

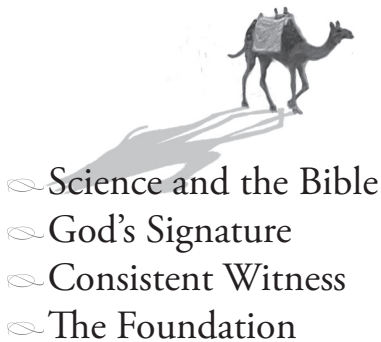
ONE GOD
ONE MESSAGE

Part 2



Considering
The Evidence

by P. D. Bramsen



- Science and the Bible
- God's Signature
- Consistent Witness
- The Foundation

ONE GOD ONE MESSAGE - PART 2
CONSIDERING THE EVIDENCE

by P. D. Bramsen

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Considering The Evidence

Dear Friend,

The story is told of two bedouins who found a European traveler one sand dune away from a refreshing oasis. The man was dead. “But how is it possible that he could have died of thirst so close to this life-giving source?” one of the men wondered. The other bedouin shook his head and said, “He didn’t recognize the signs and must have been looking in the wrong direction.”

When it comes to matters of eternal importance, did you know there is no need to stumble through life filled with fear and uncertainty? You can know what is true and what is false. But you must open your eyes and recognize the signs provided by God.

In this second stage, we will discover:

- what science, archaeology, and poetry can and cannot prove.
- an indisputable proof of divine authorship.
- how to distinguish a true prophet from a false prophet.
- why it is important to start at the beginning of God’s Book.

We pray that God Himself will instruct your mind and heart as you press forward in this unhurried pilgrimage. Take time to go through the questions at the end of each chapter and send your answers to us. We appreciate the opportunity to correspond with you.

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4

SCIENCE AND THE BIBLE

*“He hangs the earth on **nothing**.”*

— Prophet Job (Job 26:7)

Several years ago, my wife and I toured a cavern deep in the earth. As our guide pointed out impressive rock formations, stalactites and stalagmites, she said something like: “It all began with a drop of water. A shallow inland sea covered this area 330 million years ago, depositing layers of sediment that eventually hardened into limestone...”

It sounded so scientific, as if man had been there as an observer in the beginning. As she talked, God’s words to the prophet Job echoed in my mind: “*Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth? Tell Me, if you have understanding!*” (Job 38:4) At the end of the excursion, I thanked our guide for the tour and then asked her how geologists know the cavern is so many millions of years old. She admitted they do not really know, and then added, “I just told you what I have been trained to say.”

GENUINE SCIENCE

The word *science* comes from the Latin noun *scientia*, meaning **knowledge**.⁵² The verb *scire* means **to know**. *To know* is *to regard as true beyond any doubt*. While a scientist may choose to label a hypothesis as “science,” that does not make it science.

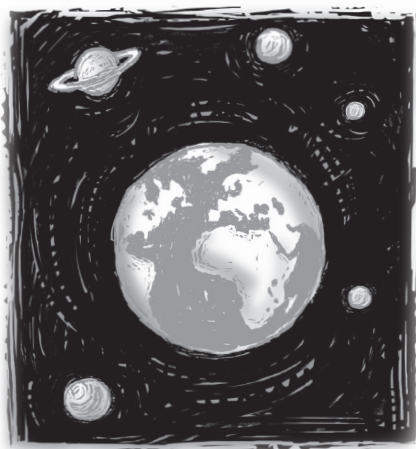
In the mid-1970s, the French Doctor Maurice Bucaille, King Faisal's personal physician, wrote a book called *The Bible, the Qur'an and Science*. This book—prominently displayed in bookstores and mosques across the Muslim world—asserts that the Bible contradicts modern science. Bucaille suggests that the creation narrative recorded in the Bible's first chapter is “probablement la traduction d'un mythe” (probably translated from a myth), because it does not line up with man's changing theories about the origin of the universe.⁵³ Like so many, Bucaille mistakenly equates evolutionary *theory*⁵⁴ with genuine *science*.

It is important to understand that the Scriptures were not given to teach *physical science*, but to reveal *spiritual science*. God gave us His Book to show us *who He is*, *what He is like*, and *what He has done for us*. He also gave it to teach us *where we came from*, *why we are on earth*, and *where we will end up*. Such information cannot be discovered or verified in a research laboratory. Nevertheless, since the Bible deals with every aspect of life, it should not come as a surprise that it also includes data about the natural world which was unknown to man at the time the Scriptures were written.

GOD SAID IT FIRST

Let's consider seven examples where God's Book recorded scientific data long before modern-day scientists discovered it. Later, as we think our way through the Scriptures, we will encounter other striking examples of science in the Bible.

1. **ROUND EARTH.** Most modern history books teach that the Greeks, in 500 BC, “were the first to theorize that the Earth was round.... Greek philosophers also concluded that the Earth could only be a sphere



because, in their opinion, that was the ‘most perfect’ shape.”⁵⁵ Yet more than a millennium earlier, the prophet Job had already declared that the God who “**hangs the earth on nothing... drew a circular horizon on the face of the waters, at the boundary of light and darkness.**” (Job 26:7,10) And 400 years before the Greeks, the prophet Solomon stated that God “**drew a circle on the face of the deep.**” (Proverbs 8:27) And in 700 BC, still 200 years before Greek philosophers came along, Isaiah announced: “*It is He who sits above the **circle** of the earth.*” (Isaiah 40:22) The word for *circle* in Hebrew can also be translated *sphere* or *roundness*. So who was first to speak of the earth’s round shape—the Greeks or God? Yes, it was God, Earth’s Architect.

2. WATER CYCLE. The book of Job also describes the hydrologic cycle: “**He draws up drops of water, which distill as rain from the mist, which the clouds drop down and pour abundantly on man. Indeed, can anyone understand the spreading of clouds, the thunder from His canopy?**” (Job 36:27-29) Thus, the Bible describes the rain cycle which first becomes vapor, condensing into tiny liquid water droplets in the clouds, and then combining into drops large enough to overcome the updrafts that suspend them in the air. Job also refers to the incredible amount of water that can be held as condensation in the clouds: “*He binds up the water in His thick clouds, yet the clouds are not broken under it.*” (Job 26:8)⁵⁶

3. COMMON ANCESTRY. Thirty-five hundred years ago, the prophet Moses wrote: “*Adam called his wife’s name Eve, because **she was the mother of all living.***” (Genesis 3:20). According to the Bible, all humans descend from one common mother. Evolutionary scientists were unconvinced of this fact until 1987. After extensive analysis of mitochondrial DNA (section of human genetic code passed down intact from mother to child) taken from placentas around the world, the research concluded that all humans today come from “*a common ancestral female.*”⁵⁷ Several years later, studies also concluded that all humans descend from one common male parent.⁵⁸ Little did these researchers realize that all their effort and expense would confirm the accuracy of the Bible!

4. LIFE BLOOD. Moses also stated: “*the life of the flesh is in the blood.*” (Leviticus 17:11) This fact was understood only fairly recently by the medical community, which practiced the potentially fatal technique of “blood letting” until the 19th century.⁵⁹

5. AGING EARTH. Three thousand years ago, the prophet David wrote that the earth will one day “*perish*” and “*grow old like a garment.*” (Psalm 102:25-26) Modern science concurs that our planet is slowing down, its magnetic field decaying, and its protective ozone layer thinning.

6. OCEANOGRAPHY. David also wrote about “*the paths of the seas.*” (Psalm 8:8) It was this little phrase that inspired Admiral Matthew Fontaine Maury (1806-1873) to dedicate his life to discover and document these ocean currents. He figured if God spoke of “*paths*” in the seas, then he should be able to map them. Maury did just that and became known as “the father of oceanography.”⁶⁰

7. ASTRONOMY. Nearly 2,000 years ago, the apostle Paul wrote: “*There is one glory of the sun, another glory of the moon and another glory of the stars; for one star differs from another star in glory.*” (1 Corinthians 15:41) To the naked eye, all stars look much alike. Yet today, by means of powerful telescopes and light spectra analysis, astronomers affirm: “Stars *differ* greatly in color and brightness. Some stars look yellow, like the sun. Others glow blue or red.”⁶¹ “Each individual star is *unique*.”⁶² How could Paul have known this in the first century AD?

BLIND FAITH?

Though numerous other cases of “science in the Bible” could be cited, the point of these seven examples is simply this: Although the Bible is not a science textbook, whenever it does speak on science, it is accurate and true.

Some label belief in the Bible as “blind faith.” Is it? Or is it *intelligent faith* rooted in incontrovertible evidence? Since the data consistently lines up with what is written in the Bible, are we being foolish or wise to accept these Writings as true—even when they teach things we cannot fully explain or prove?

God does not ask us to commit intellectual suicide. He has provided us with “*many infallible proofs*” (Acts 1:3), which affirm the trustworthiness of His Book.

HISTORY, GEOGRAPHY, ARCHAEOLOGY

In the last chapter, we examined some of the evidence that establishes the Old and New Testaments as the best-preserved books of antiquity. But what about the actual information contained in these Scriptures? Can it be trusted?

The Bible provides scholars and skeptics with thousands of opportunities to check its accuracy since almost every page names a historical person, place, or event.

What do history, geography, and archaeology reveal?

For centuries, many men have sought to discredit the historical accuracy of the Bible. One such skeptic was Sir Walter Ramsay (1851–1939), one of the all-time great archaeologists and the Nobel Prize winner for chemistry in 1904. As a young man, Ramsay was convinced that the Bible could not be trusted. But his discoveries changed his thinking and compelled him to write, “Luke is a historian of the first rank; not merely are his statements of fact trustworthy... this author should be placed along with the very greatest of historians.”⁶³

Luke was a doctor, a historian, a follower of Jesus, and the writer of both the *Gospel according to Luke* and the *Acts of the Apostles*. These two biblical books refer to 95 geographical locations (32 countries, 54 cities, and 9 islands), as well as numerous historical personalities and events. Critics have worked hard to find an incongruity between what Luke recorded and what archaeology, geography, and extra-biblical history reveal. They have been disappointed. Luke’s writings have been proven accurate on every count.

To illustrate, let’s look at one sentence in Luke’s Gospel. It is a phrase designed to establish the historical setting for the earthly ministry of Jesus of Nazareth.

*“Now in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar,
Pontius Pilate being governor of Judea, Herod being*

*tetrarch of Galilee, his brother Philip tetrarch of Iturea and the region of Trachonitis, and **Lysanias** tetrarch of Abilene, while Annas and **Caiaphas** were high priests, the word of God came to John the son of Zacharias in the wilderness.” (Luke 3:1-2)*

WAS LUKE RIGHT?

The many names and details naturally make us ask, “Was Luke accurate?” As a test, let’s check up on four of the people mentioned—the names highlighted in the previous quotation.

First, Luke mentions *the Roman emperor Tiberius Caesar* and *provincial governor Pontius Pilate*. Were they historical figures? Did they rule at the same time? In 1961, in the area of Herod’s restored theater in Caesarea (also mentioned by Luke [Acts 12:19-24]), a one-meter high stone was discovered that bears an inscription confirming that Pontius Pilate was indeed governor while Tiberius Caesar was Emperor. The non-biblical historian Josephus (AD 37–101) also wrote of these same people, places, and events.⁶⁴

Luke was right.

Luke also mentions *Lysanias* as the tetrarch (joint governor) of *Abilene*, a province in Syria. For years scholars used this “factual error to prove Luke was wrong” because the only Lysanias known to historians was the ruler of Chalcis, Greece, who was killed about 60 years before the time period of which Luke writes (circa AD 27). Historians knew nothing of *Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene*, Syria, until an inscription, dated between AD 14 and 29, was found near Damascus. It bears the name: “Lysanias the Tetrarch.”⁶⁵ So there were two people named Lysanias.

Luke was right.

Luke also wrote of *Caiaphas*, a co-high priest in the Jewish temple when Jesus was on earth. In December of 1990, workers constructing a road just south of Old Jerusalem accidentally discovered Caiaphas’ family tomb. Archaeologists were called to the scene. The tomb contained twelve ossuaries (limestone bone boxes). The most beautifully decorated of the ossuaries was inscribed with the name “Joseph son of Caiaphas.” That was the

full name of the high priest who arrested Jesus.⁶⁶ Inside the box were the remains of a 60-year-old male, almost certainly those of the Caiaphas of the New Testament.⁶⁷

Luke was right.

Renowned archaeologist Nelson Glueck observed: “It may be clearly stated categorically that no archaeological discovery has ever controverted a single biblical reference. Scores of archaeological findings have been made which confirm in clear outline or exact detail historical statements in the Bible.”⁶⁸ This cannot be said of other books revered by the world’s religions. For example, archaeological finds have shown the Book of Mormon to be inconsistent with history and geography.⁶⁹

Archaeologist Joseph Free, chairman of the department of archaeology at Wheaton College, concludes his book *Archaeology and Bible History* with these words: “I thumbed through the book of Genesis and mentally noted that each of the 50 chapters was either illuminated or confirmed by some archaeological discovery—the same would be true for most of the remaining chapters of the Bible, both the Old and New Testaments.”⁷⁰

WHAT SCIENCE CANNOT PROVE

While genuine archaeological data consistently affirms the Bible’s reliability as an accurate historical document, archaeology cannot *prove* divine inspiration. And while impressive scientific statements are found in the Bible, science cannot *prove* any book to be the true Word of God. This needs to be said because there are people who try to convince others that their sacred book is inspired by God since it contains some scientific-sounding statements.

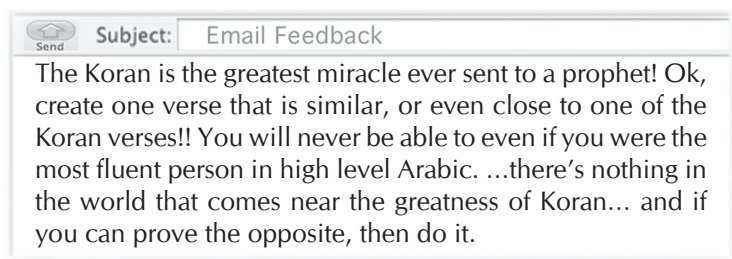
Spiritual truth cannot be proven by *scientific* discovery, nor can scientific facts in a book prove it to be from God. Satan, who has been around a long time, knows a lot about science too. Early on in our journey through the Scriptures, we will meet this former heavenly angel—now called *Satan* and *the devil*—who has become God’s adversary. For now, just keep in mind that Satan is incredibly intelligent and is capable of inspiring humans to write impressive things.

The prophet Daniel was a wise man whom God used to write one of the most profound books in Scripture, yet when it comes to natural capacities, Satan, the spirit who opposes God's truth, is even "*wiser than Daniel.*" (Ezekiel 28:3) The devil is the mastermind behind false religion. He is proficient in the art of deception. The very term *devil* means "accuser" or "slanderer."

An Arab proverb summarizes the danger: "*Beware! Some liars tell the truth.*"

WHAT POETRY CANNOT PROVE

Some religions claim that their book is proven to be from God because it is written in a style that no mere human could produce.⁷¹ As Ahmed wrote in his e-mail:



Ahmed's challenge is based on a verse from the second sura (chapter) of the Qur'an which says: "*If ye are in doubt as to what We have revealed from time to time to Our servant, **then produce a Sura like thereunto**....*" (Sura 2:23)

The difficulty with this claim is that it can neither be proved nor disproved.

To illustrate, suppose I organize an art contest, enter my own painting, act as the judge, declare myself the winner and then challenge the other contestants, "No one can paint like me. If you doubt that I am the world's greatest artist then produce a painting like mine!"

Would that prove my painting is the best? Would that prove I am the greatest artist? No. Yet neither would anyone be able to prove me wrong! Why not? Beauty is in the eye of the beholder.

So it is with rhythmic, literary beauty. It is subjective.

The Bible is rich in amazing Hebrew poetry and mind-boggling numerical patterns.⁷² Yet it is not because of such literary eloquence that God expects us to believe His Word.

Just as science cannot *prove* divine inspiration, neither can beautiful-sounding prose prove a book to be from God.

It is wise to keep in mind that Satan, the great imitator, can also inspire mesmerizing poetry and “*great swelling words.*” (Jude 16) The Scriptures warn us not to be deceived “*by smooth words and flattering speech [that] deceive the hearts of the simple*” (Romans 16:18), especially when those words contradict the plan and message the Creator made known from the beginning of time.

Neither science, nor archaeology, nor poetry can prove any book to be the true Word of God. Such proof of divine inspiration must be based on a higher court of judgment—on stronger, indisputable evidence.

It is that evidence we will now consider.



CHAPTER 4 REVIEW

SCIENCE AND THE BIBLE

1. Name three scientific facts proclaimed thousands of years ago in the Bible, which have been confirmed by modern science in recent centuries.
2. Does the Bible require blind faith or intelligent faith? Explain your response.
3. How do history and archeology confirm the accuracy of the Bible?
4. What does the Qur'anic challenge issued in sura 2:23 prove? Explain.
5. By themselves, can science, archeology, and poetry prove an alleged "holy book" to be the inspired Word of God? Defend your position.
6. In your own words, explain Job 38:4. *"Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth? Tell Me, if you have understanding!"*

5

GOD'S SIGNATURE

"Let all the nations...hear and say, 'It is truth.'"
— God (Isaiah 43:9)

Most legal documents require an official signature. The Old and New Testament Scriptures, which claim to be God's authorized record and covenant, are signed, not with a pen, but with an utterly distinctive signature called *fulfilled prophecy*.

*"This is what the LORD says...
'I am the first and I am the last,
apart from me there is no God. Who
then is like me? Let him proclaim it.
**Let him declare and lay out before me
what has happened since I established
my ancient people, and what is yet to come—yes, let him
foretell what will come. ...Who foretold this long ago,
who declared it from the distant past? Was it not I, the
LORD?'"*** (Isaiah 44:6-7; 45:21 NIV)



Let us not fail to grasp God's logic. It is because the Bible abounds with detailed prophecies which have been accurately fulfilled that we can trust what it declares about the past, present, and future.

POSITIVE PROOF

Only the One who exists outside of time can announce and record history before it happens.

Mortal men and women have, at times, made educated guesses about what might occur in the future, but only God sees the future as though it has already happened. Only God knows what will take place a thousand years from now. Apart from divine revelation, neither humans, nor angels, nor Satan, nor demons can authoritatively foretell a future event.

Some would say, “But what about mediums, witch doctors, and fortune-tellers? They predict the future!”

First, it is important to understand that Satan is able to give extra-terrestrial knowledge and power to those who have “*been taken captive by him to do his will.*” (2 Timothy 2:26)

Second, Satan—the master imitator and psychologist who has been observing human history for thousands of years—has become quite proficient at forging God’s “signature.”

Third, while the devil is relatively good at forecasting the way certain events may turn out, he does not *know* the future. His “prophecies” are often proven wrong. Furthermore, they are vague. For example, a fortune teller may tell a young lady, “Within the next several years you will get married and find true love.” You and I know the odds are quite good that such a “prophecy” will come true to some extent. When speaking of *fulfilled biblical prophecies*, we are not talking about those kinds of ambiguous predictions.

Let’s consider **three examples of biblical prophecies**—about a place, a people, and a person.

PROPHECIES ABOUT A PLACE

Around 600 BC, the prophet Ezekiel prophesied against the ancient Phoenician city of Tyre. Located on the coast of Lebanon, Tyre was a world capital for over two thousand years. It was known as *the queen of the seas*. Yet while it was at the peak of its power, God told Ezekiel to proclaim and write down a detailed prophecy about the destruction to come upon Tyre as a result of its wickedness and arrogance before God.

The prophet Ezekiel predicted:

1. *Many nations would come up against Tyre.*
(Ezekiel 26:3)
2. *Babylon, under King Nebuchadnezzar, would be the first to attack it.* (v. 7)
3. *Tyre's walls and towers would be broken down.* (vv.4,9)
4. The people of Tyre would be *slain by the sword.* (v.11)
5. *The rubble and soil of the city would be cast into the sea.* (v. 12)
6. It would be scraped bare "*like the top of a rock.*" (v. 4)
7. It would become a fisherman's workplace "*for spreading nets.*" (vv. 5,14)
8. The great city of Tyre would "*never be rebuilt, for I the LORD have spoken.*" (v.14)

Secular history records that all eight predictions came true:

1. *Many nations came up against Tyre.*
2. The first was *Babylon, led by King Nebuchadnezzar.*
3. After a 13-year siege (585–572 BC), Nebuchadnezzar *broke down mainland Tyre's walls and towers,* fulfilling the first of Ezekiel's prophecies.
4. Nebuchadnezzar *massacred the inhabitants* who were unable to escape to Tyre's island fortress, located about a kilometer out in the Mediterranean Sea.
5. Secular history documents that in 332 BC, "Alexander the Great became the first to conquer the island portion of Tyre. He achieved this by destroying the mainland portion of the city and using the rubble to build a road to the island."⁷³ Thus, he unwittingly fulfilled another portion of the prophecy by *casting the rubble from the destroyed city into the sea.* Alexander's conquest brought a permanent end to the Phoenician Empire.⁷⁴
6. The city was scraped bare "*like the top of a rock.*"
7. It became "*a place for spreading nets.*"
8. In succeeding years many efforts were made to rebuild Tyre, only to have it destroyed repeatedly.

Today in Lebanon there is a modern city named Tyre, but the ancient Phoenician city against which Ezekiel prophesied never recovered. Below a photo of stone pavement, National Geographic magazine has this caption: “Today the Phoenicians’ Tyre lies buried beneath these paving stones and columns of a Roman metropolis. Only a small dig reaches down to the lost world of the Phoenicians.”⁷⁵

What would have been the odds that the man Ezekiel, by his own wisdom, could have made these eight accurate predictions about the city of Tyre?

Since only God sees history before it happens, only God could have given Ezekiel this information.

PROPHECIES ABOUT A PEOPLE

The Bible contains hundreds of precise prophecies about numerous people and nations: Egypt, Ethiopia, Arabia, Persia, Russia, Israel, and others.

Before we proceed with the next example of fulfilled prophecy, let us retain that our purpose is not to make these prophecies say what we want to hear, nor to push a political or religious agenda. Our objective is to discover what the Scriptures declare.

Here is an easy-to-interpret yet hard-for-many-to-accept case of fulfilled prophecy about one particular nation.

Around 1920 BC, God promised Abraham, “*To your descendants I will give this land.*” (Genesis 12:7)

Later God repeated the same promise to Isaac and Jacob.⁷⁶

The descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were first called *Hebrews*, later *Israelites*, and still later *Jews*.

Hundreds of years afterward, God informed Moses what would happen to them if they failed to trust and obey their God:

“I will scatter you among the nations and draw out a sword after you; your land shall be desolate and your cities waste.” (Leviticus 26:33)

“You will become a thing of horror and an object of scorn and ridicule to all the nations where the LORD will drive you. ...Among those nations you will find no repose, no resting place for the sole of your foot. There the LORD will give you an anxious mind, eyes weary with longing, and a despairing heart.” (Deuteronomy 28:37,65 NIV)

The Old Testament contains scores of similar prophecies.

Around AD 30, affirming the words of the prophets, Jesus of Nazareth foretold the destruction of Jerusalem: *“Now as [Jesus] drew near, He saw [Jerusalem] and wept over it, saying, ‘...days will come upon you when your enemies will build an embankment around you, surround you and close you in on every side, and level you, and your children within you, to the ground...because you did not know the time of your visitation.’”* (Luke 19:41-44) In speaking of the temple itself, Jesus foretold: *“The days will come in which not one stone shall be left upon another that shall not be thrown down.”* (Luke 21:6)

Forty years later, these events took place.

The historian Flavius Josephus, born in AD 37, recorded his eye-witness account. In AD 70, the Roman army *surrounded* Jerusalem, *built an embankment* around the city, and, after three years of siege, the army *leveled* Jerusalem. Though Caesar himself had ordered his troops to spare the great temple, the enraged Roman soldiers set it on fire, killing the Jews hiding inside. The temple's gold and silver melted and ran between the stones. The temple was pulled down, just as Jesus had foretold. *“Not one stone [was] left upon another.”*⁷ And, as Moses and the prophets had predicted, the Jews were *scattered* worldwide. Over the next two millennia, history would witness the fulfillment of these prophecies, as the wandering Jew became *“an object of scorn and ridicule to all the nations”* with *“no resting place.”*

Whatever our personal feelings, there is another side to this biblical prophecy none can deny. God also told His prophets that, against all odds, the Jews would be preserved among the nations as a distinct people and would one day return to the land God had given to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

Moses prophesied to the children of Israel: “*God will... **gather you again from all the nations** where the LORD your God has scattered you.*” (Deuteronomy 30:3) The prophet Amos added: “*I will bring back the captives of My people Israel; **they shall build the waste cities and inhabit them... I will plant them in their land, and no longer shall they be pulled up from the land....***” (Amos 9:14-15)

News networks around the world report the fulfillment of these events.

What has happened with the Hebrew nation is unique in world history. For one thing, it goes directly against *the law of assimilation*. This law demonstrates that whenever a nation is conquered by another nation, within a few generations the dispersed survivors will be assimilated by the nations in which they have settled. They intermarry, adopt the new language and culture—and lose their national identity. This did not happen with the Jews. Though millions desperately tried to blend in and be absorbed, they could not.⁷⁸

Understandably, many find these words painful to accept. Recently, a friend in Lebanon wrote: “*As concerns the fulfillment of prophecy [concerning God’s pledge to bring the Jewish people back to the land], I cannot overlook the implications of accepting such a belief. Accepting it would be detrimental to my cause.*”

Let us be clear. Recognizing the survival and reestablishment of the Jews as a people and nation does not mean that we must endorse Israeli government policies. I understand and sympathize with my Lebanese friend. His mother’s family and neighbors were driven from their homes in 1948 along with many others. His country has suffered terribly. Nevertheless, the point to be grasped is this: the words of the biblical prophets are taking place before our eyes.

The fact that most Jews today reject the message of the very prophets they claim to honor is also a fulfillment of Scripture. As a nation they are spiritually blind. “*Even to this day, when Moses [their own Torah!] is read, a veil lies on their heart.*” (2 Corinthians 3:15) As a nation, they will not enter into God’s true blessings until a coming day when they repent (have a radical change of mind and heart) and believe God’s age-old message.⁷⁹

Near the end of our journey through the Scriptures, we will observe how these events fit into God's program for the end times. We'll also hear some prophecies about the blessings God has in store for the Middle East and the entire world.

"I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the LORD, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope." (Jeremiah 29:11)

PROPHECIES ABOUT A PERSON

Scattered throughout the Old Testament are hundreds of prophecies about a Messiah-Deliverer whom God promised to send into the world. The Dead Sea Scrolls affirm that these Scriptures were written hundreds of years before Messiah's birth. Here is a sampling of those predictions.

- **Prophecy to Abraham, 1900 BC: The Messiah would enter the world through the family line of Abraham and Isaac.** (Genesis 12:2-3; 22:1-18. *Fulfilled: Matthew 1*)
- **Prophecy by Isaiah, 700 BC: He would be born of a virgin, having no earthly biological father.** (Isaiah 7:14; 9:6. *Fulfilled: Luke 1:26-35; Matthew 1:18-25*)
- **Prophecy by Micah, 700 BC: He would be born in Bethlehem.** (Micah 5:2. *Fulfilled: Luke 2:1-20; Matthew 2:1-12*)
- **Prophecy by Hosea, 700 BC: He would be called out of Egypt.** (Hosea 11:1. *Fulfilled: Matthew 2:13-15*)
- **Prophecy by Malachi, 400 BC: The Messiah would be preceded by a forerunner.** (Malachi 3:1; Isaiah 40:3-11. *Fulfilled: Luke 1:11-17; Matthew 3:1-12*)
- **Prophecy by Isaiah, 700 BC: He would cause blind to see, deaf to hear, lame to walk, and preach good news to the poor.** (Isaiah 35:5-6; 61:1. *Fulfilled: Luke 7:22; Matthew 9; etc.*)
- **Prophecy by Isaiah, 700 BC: He would be rejected by His own people.** (Isaiah 53:2-3; also: Psalm 118:21-22. *Fulfilled: John 1:11; Mark 6:3; Matthew 21:42-46; etc.*)
- **Prophecy by Zechariah, 500 BC: He would be betrayed for 30 pieces of silver, which would be used to buy a field.** (Zechariah 11:12-13. *Fulfilled: Matthew 26:14-16; 27:3-10*)

- **Prophecy by Isaiah, 700 BC: The Messiah would be rejected, falsely accused, tried and executed by the Jews and Gentiles.** (Isaiah 50:6; 53:1-12; also: Psalm 2 & 22; Zechariah 12:10. *Fulfilled: John 1:11; 11:45-57; Mark 10:32-34; Matthew 26 & 27*)
- **Prophecy by David, 1000 BC: His hands and feet would be pierced, He would be mocked by onlookers and lots would be cast for His garments, etc.** (Psalm 22:16,8,18. *Fulfilled: Luke 23:33-37; 24:39*) (Keep in mind that this prediction was made long before crucifixion had been invented as a form of capital punishment.)
- **Prophecy by Isaiah, 700 BC: Though killed like the worst criminal, He would be buried in the tomb of a rich man.** (Isaiah 53:8-9. *Fulfilled: Matthew 27:57-60*)
- **Prophecy by David, 1000 BC: The Messiah's body would not decay in the tomb, He would overcome death.** (Psalm 16:9-11 [See also: Matthew 16:21-23; 17:22-23; 20:17-19; etc.]. *Fulfilled: Luke 24; Acts 1 & 2*)

The laws of probability reveal the “impossibility” of any one person fulfilling such specific, verifiable prophecies.

Yet that is exactly what happened.

Later, you may want to come back to this list, pick up a Bible, and read each Old Testament prophecy and the fulfillment recorded in the New Testament.

PROPHETICAL SYMBOLS AND PATTERNS

In addition to hundreds of *prophecies*, scattered throughout the Old Testament Scriptures are hundreds of *symbols* and *patterns* (also referred to as *types*, *pictures*, *shadows*, *prefigurations*, and *illustrations*). God designed each of these visual aids to teach the world about Himself and His plan for mankind.

In our journey through the Scriptures, many symbols and patterns will be encountered. For example, one prominent *symbol* is that of a *sacrificed lamb*, which is clearly explained in chapters 19 to 26 of this book.

In chapter 21, we will learn about a special tent called the *tabernacle*, which God commanded His people to construct as

a *pattern*. The tabernacle and all that went with it are powerful visual aids to help people understand what God is like and how sinners can be forgiven and qualified to live with Him forever.

A comparative study between the life of Joseph son of Jacob and Jesus of Nazareth provides a striking example of the kind of *prefigurations* found in Scripture. There are more than a hundred parallels between the life of Joseph and the life of Jesus. God used the life of Joseph to paint a picture of Jesus who would come into the world 1,700 years later.⁸⁰

There is only one reasonable explanation for such patterns and prophecies...

God.

THE PURPOSE OF PROPHECY

While on earth, the Messiah said:

*"I am telling you now **before it happens**, so that **when it does happen** you will **believe** that I am He."*

(John 13:19 NIV)

The prediction of future events, followed by their realization in history, is one way God has validated His messengers and His message. To strengthen our faith in His Word, the true and living God has "*declare[d] **the end from the beginning**, and from ancient times **things that are not yet done**, saying, 'My counsel shall stand....'*" (Isaiah 46:10)

Our upcoming journey through the Scriptures will begin in the Bible's first book—*Genesis*—which reports how the world began. The journey will conclude in the Bible's final book—*Revelation*—which foretells the closing events of world history.

How can we be certain that biblical statements about the unverifiable past and the unforeseeable future are true? We can be certain by applying the same logic by which we are confident the sun will rise tomorrow. For thousands of years, our solar system has a perfect record. The earth has never failed to rotate. The sun consistently rises and sets. So it is with biblical prophecy. In all that can be verified, God's Book has a perfect record.

GOD'S CHALLENGE

Some religious people claim that their holy book also contains prophecies which have been fulfilled. If you hear someone make this claim, respectfully ask them to provide you with a short list of three or four of their holy book's most convincing prophecies. It is unlikely they will comply, but if they do, first verify that the prophecies were written down *before* the events they foretold, and then compare them with secular history to confirm their fulfillment. From my experience, any such predictions are, at best, few and ambiguous.

It is for good reason the true and living God presents the following challenge to all religions and imagined deities:

*“‘Present your case,’ says the LORD. ‘Set forth your arguments... Bring in your idols to **tell us what is going to happen**. Tell us what the former things were, so that we may consider them and know their final outcome. Or declare to us the things to come, tell us what the future holds, so we may know that you are gods. Do something, whether good or bad, so that we will be dismayed and filled with fear. But you are less than nothing and your works are utterly worthless; he who chooses you is detestable.’”*

(Isaiah 41:21-24 NIV)

When it comes to multiple, detailed prophecies which have been precisely fulfilled, the Bible stands alone.

The true and living God has authenticated His message to mankind by writing history before it happens.

Fulfilled prophecy is ***His signature***.



CHAPTER 5 REVIEW

GOD'S SIGNATURE

1. Can we be confident that what the Bible declares about the past, present, and future is accurate? Explain.
2. What is the difference between predictions found in the Bible and predictions made by witch doctors, fortune-tellers, and mediums?
3. Tell of a biblical prophecy that secular history confirms as having been precisely fulfilled.
4. What is the purpose of prophecy in the Bible?
5. In what way is fulfilled prophecy “God’s signature”?
6. In your own words, explain John 13:19. *“I am telling you now before it happens, so that when it does happen you will believe that I am He.”*

6

CONSISTENT WITNESS

*“If you want to know
what the water is like,
don’t ask the fish.”*

— Chinese proverb

Imagine this.

One hot day, as you are walking alongside a river, you consider going for a swim. However, you wonder if the water is to your liking. Is the current too swift? Is the temperature too cold? Or are the conditions just right?

The Chinese proverb counsels, *“Don’t ask the fish.”*

Why are the fish that live in that very river unqualified to tell you *“what the water is like”* (besides the fact that they don’t speak your language!)? The fish are unable to provide such information for the simple reason that they have no reference point outside the confines of their watery existence. That limited, murky world is all they know.

Likewise, if we are ever to understand the world in which we live and why we are here, such information must come from outside man’s limited and self-focused worldview.

The good news is that the God of heaven has provided this information for those who want it.

*“All Scripture is **God-breathed** and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness....”*

(2 Timothy 3:16 NIV)

How can we know that the biblical Scriptures are “*God-breathed*,” that is, inspired by God? In the previous chapter, we observed that the Creator has put His stamp of authenticity on the Bible by embedding in its pages hundreds of prophecies which have been fulfilled.

Only God can repeatedly predict the distant future with 100% accuracy.

Another way God has established the trustworthiness of His revelation is by revealing it to many prophets over many centuries.

ONE WITNESS IS NOT ENOUGH

God told Moses, “***One witness is not enough** to convict a man accused of any crime or offense he may have committed. **A matter must be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.***”

(Deuteronomy 19:15 NIV)

This principle is recognized around the world. More than one witness is required in a court of law to establish truth. Before a statement can be accepted as factual, it must be substantiated by several reliable sources.

In revealing His truth, God did not set aside His own law which states: “*One witness is not enough.*” The Scriptures declare that “*the living God, who made the heaven, the earth, the sea, and all things that are in them, [has]... allowed all nations to walk in their own ways. Nevertheless, **He did not leave Himself without witness....***” (Acts 14:15-17)

Even the most isolated tribes on earth have the *outward witness of creation* (seeing the things their Creator has made) and the *inward witness of conscience* (an inbred sense of right, wrong, and eternity). Every person on earth has been given some light—some truth. Thus, God declares mankind to be “*without excuse.*”⁸¹ Nonetheless, He promises to give further light to all who diligently seek to find and know their Creator.

CONTINUOUS WITNESS

God has never left Himself without witness.

During the inaugural thousand years of human history, God either spoke directly with people or He made His truth known through the *oral testimony* of the first humans.

Adam, the first man, lived to be 930 years old. People living in the first millennium of human history were without excuse for not knowing the truth about their Creator-Owner since they could have interviewed *the original witnesses*, Adam and Eve.⁸² The longevity of the first humans was about eleven times longer than the average life-span today, which the Creator later reset at “*seventy years—or eighty, if we have the strength.*” (Psalm 90:10 NIV)

Around 1920 BC, God singled out an aged man to whom He gave the name Abraham. God promised to make of Abraham a *nation* through which He would teach the nations of the world important lessons about Himself and His plan for mankind. It would also be through this chosen nation that God would provide the *prophets* and the *Scriptures*, and send the *Messiah* into the world. Around 1490 BC, God called on a man from within that nation to be His spokesman. His name was *Moses*.

WRITTEN WITNESS

God inspired Moses to write the first section of Holy Scripture, *the Torah*. The Creator of heaven and earth purposed to make His truth available in *written form* for future generations until the end of time. He put into Moses’ mind the words to be written. God authenticated His Word to the nations with mighty *miracles* by the hand of Moses. God also revealed *future events* which Moses announced to the Egyptians and Israelites. Everything happened exactly as Moses predicted. God left no room for reasonable doubt.

Even the toughest skeptics had to admit that the God who spoke through Moses was the true and living God.⁸³

Moses was the first in a long line of prophets who recorded God’s Word over a period of at least 1,500 years.⁸⁴ The prophets came from a variety of backgrounds. Some had no formal education

And though they lived in different generations, what they wrote presents a perfectly unified message from start to finish.

God chose men like Moses, David, Solomon, and about thirty others to write the Old Testament Scriptures. He authenticated His Word with fulfilled promises and prophecies, and with miraculous signs and wonders.

In the New Testament, the origin, life, words, works, death, and resurrection of the Messiah are recorded by four men: Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. These four men wrote the Gospel record (called the *Injil* in Arabic), thus providing the world with four separate testimonies. God also inspired Peter (a fisherman), James and Jude (Jesus' half brothers), and Paul (a scholar and former terrorist) to explain in glorious detail God's present and ultimate purposes for His people. The apostle John wrote the final book of the Bible which graphically foretells how world history, as we know it, will conclude.

CONSISTENT WITNESS

In all, God used about forty men over more than fifteen centuries to record His revelation for mankind. Even though most of these witnesses never knew each other, all they wrote fits together to form the ultimate story and message.

Who, but the One unfettered by the span of a lifetime, could have transmitted such a consistent narrative?

*“Prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but **men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.**” (2 Peter 1:21 NIV)*

Over the centuries, many have tried to discredit the New Testament writers and their message. The writings of the apostle Paul are especially attacked.

The apostle Peter exhorts us to take Paul's writings seriously: *“Paul also wrote you with the wisdom that God gave him.... His letters contain some things that are hard to understand, which ignorant and unstable people distort, as they do **the other Scriptures**, to their own destruction.” (2 Peter 3:15-16 NIV)*

Everything the apostle Paul wrote is in harmony with what the prophets wrote. As Paul himself testified, *“Having obtained help from God, to this day I stand, witnessing both to small and great, saying no other things than those which the prophets and Moses said would come... Do you believe the prophets?”* (Acts 26:22,27)

CONSISTENT OR INCONSISTENT?

The trustworthiness of a witness is tested, not by the amount of truth contained in the person’s testimony, but by the absence of any inconsistency. This is illustrated by the following anecdote:

One sunny day, four high school boys couldn’t resist the temptation to skip classes. The next morning they explained to their teacher that they had missed her class because their car had a flat tire. To their relief, she smiled and said, “Well, you missed a quiz yesterday.” But then she added, “Take your seats and get out a pencil and paper. The first question is: Which tire was flat?”⁸⁵

The boys’ conflicting answers on this one point exposed their fabricated story.

In contrast to the contradictory testimony of these four boys, God’s testimony is consistent. Using dozens of witnesses and writers over countless generations, our Creator has revealed Himself and His plan with flawless consistency.

In the midst of the turbulent ocean of man’s contradictory religions and philosophies, God has provided and preserved for us an immovable rock upon which we can rest our souls.

That rock is *His Word*.

*“We have **the prophetic word confirmed**, which you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place... But there were also **false prophets among the people**, even as there will be **false teachers among you**... And many will follow their **destructive ways**, because of whom the way of truth will be blasphemed. **By covetousness they will exploit you with deceptive words.**”* (2 Peter 1:19-2:3)

FALSE PROPHETS

Thus, the Word of God warns against covetous, self-seeking prophets and teachers who “*will exploit you with deceptive words.*”⁸⁶ The Bible includes numerous stories about men who claimed to speak for God, but their message was, in fact, inspired by “*a lying spirit.*” (1 Kings 22:22)

The Scriptures describe a time in Israel’s history when there were 850 false prophets and only one true prophet, Elijah. While 7,000 Israelites remained faithful to the one true God, millions of others chose to believe the self-serving, false witnesses.⁸⁷

Micah, one of God’s faithful prophets, wrote:

*“Thus says the LORD concerning **the prophets who lead My people astray**... They cry, ‘Peace,’ but against him who puts nothing in their mouths, they declare holy war.”*
(Micah 3:5 NAS)

That is the pattern of history, which is why Jesus warned:

*“**Wide** is the gate and **broad** is the way that leads to **destruction**, and there are **many** who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it. **Beware of false prophets**, who come to you in **sheep’s clothing**, but inwardly they are **ravenous wolves**. You will know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes from thornbushes or figs from thistles? Even so, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears **bad fruit**.”* (Matthew 7:13-17)

Over the centuries, countless bad prophets and teachers have come and gone. Some have influenced hundreds and thousands, while others have led millions and even billions of souls down “*the way that leads to destruction.*”

If you want to avoid becoming one of the “*many*” who blindly follow a false prophet to “*destruction*,” then filter that person’s teaching through this grid:

The message of a true prophet always harmonizes with the confirmed prophetic Scriptures that preceded him.

Consider the following **three case studies** of men who claimed to be prophets of God. Were they true or false prophets?

CASE #1: A BURIED “MESSIAH”

History catalogues dozens of self-proclaimed prophets and messiahs who lived after the time of Christ.⁸⁸ One was Abu Isa.

Abu Isa of Persia lived in the latter part of the 7th century. His followers believed him to be the Messiah because he said he would lead them to victory, and, although he was illiterate, he reportedly wrote books. But his message contradicted the Scriptures.

Abu Isa taught his followers to pray seven times a day and to follow him into battle, promising them divine protection. However, after Abu died in battle, was buried and failed to come back to life, his followers had to admit that he was not the Messiah.

Long before Abu’s time, Jesus had warned His listeners:

“False christs [messiahs] and false prophets will rise and show great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect. See, I have told you beforehand.” (Matthew 24:24-25)

CASE #2: A SUICIDE “PROPHET”

Jim Jones founded a cult called *the People’s Temple*. In the early 1970s, Jim was a popular preacher in San Francisco, California. He was known for his ability to mobilize multitudes to participate in politics and in projects to help the poor. Jim called himself “the Prophet” and claimed to have power to heal cancer patients and raise the dead.

Eventually, Jim Jones convinced more than a thousand of his followers to follow him to “Jonestown” in Guyana, South America. In this new community, “the prophet Jim” promised his disciples a life of peace and happiness. But it was a huge lie.

Jim was nothing more than a ravenous wolf in sheep’s clothing. As reported by the *San Francisco Chronicle*, “November 18 [1978]: Jones orders his flock to kill themselves by taking cyanide. Those who refuse are forced to take the poison. Children are killed with injections. Eventually, 914 bodies are found in Jonestown, including that of Jones himself.”⁸⁹

CASE #3: AN UNCONFIRMED “HOLY BOOK”

Joseph Smith was born in North America in 1805. Reared in poverty and superstition, as a young man, he began to tell people that he was God’s prophet. He claimed that God had spoken to him in a series of visions through an angel of light named Moroni.

Joseph wrote: “I was seized upon by some power which entirely overcame me, and had such an astonishing influence over me as to bind my tongue so that I could not speak. Thick darkness gathered around me, and it seemed to me for a time that I was doomed to sudden destruction.” Next Smith tells how a “pillar of light” appeared over his head “above the brightness of the sun, which descended gradually until it fell upon” him.⁹⁰ Joseph proclaimed that God had revealed to him a new holy book—the *Book of Mormon*. He told his followers that the Bible came from God, but that his new book was God’s latest revelation. Joseph taught people to recite prayers, fast, give alms, do good works, and accept him as a prophet. Meanwhile, he himself practiced and legitimized a self-seeking and sensuous lifestyle.

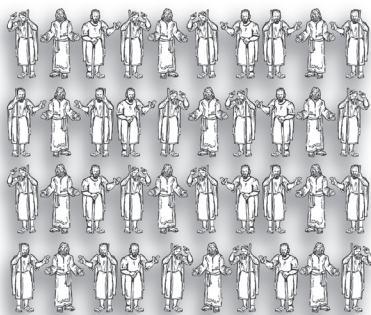
Although Joseph Smith’s “revelations” were unconfirmed by any other witnesses (though he claimed to have three), and despite the fact that his book contradicts the Bible, history, and archaeology,⁹¹ today millions of people adhere to the religion of *Mormonism*. The affluent Mormon Church sends its missionaries all over the world, and every day hundreds of people become *Mormons* (also called *Latter-day Saints*). Most Mormons are sincere, nice people, but if you compare the message of “the prophet Joseph” with what the prophets of the Bible proclaimed and wrote, you will discover two radically different messages.

To stake our eternal destiny on the conflicting, unconfirmed message of a self-proclaimed prophet—no matter how articulate or intelligent he may be—is unwise. “*For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light.*” (2 Corinthians 11:14)

A CONFIRMED MESSAGE

In a confused world where multitudes have “*exchanged the truth of God for the lie*” (Romans 1:25), the one true God has clearly distinguished His truth from the multitude of counter-voices.

One way God has clarified and confirmed His message is by revealing it progressively with perfect consistency to many prophets over many generations. Only the Author who exists outside of time could have inspired such a revelation.



The *forty men* in this illustration represent the messengers who, over fifteen centuries, recorded in the Scriptures, God's consistent, confirmed message.



The *solitary man* represents any messenger who came along later with a clashing, unconfirmed message.

In the past few chapters, we have encountered many proofs that show the Bible to be God's Word. Yet as convincing as these and other evidences are, the most compelling certification of God's message is found simply in hearing it, understanding it, and embracing it.

The unfolding drama of God's Book reveals the One who is infinitely above and beyond our imaginative powers. It displays our Creator's glorious and perfectly balanced nature. It delivers people from the fear of death and provides them with the sure hope of everlasting life. It transforms their character and conduct. It leads them to the one true God.

No devil or man could have come up with such a message.
But don't take my word for it.

"Test all things; hold fast what is good."

(1 Thessalonians 5:21)



CHAPTER 6 REVIEW

CONSISTENT WITNESS

1. In your opinion, why is one human witness insufficient to substantiate truth?
2. What two “witnesses” about God have been given to all people everywhere?
3. Name ten people God used to write down His message for mankind.
4. How can the trustworthiness of a witness be tested?
5. How can we distinguish a true prophet from a false prophet?
6. In your own words, comment on Matthew 7:15-17. *“Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves. You will know them by their fruits. ... Every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit.”*

7

THE FOUNDATION

*“A wise man...
built his house on **the rock.**”*
(Matthew 7:24)

In His *Sermon on the Mount*, Jesus of Nazareth concluded with these words:

“Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock. But everyone who hears these sayings of Mine, and does not do them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it fell. And great was its fall.”

(Matthew 7:24-27)

What was the difference between the house that withstood the storm and the house that was destroyed?

The foundation.

The wise man built his house on solid rock; the foolish man built his house on shifting sand.

In the Scriptures of the prophets, God has laid a rock-solid foundation for the message He wants everyone to understand and believe. That foundation is *the Torah* (also known as *the Law of Moses*, *Pentateuch*, or *Tawret*).

THE BOOK OF BEGINNINGS

The Torah of Moses contains the first five books of Scripture. The opening book is called **Genesis**, meaning “*origin*.” Genesis is *the Book of Beginnings* in which God makes known the origins of earth, life, humans, marriage, families, societies, nations, and languages. Genesis provides the answers to life’s greatest mysteries. What is God like? Where did man come from? Why are we here? What is the source of evil? Why do people suffer? How can a perfect God accept imperfect people?

While the answers to these and other crucial questions are developed later in the Scriptures, it is in Genesis that the Creator has laid the groundwork for His answers. The first book of the Bible is the foundation for all that follows.

GOD’S STORY

The Bible contains hundreds of stories which took place over thousands of years. Together these stories form *one story*—the best story ever told. It is in this story that God has embedded *one main message*—the best news ever announced.

God’s dramatic story includes many climaxes. As we make our way through the Scriptures, one high peak will be encountered in *the Gospel* records. Another stunning climax will burst upon us in the Bible’s closing book, entitled *the Revelation*, which means “the Unveiling.”

Despite the fact that God has unveiled His plan for mankind, that plan remains a mystery to most people.

FIRST THINGS FIRST

The book of Genesis contains 50 of the Bible’s 1,189 chapters.⁹² To read through the entire Bible non-stop would take about three days and three nights.

In our upcoming journey, while we must pass by most stories contained in the Scriptures, we plan to visit many classic, key stories which reveal “the big picture” of God’s fascinating plan for mankind. A significant part of our travel time will be spent in *the first four chapters* of the Bible since these opening pages unlock the great truths found elsewhere in God’s Word.

The importance of the Bible’s first few chapters cannot be overemphasized.

When we tell or read a story to a child, where do we begin? Do we start in the middle of the story and then jump to the end, reading a line or two? No, we start at the beginning. Yet when it comes to the Scriptures, most readers only skip around. Could it be that God’s story remains a mystery to them because they have neglected the first pages of God’s Book? Is it any wonder most people concur with Ahmed who wrote in his e-mail: “*The whole sinners thing makes no sense to me*”? (Chapter 1)

If we are unacquainted with the beginning of God’s story, we will have a hard time appreciating the rest. However, once we understand the first few chapters, the rest will make amazing sense.⁹³

A SEED PLOT

Picture a single grain of wheat. It might not seem to be much, but concealed in that simple-looking seed is the complex code and latent power required to produce a mature plant loaded with grain. The Scripture describes the process:

*“The earth yields crops... **first** the blade, **then** the head, **after that** the full grain in the head.”* (Mark 4:28)

God did not design grains, fruits, and vegetables to ripen immediately, nor did He design His story and message to be revealed all at once. Just as God chose to provide food for man’s body by means of plants that grow progressively, so He has chosen to provide spiritual food for man’s soul by means of *truth revealed progressively*.

*“Precept must be **upon** precept, precept **upon** precept,
line **upon** line, line **upon** line, here a little, there a little.”*

(Isaiah 28:10)

The book of Genesis is like a fertile plot of land in which God has neatly planted His “seeds” of truth. From those truths His message sprouts and matures in the remaining books of Scripture, offering life and refreshment to the world.

AN EMBRYO

Thanks to modern technology, things once shrouded in mystery can now be seen. For example, today we can view clear images of a developing human embryo. Phenomenal! Within eight weeks, the fertilized egg in the mother’s womb develops into a peanut-sized baby, complete with eyes, ears, nose, mouth, arms, hands, legs, and feet. It even has its own fingerprints. Though not fully formed, it contains all the parts.

Similarly, today we know that every essential truth revealed by our Creator about Himself and His plan for mankind can be found in embryonic form in the book of Genesis. However, it is in the rest of the completed Scriptures that *“the mystery of God”* (Revelation 10:7) grows to maturity.

To this day, God’s personality and purposes remain a mystery to most, but unnecessarily so, since *“the mystery which has been hidden from ages and from generations... **now has been revealed.**”* (Colossians 1:26)


God invites us to understand His mystery, but we must *want* to understand it.

BITS AND PIECES

The Bible is somewhat like a jigsaw puzzle.


The way some pieces fit together is unmistakable, while others are not so obvious. Patience and perseverance are required. Similarly, it is only by taking time to reflect on the Word of God that our confusion will evaporate and God’s harmonious design will emerge.

In recent times, I have had the privilege of corresponding with an aspiring journalist in Lebanon. Though we have not yet met, we have become friends. In his first e-mail to me he wrote:

 **Subject:** Email Feedback


I do not believe it is possible to reach a proof-positive conclusion [regarding] ultimate truth.

I encouraged him to lay aside all preconceived ideas and read the Bible for himself, allowing it to speak for itself. This he has been doing, as evidenced by a later e-mail:

 **Subject:** Email Feedback

I have read the New Testament in Arabic and intend to embark on the Old. **Before, I only read bits and pieces.** Now, many questions I had asked I find answered before me.... What have I gained from this reading? A deeper respect for [the Bible's message], viewing it more like a force to change the life of the individual, to effect a real change in him/her, rather than a body of rigid duties...without actually changing him/her.... I have discovered that perhaps there is a way to be certain of what we have in our hands.

Recently, he observed:

 **Subject:** Email Feedback

I have taken a step I should have taken a long time ago. I realize that it's not enough to say, 'I've read the Bible.' **It's a book that needs to be perpetually read.** It's amazing how so many of my questions have disappeared into the shadow of that book.

For this man, God's message is beginning to emerge.

In our upcoming journey through the Scriptures, the gripping story and message of the one true God will become clear as we assemble the most important pieces of history's great puzzle. It is as we perpetually read the Scriptures for ourselves that we will discover where the other "bits and pieces" fit.

LOVE LETTERS

The tale is told of a soldier who loved a young lady. While his affection for her was deep, how she felt about him was unclear. In due time, the soldier was sent to a distant land. He faithfully wrote letters to the lady, although she never sent any to him.

Finally, the day came for his return. Upon arrival, his first stop was to visit the one he so loved. He found her at home. While she acted pleased to see him, a dusty box in the corner of the room exposed her heart's true condition.

It was full of unopened letters—his.

FROM HEAVEN TO EARTH

The Scriptures are like a series of letters from God to you. In His writings, the Creator-Owner of heaven and earth is introducing Himself to you, expressing His love, and telling you how you can live with Him in the splendor and joy of His eternal home.

Here is part of a “letter” He sent to earth 2,700 years ago:

*“Everyone who thirsts, come to the waters;
And you who have no money, come buy and eat....
Why do you spend money for what is not bread,
And your wages for what does not satisfy?
Listen diligently to Me, and eat what is good,
And let your soul delight itself in abundance.
Incline your ear, and come to Me.
Hear, and your soul shall live;
And I will make an everlasting covenant with you....
For as the heavens are higher than the earth,
So are My ways higher than your ways,
And My thoughts than your thoughts.” (Isaiah 55:1-3,9)*

*Love,
Your Creator*

Have you opened His letters to you? Have you read them?
Have you responded to Him?

Let the journey begin.



CHAPTER 7 REVIEW

THE FOUNDATION

1. In Jesus' Sermon on the Mount, what was the difference between the wise man and the foolish man? Why are foundations so important for buildings—and for beliefs?
2. The book of Genesis (meaning *origin*) provides answers to many of life's great mysteries. What are some of life's biggest questions?
3. When we tell a story, where do we begin? Why?
4. In what way can God's revealed truth be compared to plants and embryos?
5. What did the author's friend in Lebanon discover once he studied the Bible for himself?
6. In your own words, sum up God's declaration in Isaiah 55:9.
"For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts."

ENDNOTES

CHAPTER 4: SCIENCE AND THE BIBLE

⁵² *Webster's New World College Dictionary*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1997. See: *science*.

⁵³ Bucaille, Maurice. *La Bible, le Coran et la science*. Paris: Seghers, 1976, p. 35. In response to Dr. Bucaille's book, Dr. William Campbell has written *The Qur'an and the Bible in Light of History and Science*. Second Edition; Middle East Resources, 2002. Dr. Campbell's carefully-researched rebuttal can also be read online in six languages. <http://answering-islam.org/Campbell>

⁵⁴ Biological evolution suggests that the population of life forms such as *algae and apes*, when spread over millions of generations, can change into populations of *plants and people*. According to evolution, man, monkeys, and minnows share a common ancestry. The truth is that neither random evolution nor purposeful creation can be proven by modern science. Both require faith.

⁵⁵ http://www.gma.org/space1/nav_map.html

⁵⁶ Additional verses that affirm the hydrologic cycle: Psalm 135:7; Jeremiah 10:13; Ecclesiastes 1:7; Isaiah 55:10

⁵⁷ www.artsci.wustl.edu/~landc/html/cann; *Newsweek Magazine*: "a trail of DNA...led [scientists] to a single woman from whom we all descended." *Newsweek*, January 11, 1988, pp. 46-52.

⁵⁸ *Time Magazine*: "...there was an ancestral 'Adam' whose genetic material on the chromosome is common to every man now on earth." *Time*, December 4, 1995, p. 29. **Note:** Scientists claim that our common male ancestor does not date back as far as our common female ancestor. Their claim lines up with the Bible, which shows that we all descend from Noah. But our common mother is Eve, since Noah had three sons and *three daughters-in-law* from which all people come.)

⁵⁹ www.pbs.org/wnet/redgold/basics/bloodletting.html

⁶⁰ www.bible.ca/track/matthew-fontaine-maury-pathfinder-of-sea-ps8.htm **Note:** Maury discovered that the paths of the seas are so fixed that the navigator can literally "blaze his way" across the ocean. (Rozwadowski, Helen M. *Fathoming the Ocean*. Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2005, p. 40); When David wrote of "*the*

paths of the seas,” the only seas known to him and his people were the Mediterranean, the Sea of Galilee, the Dead Sea and the Red Sea. These bodies of water did not have “*paths*” or significant observable currents.

⁶¹ *World Book Encyclopedia* 1986; Stars.

⁶² “On a clear dark night, a few thousand stars are visible to the naked eye. With binoculars and powerful telescopes, we can see so many stars that we could never hope to count them. Even though each individual star is unique, all stars share much in common.” (Cornell University Astronomy website: <http://curious.astro.cornell.edu/stars.php>) The Bible states that the number of stars cannot be counted. (Genesis 15:5; 22:17).

⁶³ Ramsay, Walter M. *The Bearing of Recent Discovery on the Trustworthiness of the New Testament*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1953, p. 222.

⁶⁴ Josephus, Flavius. *Josephus: The Essential Works*. (Paul L. Maier, editor) Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 1988. pp. 268,277. The book includes photos of the Pilate-inscription stone and Herod’s theater.

⁶⁵ Bruce, F.F. *Archaeological Confirmation of the New Testament. (Revelation and the Bible*. Edited by Carol Henry) Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1969.

⁶⁶ Josephus, Flavius. *Antiquities* 18: 2, 2; 4, 3

⁶⁷ Photo and details on Caiaphas’ burial box: <http://www.kechanson.com/ANCDocs/westsem/caiaphas.html>

⁶⁸ Glueck, Nelson. *Rivers in the Desert*. NY: Farrar, Strauss & Cudahy, 1959, p. 136. Glueck specialized in Middle East digs.

⁶⁹ Mormonism is a religion followed by millions of people. Unlike the Bible, the Book of Mormon is not confirmed by archaeology. The Smithsonian Institution in Washington, DC concluded: “Smithsonian archaeologists see no direct connection between the archaeology of the New World and the subject matter of [Book of Mormon].” (Martin, Walter. *The Kingdom of the Cults*. Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House Publishers, 1997, pp. 200-202.) See also footnote 91 on the same subject in chapter 6. For a comparative view of archaeology as it relates to the Bible and Qur’an, see: <http://debate.org.uk/topics/history/bib-qur/contents.htm>

⁷⁰ Free, Joseph P. and Howard F. Vos. *Archaeology and Bible History*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1992, p. 294.

⁷¹ Both Muslims and Mormons claim that one of the greatest proofs that their holy books are from God is seen in the literary style in which they are written. *A Muslim website* states: “The Great Challenge...of the Holy Quran: ...Ever since the Quran was revealed, fourteen centuries ago, no one has been able to produce a single chapter like the chapters of the Quran in their beauty, eloquence, splendor...” (www.islam-

guide.com/frm-ch1-2.htm). *A Mormon website* makes a similar claim: “Book of Mormon Challenge: ...You must write your record using a number of ancient Hebrew poetry and writing styles which will not be rediscovered and announced to the English speaking world until years after you publish your record...” (www.greatlakesrestorationbranches.org/newpage34.htm).

⁷² Psalm 119, the longest chapter in the Bible, provides an example of the intricate types of literary construction found in the Scriptures. Psalm 119 is an alphabet acrostic, composed of 22 sections with 8 verses each. All 8 verses of each section begin with the same letter of the Hebrew alphabet. In section 1, each verse begins with *Aleph* (first letter of the Hebrew alphabet). Section 2, all eight verses begin with *Beth* (second letter of alphabet), and so on through the entire Hebrew alphabet. Try to duplicate that! No, don’t. Instead, read Psalm 119 and immerse yourself in the power of its words.

CHAPTER 5: GOD’S SIGNATURE

⁷³ Wallenfels, Ronald and Jack M. Sasson. *The Ancient Near East*. Volume IV. NY: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 2000; also see: Carl Roebuck. *The World of Ancient Times*. NY: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1966, p. 355.

⁷⁴ “Alexander the Great reduced the city after a siege of nine months (332 BC), though he did not completely destroy it. From this blow Tyre never fully recovered...” (Avery, Catherine B. & Jotham Johnson. *The New Century Classical Handbook*. NY: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., 1962, p. 1130.)

⁷⁵ Matthews, Samuel W. “The Phoenicians Sea Lords of Antiquity,” Washington, DC: *National Geographic*, August 1974, p. 165.

⁷⁶ Genesis 26:3; 28:15 **Note:** The land God promised to give to the nation descended from Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob was strategically placed “*in the midst of the nations*.” (Ezekiel 5:5) See also Acts 1:8; 2:5.

⁷⁷ Josephus, Flavius, *The Complete Works of Josephus*. (William Whiston) Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 1967, pp. 566-568, 580-583, 588-589.

⁷⁸ To illustrate, before World War II, countless Jews in Hitler’s Germany did not want to be recognized as Jews. They spoke German, paid German taxes, and fought for Germany in World War I. Yet the Nazis labeled them as Jews. Within a few years, 6 million were exterminated in “the Holocaust...called history’s best documented crime.” (Phillips, John. *Exploring the World of the Jew*. Neptune, NJ: Loizeaux Brothers, 1993, p. 109) See headline article: “Nazis Admit Murdering 6 Million Jews in Europe.” Bourne, Eric. *The Palestine Post*, Sunday, December 16, 1945.

⁷⁹ Isaiah 44:18; Jeremiah 5:21; John 5:39-47; 2 Corinthians 3:12-16; Romans 9-11. **Note:** About 2600 years ago, God revealed to Ezekiel that Israel's rebirth would happen in three distinct stages. He compared Israel to a valley littered with *dry bones*, which would *come together* as a body and ultimately have *life breathed into them* (Ezekiel 37:1-14).

⁸⁰ Compare Genesis 37-50 with the life of Jesus recorded in the Gospels. Recommended reading: *Joseph Makes Me Think of Jesus*, by William MacDonald. Grand Rapids, MI: Gospel Folio Press.

CHAPTER 6: CONSISTENT WITNESS

⁸¹ ***“What may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. For since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse.”*** (Romans 1:19-20 NIV) Even people who do not have the Scriptures, *“show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and between themselves their thoughts accusing or else excusing them...”* (Romans 2:15). Yet, instead of seeking for more truth, most people pursue falsehood.

⁸² By computing the ages of the genealogies recorded in the Bible, we learn that Adam didn't die until Noah's father (9th generation after Adam) was more than 50 years old (Genesis 5).

⁸³ ***“Then the magicians said to Pharaoh, ‘This is the finger of God.’”*** (Exodus 8:19) See also Exodus 12:30-33. For full story: Exodus 5–14.

⁸⁴ While Moses wrote the first section of Scripture, it is likely the book of Job was written before the Torah (around the time of Abraham), making it one of the oldest pieces of finished literature in existence. If this date is correct, then the Bible was written over a period of about 2,000 years.

⁸⁵ DeHaan, Dennis. *Our Daily Bread*, May 6, 2006. Grand Rapids, MI: RBC Ministries.

⁸⁶ Some ask, “Why would God allow false prophets to proclaim their deceptive messages?” Moses answered that question in the Torah. ***“If there arises among you a prophet or a dreamer of dreams, and he gives you a sign or a wonder, and the sign or the wonder comes to pass, of which he spoke to you, saying, ‘Let us go after other gods’—which you have not known—and let us serve them, you shall not listen to the words of that prophet or that dreamer of dreams, for LORD your God is testing you to know whether you love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul.”*** (Deuteronomy 13:1-3)

⁸⁷ 1 Kings 18; 1 Kings 19:18; Romans 11:14

⁸⁸ Smith, James E. *What the Bible Teaches about the Promised Messiah*.

Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1993, pp. 470-474; Also: Phillips, John. *Exploring the World of the Jew*. Neptune, NJ: Loizeaux Brothers, 1993, pp. 80-81.

⁸⁹ Taylor, John. "Jones Captivated San Francisco's Liberal Elite," *San Francisco Chronicle*, November 12, 1998.

⁹⁰ Smith, Joseph. *Pearl of Great Price*. Joseph Smith—History; 1:15-16.

⁹¹ Unlike the Bible, which is confirmed by history and archaeology, the book of Mormon is unsubstantiated. Professor Thomas Stuart Ferguson founded the Department of Archaeology at Mormonism's own Brigham Young University for the sole purpose of discovering confirming evidence for their "holy book." After 25 years of dedicated research, the department found nothing to confirm the flora, fauna, topography, geography, peoples, coins, or settlements described in the Book of Mormon. Ferguson concluded that the geography of the Book of Mormon is "fictional." (Martin, Walter. *The Kingdom of the Cults*. Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House Publishers, 1997, pp. 200-202)

CHAPTER 7: THE FOUNDATION

⁹² The Bible contains 66 individual books—39 in the Old Testament and 27 in the New Testament. Later in history, the Roman Catholic Church (which, like many Protestant churches, elevates their church traditions above the Word of God) decided to include 11 additional books between the Old and New Testaments. These books, known as the *Apocrypha* (or *Deuterocanonical* books), were written primarily in the era between the Old and New Testaments. While they contain interesting historical and legendary material, Hebrew believers never accepted them as inspired Scripture. Many of the Dead Sea Scrolls discovered in 1947 are commentaries, which comment only on the 39 Old Testament books and not on the Apocrypha. When the Messiah was on earth, He frequently quoted from the Old Testament, but never from the Apocryphal books. The Apocrypha is never quoted in the New Testament. The 39 books contained in the Old Testament were written by prophets to whom God spoke directly and to whom He confirmed His word, "*bearing witness both with signs and wonders, with various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit.*" (Hebrews 2:4) As for the New Testament, believers who lived in the time following Christ's visit to earth accepted the apostles' authority and New Testament Scriptures as equal to the Old Testament prophets and Scriptures. This could not be said of the Apocrypha.

⁹³ Luke 24:25-48; John 5:39-47. For resources that present God's message chronologically: www.goodseed.com www.twor.com www.one-god-one-message.com

