills children: Jeremiah 31:15; Matthew 2:16
13. His pre-existence: Micah 5:2 (Isa 9:6-7; Psalm 102:25); Colossians 1:17 (John 1:1-2; 8:58)
14. He shall be called Lord: Psalm 110:1 (Jeremiah 23:6); Luke 2:11; 20:41-44
15. He shall be Immanuel (God With Us): Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 1:23; Luke 7:16
16. He shall be a prophet: Deuteronomy 18:18; Matthew 21:11 (Luke 7:16; John 4:19; 6:14; 7:40)
17. He shall be a priest: Psalm 110:4; Hebrews 3:1; 5:5-6
18. He shall be a judge: Isaiah 33:22; John 5:30; 2 Timothy 4:1
19. He shall be a king: Psalm 2:6 (Zechariah 9:9); Matthew 27:37; 21:5 (John 18:33-38)
20. Special anointing of the Holy Spirit: Isaiah 11:2; Matthew 3:16-17; 12:17-21 Mark 1:10-11
21. His zeal for God: Psalm 69:9; John 2:15-17
22. Preceded by messenger: Isaiah 40:3; Matthew 3:1-2; 3:3; 11:10
23. Ministry to begin in Galilee: Isaiah 9:1; Matthew 4:12-17
24. Ministry of miracles: Isaiah 35:5, 6; 32:3,4; Matthew 9:32,33,35; 11:4-6 (John 5:5-9)
25. Teacher of parables: Psalm 78:2; Matthew 13:34
26. He was to enter the temple: Malachi 3:1; Matthew 21:12
27. He was to enter Jerusalem on a donkey: Zechariah 9:9; Luke 19:35-37 (Matthew 21:6-11)
28. "Stone of Stumbling" to Jews: Psalm 118:22 (Isaiah 8:14; 28:16); 1 Peter 2:7 (Romans 9:32-33)
29. "Light" to Gentiles: Isaiah 60:3; 49:6; Acts 13:47, 48; 26:23; 28:28
30. Betrayed by a friend: Psalm 41:9; 55:12-14; Matthew 10:4; 26:49-50; John 13:21
31. Sold for 30 pieces of silver: Zechariah 11:12; Matthew 26:15; 27:3
32. Money to be thrown in God's house: Zechariah 11:13; Matthew 27:5
33. Price given for potter's field: Zechariah 11:13; Matthew 27:7
34. Forsaken by His disciples: Zechariah 13:7; Mark 14:50 (Matthew 26:31; Mark 14:27)
35. Accused by false witnesses: Psalm 35:11; Matthew 26:59-61
36. Dumb before accusers: Isaiah 53:7; Matthew 27:12-19
37. Wounded and bruised: Isaiah 53:5 (Zechariah 13:6); Matthew 27:26
38. Smitten and spat upon: Isaiah 50:6 (Micah 5:1); Matthew 26:67 (Luke 22:63)
39. Mocked: Psalm 22:7,8; Matthew 27:31
40. Fell under the cross: Psalm 109:24-25; John 19:17; Luke 23:26; Matthew 27:31-32

41. Hands and feet pierced: Psalm 22:16 (Zechariah 12:10); Luke 23:33 (John 20:25)
42. Crucified with thieves: Isaiah 53:12; Matthew 27:38 (Mark 15:27,28)
43. Made intercession for His persecutors: Isaiah 53:12; Luke 23:34
44. Rejected by His own people: Isa 53:3 (Ps 69:8; 118:22); John 7:5,48; 1:11 (Matthew 21:42,43)
45. Hated without a cause: Psalm 69:4 (Isa 49:7); John 15:25
46. Friends stood afar off: Psalm 38:11; Luke 23:49 (Mark 15:40; Matthew 27:55-56)
47. People shook their heads: Psalm 109:25; 22:7; Matthew 27:39
48. Stared upon: Psalm 22:17; Luke 23:35
49. Garments parted and lots cast: Psalm 22:18; John 19:23-24
50. To suffer thirst: Psalm 69:21; 22:15; John 19:28
51. Gall and vinegar offered Him: Psalm 69:21; Matthew 27:34
52. His forsaken cry: Psalm 22:1; Matthew 26:46
53. Committed Himself to God: Psalm 31:5; Luke 23:46
54. Bones not broken: Psalm 34:20; John 19:33
55. Heartbroken: Psalm 22:14; John 19:34
56. His side pierced: Zechariah 12:10; John 19:34
57. Darkness over the land: Amos 8:9; Matthew 27:45
58. Buried in rich man's tomb: Isaiah 53:9; Matthew 27:57-60
59. Resurrection: Psalm 16:10; 30:3; 41:10; 118:17 (Hosea 6:2); Acts 2:31(Luke 24:46; Mark 16:16)
60. Ascension: Psalm 68:18; Acts 1:9
61. Seated at right hand of God: Psalm 110:1; Hebrews 1:3 (Mark 16:19; Acts 2:34-35)

No one else in history ever came near to fulfilling these, and no one ever can since the birth records and tribal records of all Jews were destroyed when Jerusalem fell in 70 AD.

The probability of just 1 through 8 coming true would be 1 in 10 with 16 0's. If each chance is a silver dollar and they were laid down side-by-side totally covering all of India, layer after layer would be laid down until they were half a meter deep, one is marked, all others not, then blindfold a man and let him walk anywhere, the chance he'd pick the marked one the first time is the same as the first 8 prophecies above happening by chance.

JESUS' LIFE PROVES HE IS GOD

Another proof we have that Jesus is God is that He lived the greatest life ever lived. He claimed to be God and proved it by His actions. He had power over nature, sickness and Satan. He calmed storms with a word, turned water into wine, multiplied fish and bread, cast out demons, restored crippled limbs, sight and hearing and instantly healed lepers. He even brought dead people back to life: the son of the widow of Nain (Luke 7:11-17), restored Jairus' daughter (Matthew 9:18-26) and raised Lazarus who had been dead for three days (John 11:38-44).

His entrance into life, born of a virgin, showed He was from God (Matthew 1:18-25; Luke 1:26-38). Who would have made up such a thing if it weren't true? (See chapter 8 for more about the virgin birth.) His exit from this world was supernatural as well. He was dead but came back to life (see chapter 10) and then He ascended into heaven in front of those watching (Acts 1:9-11).

His daily life supported His claims of being God. He lived a sinless life (John 8:46), as attested to by those who lived with him 24 hours a day every day for two years. Would those who live with you and know you best say you are sinless? Even His enemies attested to His sinlessness: the thief on the cross (Luke 23:40-43), Pilate (Luke 23:4) and the Centurion at the crucifixion (Matthew 27:54).

Those who knew Him called Him “Lord”, “Son of God” and “Messiah” (Matthew 16:16; John 20:31). His impact on those who knew Him when He walked on earth was life-changing, and He continues to have the same impact on lives today. He has had the most influence on human history of anyone who ever lived!

JESUS’ RESURRECTION PROVES HE IS GOD

We will look at this in detail in chapter 10. It certainly proves Jesus is God, not just man.

ANCIENT WRITINGS PROVE JESUS IS GOD

It would seem natural that if someone as important and influential as Jesus really lived, died and came back to life that others who lived at that time would have written about it. That in fact did happen. Here are some of the writers.

TACITUS, a Roman historian, wrote about how Nero blamed the Christians for the burning of Rome in AD 64. He said the Christians followed someone called Christ, who suffered death during the reign of Tiberius at the hands of Pontius Pilate, and refers to a “most mischievous superstition” about Him. This is the belief that Jesus was God and came back to life had spread to Rome.

PLINY THE YOUNGER was the Roman governor of Bithynia in Asia minor. In a letter he wrote to Emperor Trajan dated around AD 112, he asked for advice to bring legal proceedings against those accused of being Christians. He wanted to handle the problem of the rapid growth in numbers of those who believed Jesus was God and had risen from the grave.

JOSEPHUS, the well-known first century Jewish historian, mentions Jesus twice in his Jewish Antiquities. He refers to James, the brother of Jesus, the so-called Christ. He acknowledges that many people saw Jesus as the Messiah. Josephus also wrote about Jesus Himself, “At this time there was a wise man who was called Jesus. His conduct was good and (he) was known to be virtuous. And many people from among the Jews and the other nations became his disciples. Pilate condemned him to be crucified and to die. But those who had become his disciples did not abandon his discipleship. They reported that he had appeared to them three days after his crucifixion, and that he was alive; accordingly he was perhaps the Messiah, concerning whom the prophets have recounted wonders.” Word about Jesus as God come back to life had spread everywhere. Were it not true then those who had proof of His body still being in a tomb would have countered these claims early and they would not have spread.

THE BABYLONIAN TALMUD is a collection of Jewish rabbinical writings starting in AD 70. The following is written about Jesus: On the eve of the Passover, Yeshua was hanged. For forty days before the execution took place, a herald . . . cried, “He is going forth to be stoned because he has practiced sorcery and enticed Israel to apostasy.” “Hanged” is a synonym for “crucified” (Galatians 3:13; Luke 23:39). “Stoning” is what they wanted to do until Pilate had Him crucified instead (John 10:31-33; 11:8). Jesus was accused of sorcery because they said He cast out demons by Beelzebub (Luke 23:2,5; Matthew 12:24). Jesus’ life and death were common knowledge years later and in other countries. Obviously, many believed Jesus was God who died and came back to life. That belief took root and spread since there was no evidence to contradict it.

While these do not prove Jesus is God or that He came back to life, they do show how quickly that belief took hold and spread everywhere. Had there been proof otherwise it would have been used to stop this growth and would have been known by these writers. That they knew nothing of such proof shows it did not exist. Even those who lived in Jerusalem and knew Jesus could not and did not refute the fact He did miracles and came back to life.

Jesus' claims prove He is God. He fulfilled all the prophecies about the Messiah. His perfect life, miracles, virgin birth, resurrection and ascension also show His deity. Writings by those who lived at that time verify the Bible accounts of Jesus and show how these beliefs spread without factual evidence against them. There is no doubt Jesus is God. The facts prove it.

Do you believe Jesus is God? Do you believe for yourself, not because others around you believe it? Do you believe it with your whole being, not just as an intellectual fact in your head? This is a crucial question that everyone must answer one way or the other (Matthew 16:13-17). There are tremendous implications if you believe this as well as if you don't. If you believe, then you recognize your accountability to learn about Him, follow Him and become like Him in all you think and do. That is the primary purpose of every Christian.

8. JESUS IS VIRGIN BORN

Many today consider the virgin birth of Jesus an unimportant doctrine. It is perhaps the most attacked and disbelieved doctrine about Him, even by professing Christians. Yet it is a very important truth. In order for Jesus to be Savior of the world He had to be a man to represent us, God because no one who was only man could pay for the sins of the whole world, and sinless because if He was guilty of sin He wouldn't be able to pay for our sin. The virgin birth is necessary for all of these to be true. Jesus was born of Mary and thus human to take our place, conceived by the Holy Spirit so He was God and could pay the price for all our sin, and born of a virgin so that He did not inherit man's sin nature and He would be sinless.

If the virgin birth is not true, this means Mary was pregnant before marriage and should have been stoned, and Jesus was wrong about His parentage when He said God was His Father. He would have been the illegitimate child of a sinful union of a Jewish peasant girl and an unknown man. He wouldn't have been God and man, nor could He have been our sinless Savior. There would be no salvation, no eternal life with God, no Trinity and no future for us. Denying the virgin birth is a denial of Jesus as God the Messiah. Without the virgin birth, Christianity collapses and becomes just another collection of ancient sayings by a long-dead teacher. How can we prove the virgin birth really happened?

PROOF FROM REASON

Satan knew of this prophecy, so he inspired other religions to counterfeit it. The prophecy is first recorded in the Bible in Isaiah 7:14, but was part of God's plan from the beginning. God impregnating woman later became a part of Roman and Greek mythology. Satan only counterfeits important truths about God. His purpose is to take away from God's glory and make it seem like what God has planned is nothing new or special. We know the mythical stories of Rome and Greece are not true. Many lump the story of Jesus being virgin born with them in order to discredit it.

However, since it was a part of pagan religion, the Jews would have nothing to do with it, for the idea of Jesus being virgin born would be especially disgusting to the Jews he was trying to convince. It is not anything someone then would say if he wanted others to believe Jesus was God and the Messiah. If they did make it up, would they have been willing to give up their lives defending what they knew was a lie?

Also, the virgin birth was widely accepted in the earliest years of the church. Mary and her other children were still alive. People could ask them to find out the truth. If it wasn't true, they would have denied it and that would have spread everywhere. But nothing like that ever happened.

For God, the virgin birth is no problem at all. As creator and sustainer of all things He could easily create a fetus in a woman without a male seed to show that He was the Father and this was His son. If God can't do something like that, then He really isn't God!

PROOF FROM HISTORY

The virgin birth of Jesus was believed and accepted by all from the very beginning. It was included in the Apostles' Creed, written in the late AD 300's. It says He was "conceived by the Holy Spirit," and "born of the Virgin Mary." Clearly it is something important to the early church.

PROOF FROM THE BIBLE

The virgin birth of the Messiah was prophesied in Isaiah 7:14. The word "virgin" can mean "young woman" as well, but the Jews took it to mean virgin as we would define it today. When translating the Septuagint, they used the Greek word that can only mean virgin, not the word for a young woman. Clearly the Jews saw this prophecy as applying to a virgin. Also, Genesis 3:15 purposely leaves out any mention of union with a man when reference is made to the Messiah coming from the "seed of the woman."

Matthew, a well-educated former Roman tax collector, and Luke, a professional doctor, are the two who record the story of the virgin birth (Matthew 1:18-23; Luke 1:26-37). The best educated disciple would be very sure this was true before he wrote such a thing. And a doctor, Luke, definitely would want to be sure of this medical fact. Paul, in Philippians 2:6-8, points out that Jesus was God who took on human nature and was made in human likeness. He was still man, but not to the extent of being guilty of Adam's sin (Romans 5:12-21).

So we see reason, history and the Bible all verify the truth of the virgin birth. It may not seem like it really matters, but it is of the utmost importance to our faith. Do you believe it?

9. JESUS DID MIRACLES

The Old Testament contains many miracles. People often deny them, looking for other explanations for how the events took place. If the miracles weren't true, then the Bible is full of lies and errors and can't be believed about other miracles, especially Jesus' miracles and resurrection..

Miracles were an important part of Jesus' ministry on earth as well. Those in Jesus' day could watch the miracle take place, but how can we today know Jesus really performed miracles?

PROOF FROM THE BIBLE

The Old Testament records 55 miracles, the life of Jesus 37 and the rest of the New Testament tells of 20. That is a total of 112 separate miracles.

A miracle is not a coincidence of natural happenings. It's not magic. It is overriding natural laws by a higher law. Jesus called them 'signs' (John 20:31-32). We realized they were done for a purpose – proof that Jesus was God (Matthew 11:4-6; Luke 7:22-23; John 10:25, 38; 14:11; 15:24).

The focus was not the miracle itself but what it taught about Jesus. If He had power over physical ills, He could also heal spiritual ills. If He could deliver from demons, He could deliver from sin. If He could give physical sight He could give spiritual sight. If He could feed with physical bread, He could feed with spiritual manna. If He could bring the physically dead back to life, He could do the

same with the spiritually dead. If He can stop a storm on an ocean, He can stop Satan's attacks against us. When we are helpless, He can deliver.

There are four major times of miracles in history. The first was during the time of Moses and Joshua, the second during Elijah and Elisha's time, the third during the time of Jesus and the disciples, and the fourth will be during the coming Tribulation time. In each case, God is authenticating His chosen messengers and showing everyone that His messenger has His power and authority.

The Bible records many times that Jesus did miracles (Matthew 4:24; 21:14; 12:15; 15:30; John 10:24-25, 30-31; 3:2). Of course, the resurrection is the most outstanding miracle ever (see chapter 10). John 11 tells about the raising of Lazarus from the dead. Many details are given, and the clear identity of the person and location are stated. Many were there and saw it happen. Afterwards, anyone who wanted to check the truthfulness of the account could easily find the place and eyewitnesses to talk to, as well as Lazarus himself!

Bible writers considered miracles as authentic occurrences and evidence of Christ's divinity. They considered Him to be from God (John 3:2; 20:30-31; Acts 2:22) and said they were convincing proofs of Jesus' deity (Acts 1:3; Hebrews 2:3-4) and not made-up myths (1 Peter 1:16).

There was no single pattern to Jesus' healing miracles: some asked to be healed, others didn't. Some had faith; others didn't even know who Jesus was. Whatever the illness, whatever the need - Jesus met it. He had total control over nature: calming the sea, cursing a fig tree, turning water to wine, catching many fish when there weren't any there a moment before – all these are done by Jesus with just a word. Miracles were a means to an end, not an end in themselves. That's why not every sick person in Palestine was healed. Healing everyone wasn't Jesus' purpose.

Satan can do miracles, too. He can counterfeit God's power with shows of his own (Matthew 7:22-23). His power is limited by God, however. He can't stop Jesus' power. Jannes and Jambrees counterfeited and challenged Moses, but lost to God's power (Exodus 7:10-12).

PROOF FROM REASON

Some say those Jesus healed only had psychosomatic illness. But thousands and thousands came and were healed – and stayed healed. Those who knew them knew the illnesses were real, for they were amazed at the change. Plus, He healed every single one He said He would heal: there were none where He failed.

Doing miracles wasn't something people expected the coming Messiah to do, so the gospel writers wouldn't have felt the need to invent miracles to convince their readers that Jesus was the Messiah. If they had, it is doubtful they would have been willing to give up everything, even their own lives, to follow Him.

Miracles are God's intervention in nature. If God exists, miracles are possible, even probable. To say they can't exist is to deny the existence of God. If God could create the universe out of nothing, His other miracles would be easy for Him.

PROOF FROM OTHER WRITERS

We have seen what ancient writers have recorded about Jesus (chapter 7). In addition there is the following support for His miracles:

THALLUS recorded the darkness over the whole earth at the time of Jesus' crucifixion. The only way he could explain it was to say it was an eclipse, but modern science can determine when they have occurred in the past, and there were none during that time in history.

THE TALMUD tells the story of a rabbi (Rabbi Eleazar ben Dama) who was bitten by a venomous snake and called on a Christian named Jacob of Kephar Sama to heal him. He arrived, but Rabbi Ishmael did not permit it. Rabbi Ben Dama replied "I will bring you proof (from the scriptures) that he may heal me!" but then died before he could produce the proof. He believed a Christian could heal him by Jesus' power. (Tosefta, Hullin 2:22-23).

ANCIENT PAGAN SPELLS often contain the name of Jesus because clearly they thought there was power in that name to heal.

JULIAN THE APOSTATE was the Roman Emperor from AD 361-363. He was a strong enemy of Christianity. He wrote: "Jesus . . . has now been honored for about three hundred years; having done nothing throughout his lifetime that was worthy of fame, unless anyone thinks it a very great work to heal the lame and the blind and to cast out demons in the towns of Bethsaida and Bethany." This shows how common the knowledge was that Jesus performed miracles in those areas, as recorded in the Bible (Mark 8:22; John 12:1).

Yet, despite this great amount of proof that Jesus performed miracles, many people deny it. How can they do so? Those who don't believe in Jesus have preconceived prejudices against anything supernatural. If they believe anything supernatural exists, then that opens the door to God existing, and with that belief comes accountability to Him. Holding to their belief there is no God, they reject any form of supernatural. Yet we have provided much evidence that God exists and so do miracles.

10. JESUS CAME BACK TO LIFE

The proof of the deity of Jesus rises and falls on truth of His resurrection. Jesus said He would come back to life, then claimed to have done so. His followers clearly claimed the same thing about Him. Were they right?

PROOF FROM THE BIBLE

The Bible itself says many times that Jesus came back from the dead (Matthew 16:4; 28:6; Luke 24:39; Acts 1:3; 1 Corinthians 15:1-4, 17; Revelation 1:5, 18; Colossians 1:18; John 2:19-22; Psalm 16:10; Romans 6:9; etc.). We have proven the Bible is from God (chapter 6). What it says is true. If there is no resurrection, then there is nothing in the Bible we can trust and Jesus wasn't able to conquer death so we are still in our sins (1 Corinthians 15:12-19).

PROOF FROM REASON

First, it stands to reason to assume that something like resurrection from dead to an eternal body isn't something a person would just make up! It would be too unbelievable, too unprovable, too far out for someone to have just made it up, and easily be proven wrong and discredited. So why make it up if it isn't true?

If Jesus didn't come back to life, what else could have happened to his body? Some say the disciples stole His body, but how would they gain the courage to preach that they didn't have before? Why would they give up their lives for something they knew was a lie?

Others say it was His enemies who stole the body. That still doesn't explain His many appearances. Also, when people started thinking He was alive, the enemies would have produced the body to prove He wasn't alive, and they never even tried to do so.

Finally, some say Jesus never died, that He just passed out and then revived. Think about what that means, though. First, He was pronounced dead by experienced Roman executioners, then a sword shoved in His side up into His heart. He was wrapped cocoon-like, head to foot (no way to breathe), covered with 100 pounds of spices, sealed in a dark, damp tomb for 3 days. Somehow He would have to revive, slip out of his wrappings (the Greek says they were undisturbed, like a cocoon after the butterfly leaves), with hands and feet ruined by nails He'd have to move a thousand-pound stone uphill from the inside (no handholds), overpower many Roman soldiers, and travel numerous miles to Emmaus where He'd convince everyone that He has a glorious, superior, eternal body! That takes more faith than believing in the resurrection!

There are just too many proofs to the resurrection to doubt it. He appeared 10 times to 500 witnesses. Without the resurrection being real, what could account for the spread of the early church, the conversion of Paul and millions of others, and the willing martyrdom of so many? How would the Lord's Supper have gotten started (why worship the body and blood of a dead person)? Why even bother with baptism, which is a picture of Jesus dying and coming back to life? There is no reason staunch Jews would change their day of worship from Saturday to Sunday unless something really momentous, something greater than the creation of the world (which is what the 7th day celebrates) happened on that day. Then, too, there is the whole Easter celebration of the resurrection. Why would that have started and continued if people then knew He didn't arise?

PROOF FROM OTHER WRITERS

There were others who wrote about the time of Jesus; they recorded that many followed Jesus, believed He was God and came back from the dead (chapter 7), and performed miracles (chapter 9).

TIBERIUS CAESAR, the Roman emperor, obviously heard about the claims of Jesus' resurrection and the impact it was having in his empire, for he had a marker erected in the Nazareth cemetery (probably because he heard that Jesus of Nazareth arose but didn't learn that it was in Jerusalem) saying that anyone robbing a grave would be put to death. Why else would such a strange law have been made by the ruler of the whole empire?

IN RECENT TIMES writers and scholars have investigated the resurrection of Jesus in order to discredit it, but instead the facts brought them to faith in Jesus and His resurrection.

Simon Greenleaf, Professor of law at Harvard from 1833 to 1848, has been called the greatest authority on legal evidences in the history of the world. When Greenleaf applied legal evidences to the resurrection event, he concluded that it was an historical reality, and that anyone who examined the evidence for it honestly would be convinced this was the case.

In the 1930 Frank Morrison, a British journalist trained in the law, set out to do the world a favor by once and for all exposing what he believed to be the superstition of Christ's resurrection. However, by using the test of evidence permitted in a court of law, he became convinced of the truth of the resurrection. He detailed his findings in a book still in print entitled "Who Moved the Stone".

In the 1990's, an American atheist journalist, by the name of Lee Strobel, also trained in the law, interviewed many biblical scholars to disprove the resurrection. His book "The Case for Christ" is

a brilliant summary of the best modern scholarship on the subject. His study once again confirmed the biblical accounts as factual.

C. S. Lewis, Professor of Medieval and Renaissance Literature at Cambridge University, acknowledged that the evidence for the historicity of the Gospels was a major factor in his conversion from atheism. Lewis became one of the twentieth century's greatest intellectual Christian proponents and writers.

Lord Darling, former Chief Justice of England said that, "...no intelligent jury in the world could fail to bring in a verdict that the resurrection story is true."

The resurrection of Jesus Christ is the cornerstone of the Christian faith. Without it the believer has no hope for this life or for the life to come. The apostle Paul wrote, "And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain" (1 Corinthians 15:17). Our belief in this great teaching is not based upon some religious feeling or an unfounded idea about what may have happened in the past. Nor are we talking about an isolated rumor, but about an historical fact with solid evidence to support it. Do you believe Jesus came back to life? Are you willing to live your life based on that fact?

11. JESUS IS COMING BACK FOR US

We've established Jesus came as God, born of a virgin, performed miracles, was crucified and came back to life. That was His first coming. One of the promises He gave to His disciples was that He would come back a second time. That return has been the cause of much speculation as well as doubt. If He does return, then we can be assured justice is coming and sin and evil will be gone. It confirms that this world is not all there is. If He doesn't come back, then He lied and we have no future. If He lied about one thing, who knows how much else He lied about. If He is coming back or not is an important question. How can we know for sure it'll happen?

PROOF FROM BIBLE PREDICTIONS

The Bible is our authority, a trustworthy source of truth. There are over 300 references to the return of Jesus in the Bible – it isn't a small or unimportant doctrine (Zechariah 11:10; Acts 1:11; Matthew 24:29-30; Revelation 19:6-16; 1:7; 22:7,12,17,20).

PROOF FROM JESUS' PROMISES

Jesus Himself promised He would return (John 14:3; Matthew 16:27; Luke 21:27; 19:11-27; Revelation 22:20). If He isn't then He lied, and we know He is truth and there is no untruth in Him (John 14:6; 1 John 2:21).

PROOF FROM JESUS' FOLLOWERS

Those who followed Jesus firmly believed that Jesus was coming back and wrote about it in the Bible (Acts 3:11-12, 19-20; 2 Thessalonians 1:7, 10; 1 John 3:2). They didn't make this up, but had heard it from Jesus Himself and saw it prophesied in the Old Testament. Their belief was founded on factual evidence.

PROOF FROM INNER HOPE

Built into all of us is a natural longing for a better life, justice, removal of evil, peace, meaning and satisfaction. These things don't happen in this world and only will when Jesus comes. God has built it into all people to look for when He comes to earth and sets right all that is wrong.

This is the hope, the confident assurance, of all who believe in Jesus. It is what we look forward to. The evidence shows that it will happen. Do you believe He will return (1 Corinthians 15:19-22)?

IV. SALVATION

Having established the truth of God, the Bible, and Jesus as God, now we want to apply those things to salvation. There are two serious questions that often come up in regards to salvation, truths which are sometimes doubted. Let's look at proof Jesus is the only way to God, and that we can be sure we have salvation forever.

12. JESUS IS THE ONLY WAY OF SALVATION

One of the criticisms Christians receive is about the belief that Jesus is the only way of salvation. Many who aren't Christians will say they don't mind if we have our belief in Jesus, as long as we also accept their beliefs. But, when we say Jesus is the only way and their beliefs won't get them to heaven, they reject that truth. We are saying that we are right and they are wrong, and people don't want to hear that. Satan, who is behind the other religions, incites them to strongly oppose Christians for this truth, often making it hard for others to even listen to Christians. This opposition makes some Christians afraid of sharing their faith. As you can see, this is a very important part of our faith.

If Jesus isn't the only way to God, then why should we tell others about Jesus if their way is just as good? In fact, their way to heaven might be easier for they don't have to humble themselves to ask for forgiveness. Also, most of the other religions don't emphasize sin and holiness. How can we know for sure Jesus is the only way of salvation for everyone everywhere?

PROOF FROM THE BIBLE

In the Bible God clearly gives us His truth so we don't have to wonder or guess. He definitely says salvation is only in Jesus (John 14:6; 8:24; 3:16-18; Acts 4:12; Galatians 1:8). There is no other way of interpreting these verses. If you believe the Bible is God's Word (chapter 5), then this is total proof.

PROOF FROM REASON

For those who don't accept the Bible as God's authoritative Word, there is also proof from reason that this is true. We have seen there is only one God (chapter 1), the God of the Bible (chapter 2), and that He revealed His truth in the Bible (chapter 5) and only the Bible (chapter 6). We know that only Jesus is the true redeemer (chapter 7, 10). In fact, other religions don't even claim to have a god who redeems from sin. Since God is holy, sin must be dealt with. Jesus is the only one who could have done that – and He accomplished that on the cross.

Other religions teach we can do enough good to outweigh our bad. They have no way of paying for sin. However, we all know that disobedience can't be erased by obedience. Obedience is the bottom line requirement and can never make up for disobedience. That is true in the law of every country in the world. Breaking a law can't be made up for by keeping other laws. Sin must be paid for – a fine, time in jail or whatever is required. Good works cannot undo the bad. Only Christianity has a Savior who paid for our sin, because He was perfect and didn't have any sin of His own.

Many people sincerely believe their religion will get them to heaven, but even their deepest sincerity doesn't change the truth. Faith is only as good as the content, what it is placed in. You can take medicine sincerely believing it will help you, but if it is the wrong medicine it won't help, it could even harm you. Mankind used to firmly believe the world was flat, not round. No matter how many believed that, or how strongly they believed, it didn't change the fact the earth is round. No matter how strongly or sincerely people have faith, if it isn't in a trustworthy object, that faith won't help them. Only faith in Jesus will remove sin and lead to salvation.

ANSWERING OBJECTIONS

As Christians, we are accused of not being tolerant because we believe Jesus is the only way of salvation. Some argue there are many ways of salvation and we are wrong to reject other beliefs. We have seen that Jesus is the only way of salvation, so of course we must warn others that there is no salvation in their religion. Neglecting to do so would be terribly wrong on our part. Is it wrong to speak against such beliefs as racism or white supremacy? Shall we say they are just alternate belief systems and not pass judgment on them as being morally wrong? If someone believes it is OK to steal or murder, should we accept their beliefs so that we are not considered intolerant? Tolerating wrong by refusing to say it is wrong is itself very wrong.

Since Jesus is the only way, then others who deny this are not merely following other belief systems, but are actually preventing their followers from coming to Jesus for salvation. If someone has a fatal disease and you have a cure, not sharing it with them is wrong.

Others say that because we feel only Christians go to heaven then we are better than others. Salvation has nothing to do with us, but everything to do with Jesus. Everyone deserves eternity in hell. Yet we will go to heaven not because we are better than others, but because we put our faith in the One who paid for the sins of everyone.

13. WE CAN BE SURE OF OUR SALVATION

We have salvation through Jesus and only through Jesus. It comes through putting faith in Him. But after we have it, can we lose it? There are those who say we can't be sure of our salvation because we can lose it if we stop believing or if we commit certain sins. Is that true? If so, we will be living in fear and insecurity. What we do for God will be motivated by fear, not love or appreciation. Does God want that?

PROOF FROM THE BIBLE

God's Word clearly tells us that God is faithful and will not turn from us even if we deny or are faithless to Him (2 Timothy 2:11-13). Even when we stumble and fall, He will not turn us away (Matthew 12:20; Psalm 37:24). When we confess our sin, God forgives us and never holds the sin

against us (Romans 4:6-8). Nothing can separate us from God, not even we ourselves (John 10:28-29; Romans 8:37-39).

The word for “believe” in the original Greek language in which the New Testament was written refers to a one time event with future results (John 5:24; 6:47; 3:15-16, 36; 6:40). God did not use a tense that referred to continually believing because that would be something we would have to do to earn or keep our salvation and that is impossible (Ephesians 2:8-9).

The Bible also says that if we “believe” we “have eternal life” now already. Since it is eternal we have it forever, but that starts now, not if we live a certain way until we die. In the Greek language “has” is in the continual tense, meaning when we believe at one point of time in the past we continually have eternal life from then on. It doesn’t say we might or could have it, it says we do have it (John 6:47; 3:15-16, 36; 5:24).

The Bible also says if we “believe” we “will be saved.” “Believe” refers to a one time event in the past when we put our faith in Jesus. “Will be saved” is in the future tense. It is something we are guaranteed, promised for the future (Acts 16:31). No conditions or requirements are given.

God guarantees that those who come to Him for salvation will never ever die without salvation for they can never lose their salvation (John 10:28-29; Romans 8:37-39)

Those who believe in Jesus are “born again” (John 3:3) and no one can be “unborn”. Jesus is using physical birth as a way of teaching about spiritual birth, and when one is born they can’t be unborn. Similarly, salvation is a free gift which cannot be given back, nor is there any requirement to meet to keep it (Ephesians 2:8-9). There is nothing we do for salvation except to simply receive it, so there is nothing we need to keep doing to keep it (Romans 3:28; John 3:16).

God wants us to know we cannot lose our salvation so that we live for Him out of a pure motive of love and devotion, not out of a selfish desire to earn or keep our salvation. This is no excuse to sin, for taking advantage of such marvelous love like that hurts Him deeply.

A man who was a widow hired a woman to work for him. She took care of his home, clothing and meals because at the end of the week he paid her for her work. After awhile they fell in love and married. Then she continued to take care of his home, clothing and meals but she did it for a much better, purer motive – love for the man. Which do you think Jesus would prefer from us?

V. THE TRINITY & HOLY SPIRIT

We have seen that God exists, and that Jesus is God. Does that mean we have two Gods? As Christians, we believe in the Trinity, that God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit are all God. They are three separate personalities but one God. There is only one God, but in the unity of the Godhead there are three eternal and coequal persons, the same in substance but distinct in subsistence. Many deny the Trinity, a teaching which then denies the deity and divinity of Jesus and the Holy Spirit. Some also claim the Bible is untrue for it clearly teaches God is triune. How can we prove the Trinity and the Holy Spirit exist?

14. THE TRINITY EXISTS

The Trinity is impossible to understand with our limited intelligence. We are a tiny speck on a tiny planet in the midst of the whole universe. The fact that we cannot understand all there is to understand about our Creator should not surprise or alarm us! There are many things our minds cannot understand. This is one of them. But that doesn't mean it isn't true.

PROOF FROM REASON

If the Trinity isn't true, why would the writers of the Bible make up such a thing? If they were creating a new religion and trying to convince others to believe in their religion, why would they ever make something so hard to understand a key feature? Who would even think of such a thing in the first place? The Trinity is not something man could or would invent on his own. The only explanation is that God revealed this truth to the writers of the Bible and they faithfully recorded what He revealed.

PROOF FROM THE BIBLE

The Bible records that the Father is God (John 6:27), the Son is God (Hebrews 1:8; John 10:27-30; 14:8-10; 17:3-5; Philippians 2:5-11) and the Holy Spirit is God (Acts 5:3-4; John 14:16-17, 26). All three are referred to as equal (Matthew 28:19; 2 Corinthians 13:14).

Jesus says we are to "baptize them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (Matthew 28:19). He doesn't say in the "names" (plural) but in the "name" (singular). These three are all one. We have proof the Trinity exists. But is it true that God lives in us through the Holy Spirit?

15. THE HOLY SPIRIT REALLY LIVES WITHIN US

We know the Holy Spirit is God, part of the Trinity. But is it true He lives inside of us? Does God really indwell us? If so, we have His presence and guidance at all times (John 16:8). He is there to produce the fruit of the Spirit in us (Galatians 5:22-23) and empower us with spiritual gifts (1 Corinthians 12:1-11). He reveals God's truth to us (John 14:26), comforts us (John 14:18,27), convicts of sin (John 16:8) and helps us in expressing our thoughts in prayers (Romans 8:26). If He is not within us none of these would happen.

PROOF FROM THE BIBLE

The Bible tells us that the Holy Spirit lives in us from the moment of salvation (John 7:37-39; 14:16-17; 1 Corinthians 6:19-20; 12:13). This is literally Jesus' presence in us by the Holy Spirit (2 Corinthians 13:5; Romans 8:10; Galatians 2:20; Ephesians 3:17; Colossians 1:27). The Holy Spirit is always in every believer from the moment of salvation. How much we let Him control and lead us depends on our allowing Him to fill us completely (Ephesians 5:19).

In the Old Testament the filling of the Spirit was rare and was usually related to the ability to serve in some particular area. Undoubtedly, the Spirit of God was behind the work of the inspiration of the Old Testament, and those who wrote Scripture were guided infallibly in what they wrote (Romans 3:2; Hebrews 5:12; 1 Peter 4:11). The Spirit of God in the Old Testament gave men wisdom (Genesis 41:38-40; Numbers 27:18; Judges 3:10; 6:34; 1 Samuel 10:10; 16:13). The Holy Spirit also gave men special skills in the Old Testament, such as the tailors for the priestly garments (Exodus 28:3) and the workmen who built the tabernacle (Exodus 31:3; 35:30-35). In the case of Samson, the Holy Spirit's

filling gave him superhuman strength (Judges 13:25; 14:6, 19; 15:14). It is probable that the Holy Spirit was involved in the miracles of the Old Testament, though they are not attributed to the Holy Spirit specifically.

Today He indwells every believer from the moment of salvation (John 7:37-39; 14:16-17; 1 Corinthians 6:19-20), produces the fruit (good works) in believers (Galatians 5:2-16) and baptizes (identifies) all Christians into the Body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:13). He is the One Who restrains sin in general (2 Thessalonians 2:7), convicts unbelievers of sin (John 16:8-9), and seals (guarantee of assurance) believers (2 Corinthians 1:22; Ephesians 1:13; 4:30). He guides and directs believers as well as teaching and reminding them of God's Word (John 14:26). He gives spiritual gifts to each believer and through them ministers to the whole Body (1 Corinthians 12:4-13).

We are commanded to be filled (controlled) by the Spirit (Ephesians 5:18) by continually being in total submission to God (Galatians 5:16,25) and not allowing any sin or disobedience in our lives (Ephesians 4:30; 1 Thessalonians 5:19). Sinning against God is defined in the Bible as grieving the Spirit (Isaiah 63:10-11; Ephesians 4:30).

PROOF FROM PERSONAL EXPERIENCE

Those who are Christians can affirm from personal experience the change in them from before to after salvation. There is no accounting for this other than God Himself living inside and ministering to all our needs as promised. It is not a transformation we could have made on our own, it had to come from a source outside us, and that is God Himself.

VI. ANGELS, SATAN, HEAVEN & HELL

16. ANGELS EXIST

The vast majority of people believe in angels. Christians, Jews, Muslims, Buddhists, Hindus and many other religious groups affirm the existence of angels. Primitive Sumerian carvings, ancient Egyptian tombs and Assyrian artifacts have winged figures. Yet often what others believe about angels is different than what the Bible teaches. Who is correct? In fact, do angels really even exist?

Does it even matter if they exist or not? We don't worship them or talk to them, nor they to us. But understanding angels helps us know how God works in the world. Knowing this will help give us peace and assurance. It leads to praising God for His greatness. And while we don't relate to angels now, we will share eternity with them, even rule over them (1 Corinthians 6:2-4).

PROOF FROM THE BIBLE

Angels are mentioned in 34 of the 66 Bible books. There are 275 references to angels. Jesus talked about angels many times (Luke 15:10; 22:43; 16:22; Matthew 25:41; 18:10; 26:53; 24:36). The Old Testament (Isaiah 6:2; Psalm 103:20; Job 38:6-7) and New Testament (Luke 1:11; 2:13; Revelation 5:11; 13:2; Acts 5:19; 12:7; 27:23-24; Colossians 1:16; Jude 6; Hebrews 12:11; 1:14) speak often of angel activity.

The Greek word for 'angel' ('angelos') means "messenger." Actually the word is just transliterated in our Bibles (English letters replace Greek letters but the word is the same). Were it translated into

English we would have the word “messenger” every time ‘angel’ appears. That is basically their function -- messengers (servants) of God. They are God’s servants who help God’s people (Hebrews 1:14). Individual angels seem assigned to children and believers (Acts 12:12) to help them in special ways. God could use His sovereign power to do things such as prevent an automobile accident, have a child fall safely and not be hurt, discover a set of lost keys or similar actions, but usually He has His angels do that work. They protect God’s people (Psalm 34:7; 91:12; Matthew 18:10). They bring answers to prayers (Acts 12:7), although sometimes demons oppose them and the answers are delayed (Daniel 10:10-21). Angels watch and learn from believers (1 Corinthians 4:9; 1 Timothy 5:2). They encourage us in danger (Acts 27:23-24). They even help in evangelism (Luke 15:10; Acts 8:26). They care for God’s people when they die (Luke 16:22; Jude 9). They fight against demons (Revelation 12).

PROOF FROM PERSONAL EXPERIENCE

The Bible tells us that angels can appear as people in order to assist us, and we aren’t even aware that they are angels (Hebrews 13:2). I have had several experiences in my life where it became clear afterwards that the person or persons I was involved with weren’t people but were angels. Many others have this same experience.

I have been involved in spiritual warfare ministry for over 30 years. Anyone who has been demonized, or who has helped those who are to find freedom, knows the reality of angels and demons (fallen angels). There is no doubt of their existence to those who are involved in spiritual warfare and deliverance ministries.

PROOF FROM REASON

It is quite clear that supernatural occurrences happen today. There is no other explanation for events or experiences which may be either good (angels) or evil (demons – fallen angels). They could be direct interventions of God (or Satan). However they could just as well be caused by angels or demons. Missionaries often have stories of such events and experiences. These don’t prove that angels exist, but seeing angels (or demons) as the cause is a good explanation for them.

17. SATAN & DEMONS EXIST

Satan and demons are part of our culture. We see them in Halloween celebrations, movies and in religious groups which worship and serve them. But do they really exist, or are they just part of folklore with no basis. If Satan and demons exist, then we have very clever and powerful enemies with abilities far beyond our own. If they don’t exist then the Bible and Jesus both lie by speaking of them many times.

PROOF FROM THE BIBLE

The Bible tells us that Satan was God’s highest created being (Ezekiel 28:11-19; Isaiah 14:12-20). He is very intelligent and clever (Genesis 1:26; 3:1-7; 2 Corinthians 11:3). He is a murderer and a liar (John 8:44). Even though he was God’s highest creation he wanted to be worshiped instead of God, so he rebelled but was cast out of heaven and lost his perfect state (Isaiah 14:12-20; Ezekiel 28:11-19). He still has great strength and power, so much that even Michael the archangel viewed him as a foe too powerful to oppose (Jude 9). Yet Satan’s attributes, impressive as they are, are not limitless. His power is subject to God’s restrictions (Job 1:12; Luke 4:6; 2 Thessalonians 2:7-8).

The control of God on his activities is illustrated by Satan's request to God for permission to afflict Job (Job 1:7-12).

We read that Satan blinds the minds of unbelievers (2 Corinthians 4:4), snatches the Word of God from their heart so they don't respond to it (Luke 8:12) and works in men to oppose God's work (Revelation 2:13). He tempts believers to lie (Acts 5:3), accuses and slanders us before God (Revelation 12:10), does all he can to hinder what we do for God (1 Thessalonians 2:18), tempts us to sin (1 Corinthians 7:5) and incites persecution against us (Revelation 2:10). He was judged and defeated at the cross (John 12:31). One day he will be sent to hell forever (Revelation 20:1-10).

Demons are angels who rebelled along with Satan and were also cast out of heaven (Revelation 12:7-13). "Demon" means "destroyer." They are also called evil or unclean spirits, referring to the fact they don't have a physical body. They spread their sin and uncleanness any way they can. They are spiritual terrorists, trying to destroy the work of God's kingdom (Daniel 10:10; Revelation 16:13-16). They are led by Satan (Ephesians 6:11-12) and can inflict disease (Matthew 9:33; Luke 13:11,16; Job 2:7-10) and lead men to sin (Matthew 4:1-10). Demons can indwell men (Matthew 4:24) and animals (Mark 5:13). They oppose spiritual growth (Ephesians 6:12) and spread false doctrine (1 Timothy 4:1). Always remember they can do nothing without God's permission (Job 1:6-12).

PROOF FROM PERSONAL EXPERIENCE

In my spiritual warfare dealings with those who have been demonized, I have seen clear evidence of the reality of Satan and demons. The things people thought and the way they acted were evil beyond what the person normally was like. Voices came from people that didn't sound anything like the person's own voice. The profanity was beyond anything imaginable. The knowledge the demons had was far above what the person could have known as well. Those who deal with demonically oppressed people sense in their spirit the evil working in the person. The person who is delivered also attests to the demonic presence which worked through them. Missionaries and others often have stories of these things as well. In many cultures Satan flaunts his evil and power to control people by fear. People living in those places have no doubt that Satan and demons are real.

PROOF FROM REASON

The best explanation for the vile, evil acts committed today by people who were seemingly normal not long before is the reality of an evil presence working through them. Cruelty that seems beyond human ability, supernatural strength or capacity to give or withstand pain, knowledge of things no human could have ever known – these and other happenings are best explained by a personal evil power in the universe – Satan and demons.

18. GOD IS GREATER THAN SATAN

We have shown proof that God, Satan and demons exist. Clearly there are two supernatural powers at work. They are directly opposed to each other. Some follow Satan, others follow God. How can we be sure God is greater than Satan? What is the proof?

PROOF FROM THE BIBLE

The Bible repeatedly and clearly affirms that God is greater than Satan (1 John 4:4; James 2:19). Jesus defeated Satan on the cross (1 John 3:8; Colossians 2:13-15) and has power over him (Colossians 1:15-17; Luke 4:41). Satan and his demons cannot separate us from God (Romans 8:37-39). We can have victory over them through Jesus (James 4:7; Luke 10:17-19; Acts 19:13-16). They can only do what God allows (Job 1:6-12) and God only allows what is for our good and His glory (1 Corinthians 10:13; Romans 8:28; James 1:2-4). One day Satan and all demons will be sent to hell forever (Revelation 20:1-10).

PROOF FROM EXPERIENCE

Christians everywhere will testify to the victory God has given them over Satan and his forces when they live in obedience to Him and follow His Word. I have seen that happen time and time again in my own life and in my family, as well as with those to whom I minister. Satan and demons must yield to God's command and the name of Jesus (Philippians 2:9-11; Luke 10:17; Acts 16:18).

PROOF FROM REASON

Since the God of the Bible is the only God and is sovereign over everything, it stands to reason He is sovereign over Satan and demons. He created Satan, and the creator is always greater than the creation. If Satan were the more powerful, he would have overcome God and taken over control long ago, but clearly he hasn't done that. There can only be one supreme power in the universe, and that is definitely God!

19. GOD ALLOWS SUFFERING FOR A REASON

If God is greater than Satan He must also be greater than evil. If so, why doesn't He destroy all evil and suffering in the world? Why doesn't He bring justice and healing everywhere? How can a loving God allow terrible things to happen to people? Why does He permit drought, famine, war, crime and persecution? Can He be a good, loving God and allow evil to happen?

WHY DOESN'T GOD DESTROY SUFFERING?

Suffering is not because God is not good, for He is good (Psalm 34:8). Also, suffering is not because God is unable to stop it, He is all-powerful (Isaiah 40:25-26). He proved His goodness by leaving heaven to come to earth and go to the cross to pay for the sins of every one of us. Then He came back to life. We cannot doubt His goodness nor His power. Still, He allows suffering. Why?

God did not create evil. Nothing can be the source of its opposite. A good and holy God would not be able to create evil. If so, He would have evil as part of Himself and not be good and holy. God did not create evil but when He created free will He allowed for the possibility of evil. Free will, both for angels and human beings, assumes there are two opposites to freely choose between. These are good and evil. God created humans in His own image, capable of having and sustaining a personal relationship with Him. But to really be in His image, they have to be capable of freely loving Him and following His will without being forced. But, creatures who are free to love God must also be free to hate or ignore Him. And when people act in ways outside the will of God, great evil and suffering is the ultimate result.

Evil and sin exist because first some angels, then human beings, chose disobedience over obedience to God (James 1:13-15). If God never allowed free will, or if He destroyed it now, we

would be robots and unable to choose to love and follow God. There would be no human freedom. And if God destroyed evil He would have to destroy us as well. He created us because He loves us and wants to have a personal relationship with us, not destroy us. So His solution was to come to earth to pay for our sins. That way we can still have a free will to choose to follow Him, but our sin would be paid for when we don't follow Him.

God did not create evil, but He allowed it so we could have a free will. He uses evil for His ultimate good. He temporarily tolerates certain short-range evil, in order to achieve long range good that we cannot understand. God never allows pain without a purpose. My parents took me to a doctor when I was young, even though I wasn't sick. The doctor would give me injections against dangerous diseases. I couldn't imagine why they would let a strange man hold me down and stick a painful needle in my arm. But I knew they loved me and trusted that knew something I didn't know. That's how we must respond to painful things that happen to us which we don't understand. He has reasons we can't comprehend.

WHY DOES GOD ALLOW SUFFERING?

For unbelievers, suffering is a consequence of sin in the universe (Genesis 3:17-18) and also a consequence of their own actions and rejection of salvation. God allows it so they will see their need of Him and come to Him for salvation.

For us who are believers, God allows suffering for a different purpose. Sometimes we deserve the negative things that happen to us because we break the rules of government or nature. We make choices with negative consequences when we don't take care of our health or our finances. God allows difficulties to arise so we turn back to Him (Hebrews 12:4-12; Revelation 3:19; Job 5:17; Proverbs 3:12).

What about suffering that happens to God's people who are living in obedience to Him? Why does that happen? It's not punishment (Romans 8:1). God allows it for a reason. With Job His reason was to show Satan and his demons, angels, and all mankind that Job chose to remain faithful despite what happened (Job 1-2). Hosea went through a terrible marriage in order to show the people God's unconditional love and what God went through loving them. Suffering also teaches obedience, as was true of Jesus who needed to suffer to learn obedience (Hebrews 5:8; 2:10). It does bring us closer to God and cause us to lean more on Him, as Paul learned through his thorn in the flesh (2 Corinthians 12:1-10). God uses suffering to bring us closer to Christ (1 Peter 1:7-8; Isaiah 49:2) and learn to trust Him more (2 Corinthians 1:8-9).

Watching God bring us through trials and tribulations helps us see God's power at work (John 13:16; 16:33; 1 Peter 1:13). As we trust Him more, His Spirit is free to work within us to produce the fruit of the Spirit (Ephesians 5:22-23; 2 Corinthians 4:8-11) and help us grow in Him (John 15:1-8). In addition, we are better able to help others who suffer after we have been through it ourselves (2 Corinthians 1:3-4).

HOW SHOULD WE RESPOND TO SUFFERING?

Then, since God has a good reason for allowing suffering, how can we best face it when it happens to us? First, if God is allowing it to show sin in your life, confess that sin and live for Him (1 John 1:9; Romans 8:28). If you are a believer and aren't aware of any sin in your life, then make sure you are in God's will in all you do (1 Peter 4:19). Realize God is allowing it for your benefit (John 15:2; Romans 8:28), like the parent who takes their child to the doctor for injections. When we get to

heaven we will know God's purpose in allowing difficulties in our lives (John 13:7). Until then don't be ashamed, but praise God anyway (1 Peter 4:16).

WHEN WILL SUFFERING BE GONE?

We've seen that God has not destroyed evil because He would have to destroy us. We have looked at some responses to evil and suffering. There is another response; that response is to look ahead. You see, even though God won't destroy evil, He will ultimately defeat evil. And what a glorious day that will be! Satan and his deceptions will be done away with forever (Revelation 20:1-10), and we will no longer be at the mercy of a world gone mad, because we will be in the presence of God forever (Revelation 21:1-22:21).

I don't know why suffering happens, but I do know God is in sovereign control over it all and I also know that what He does is ultimately for a good reason. By very definition, God is omnipotent and in control of everything. We know God is also full of compassion and love. He's proven His love for mankind by leaving heaven and coming to live on earth with us so He could ultimately die on the cross to pay for our sins and make a way for us to be with God in heaven for all eternity. Love is the guiding force behind all God does. Knowing that God is in control and that He is motivated by love in all He does is the rock we must hang onto when we don't have answers for the 'why' questions that keep popping up in life. Don't look at the circumstances around you and try to understand God in light of them. Instead, look at our faithful God who proved His love on the cross, and face your trials with faith in the One who died for us. Don't try to understand God's character based on His actions. Instead, try to understand His actions based on His proven character of love and goodness. His character has been proven, but the reasons for His actions is something we won't understand until later. So, based on His character and His actions in the past we can and must trust Him despite whatever happens now. That's what Job did and what we must do as well.

20. HEAVEN & HELL EXIST

Having looked at proofs for God, Jesus, the Holy Spirit, the Bible, angels and demons, let's now look to the future. What about heaven and hell? There are stories, songs, myths and legends about both of them. Are they real, or just something someone imagined? It makes a world of difference if there is no heaven or hell awaiting us after this life. If this life is all there is we'd live it much differently than if we knew there was another life afterwards. So this is a very important question.

PROOF FROM THE BIBLE

First we must prove that there is life after death. We know God created man to be with Him forever, but death entered with Adam and Eve (Genesis 3:19). Yet death shows God's mercy on man, for it frees him from endless living on this earth separated from God. Death allows man to be reunited with God. Death is the result of sin (James 1:15; Romans 6:23). Jesus came to remove the power of death, which keeps us in a state separated from God forever (1 Corinthians 15:21-22). David knew he would live even after death (Psalm 23:6; Psalm 49:15; 16:10). Solomon (Ecclesiastes 12:7), Job (Job 19:25-27), Paul (2 Corinthians 5:8) and Jesus believed in life after death (Mark 12:26-27; John 11:25-26).

Since there is life after death, now we will look at where that life will take place – in heaven or in hell. We can easily prove heaven exists from the Bible because there are over 600 verses that talk

about heaven. The Bible says God created heaven (Isaiah 48:13; 1 Corinthians 2:9). Moses believed in heaven (Deuteronomy 26:15), and so did Solomon (1 Kings 8:30). Jesus taught about heaven (John 14:2-3). Peter (1 Peter 1:3-4) and Paul (2 Corinthians 5:1) spoke of heaven.

Most people believe in heaven because it fits with what they would like. But most people reject hell because they don't believe there can be such a destiny for anyone. Yet, if we believe in heaven we must also believe in hell. Jesus talked about hell over thirty times (Matthew 26:46; 13:42, 50; 25:41; 16:19; 10:28; Mark 9:43; Luke 16:22-31). The Old Testament talks about hell as well (Psalm 9:17; 16:10; 55:15; 139:8; Job 11:8; Proverbs 15:24; Isaiah 5:14).

The Bible makes it clear that hell is for those who have never accepted God's free gift of salvation by putting their faith in Jesus (Revelation 20:10, 15; 2 Thessalonians 1:9; Matthew 25:41-42; Luke 16:23-24). The only way to avoid hell and be in heaven is through Jesus (John 14:4-6; Acts 4:12).

PROOF FROM EXPERIENCE

There are many verified testimonies from those who died and experienced heaven before being brought back to life so they could tell what they experienced. There are stories of those who experienced hell the same way. I personally have talked to several people who have gone to heaven before being revived, and one man who went to hell. He immediately turned his life over to Jesus upon waking up!

PROOF FROM REASON

There is a common longing in all people for justice, for a time of peace, for something far better than this world. There is a need in us that this life does not satisfy. All people and cultures, all religions and beliefs, look forward to something better after this life. Where does this come from if not from God who built it into mankind because there really is a heaven and hell?

PROOF FROM THE CHARACTER OF GOD

When a good God looks down on this Earth and sees all these horrible atrocities occurring (like people murdering and raping), since He is good, He cannot turn a blind eye to the crimes being committed. And since it seems justice is not always carried out on this Earth, it must happen after we die. Therefore, there must be a place of punishment after we die (we call that Hell) and a place of bliss (we call that Heaven). But a good judge won't just punish murderers and rapists, He'll have to punish all acts of injustice, even thieving and lying.

We've all done at least something wrong in our life (either by lying, stealing, lustng, greed, jealousy, anger, fear, etc), so that means we are deserving of going to Hell. And the good deeds that we do don't merit us anything in front of a good judge, because a good judge would never accept a bribe. Just like if you murder somebody, you can't say to the judge, "I admit I murdered that person, but look at the good works I've done - helping the poor, working for charities. Can you let me go?" If the judge were to let the criminal go free, he would be a corrupt judge. A good judge cannot be corrupt. Likewise, the perfect character of God demands punishment for sin, eternity in hell for those who reject His free gift of salvation. The only alternative is to accept Jesus' punishment for our sin on the cross, in which case we have His perfection and are not deserving of hell. Therefore, there must another place for those who follow Him, a place of blessedness such as heaven.

PROOF FROM THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS

Jesus conquered death, showing death is not the victor and there is a life after death. It also proves that what Jesus was saying about heaven and hell are also true. He stated that everyone will go to either heaven or hell. So the resurrection of Jesus proves a life after death in either heaven or hell.

CONCLUSION

I hope this book has helped you better understand and be able to defend your faith. If you have questions or suggestions, or would like to share something you have learned, I would love to hear from you. Write me at Jerry@Schmoyer.net. For more information about this subject and others go to our website, India.ChristianTrainingOrganization.org. There is much good information there which you can use and share with others.

I have shared these important truths with you. Now you must find someone you can share them with as well (1 Timothy 2:2).