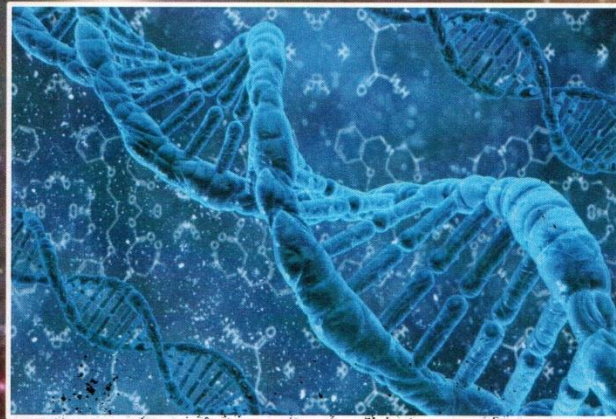


Book 1

Basics about God



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Book 1: Basics about God

A Tool for Using the Bible to Know God

CONTENTS

Guidelines for Using the Basic Training Manuals ... page 4

Instructions for Using Book 1 ... page 6

God's Greatness Shown in History ... page 8

God's Salvation (Journal pages) ... page 31

1. People's Problems ... page 32
2. People's Inadequacies ... page 33
3. God's Provisions ... page 34
4. People's Responses to God ... page 36
5. God's Assurances to His People ... page 37

God's Characteristics (Journal pages) ... page 39

1. The Extent of God's **Power** ... page 40
2. The Extent of God's **Presence** ... page 41
3. The Extent of God's **Love** (including his **Mercy, Compassion & Grace**) ... page 42
4. The Extent of God's **Knowledge** ... page 45
5. The Extent of God's **Justice** ... page 46
6. The Extent of God's **Control** and **Sovereignty** ... page 47
7. The Extent of God **Never Changing** ... page 48
8. The Extent of God's **Faithfulness** ... page 49
9. The Extent of God's **Perfection** and **Purity** ... page 50
10. The Extent of God's **Helpfulness** ... page 51

God's Promises (Journal pages) ... page 53

1. God's Promises about **Salvation / Reconciliation** ... page 54
2. God's Promises about **His Presence** ... page 55
3. God's Promises about **Leadership / Guidance** ... page 55
4. God's Promises about **Protection** ... page 56
5. God's Promises about **Wisdom / Knowledge/ Understanding** ... page 56
6. God's Promises about **Provision / Gifts** ... page 57
7. God's Promises about **Healing / Restoration** ... page 57
8. God's Promises about **Help / Strength** ... page 58
9. God's Promises about **Trials and Suffering** ... page 58
10. God's Promises about **His Relationship with Us** ... page 59

Appendix 1 – Reasons we Know the Bible is God's Communication ... page 61

Appendix 2 – The Most Influential Person in History ... page 63

Appendix 3 – Evidence That God Controls History ... page 65

Guidelines for Using The Basic Training Manuals

Tools for Using the Bible to Grow with God

There is no greater joy and fulfillment in life than living in a personal relationship with our Creator, who understands everything, has all power, and loves us more than we can imagine. Jesus Christ, our Creator who became a human, said that he came to give us life to the fullest (John 10:10). These training manuals are for the purpose of helping each of us grow into that kind of life that he wants for each of us.

Our greatest purpose

Our greatest purpose in life is to know God more fully and completely. This is what Jesus said eternal life is all about (John 17:3, “Now this is eternal life: that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.”). And this was Jesus’ first priority when he taught his disciples (John 17:4-6; “I have revealed you to those you gave me.”). Paul also explained this as his greatest purpose in life (Philippians 3:7-10). Because of their examples, the first purpose of the Basic Training Manuals is to help people know God more fully and completely.

Knowing and understanding God in every aspect of his being will never be accomplished by our limited intelligence in our limited life span. Knowing him is an unlimited subject, so it is a lifetime endeavor. Book 1 is a tool to help us in that endeavor. It is not like textbooks often used in schools, but it is a tool we can use for the rest of our lives.

Book 2 is also a tool, and it is for the purpose of helping us make progress in all the basics of our life with God. These are the same basic things Jesus taught his disciples. Similar to Book 1, we will never graduate from learning and practicing these basics.

God has designed us to learn in the context of living and interacting with other people. Book 3 is a tool to help us discover this design. The Bible gives God’s plan for growing in our relationships so we can learn and grow with God.

In summary, each of the three Basic Training Manuals is a tool to help us use the Bible to know God more fully and to grow in our life with him.

- **Book 1: Basics about God – *A Tool for Using the Bible to Know God***
- **Book 2: Basics of God’s Training – *A Tool for Using the Bible to Cooperate with God***
- **Book 3: Basics of God’s Family – *A Tool for Using the Bible to Discover God’s Plan***

All three manuals are tools to help us in the greatest adventure of life, which is getting to know God more fully and living with him.

The importance of the Bible

The reason we use the Bible as our primary source for all three manuals is that its ultimate author is God. It has been the most influential book in the world for thousands of years, and its central character, Jesus Christ, has had the greatest influence in this world since he lived here, about two thousand years ago. ***To better understand this, read Appendix 1 in Book 1.***

The Bible itself also makes the statement that it is the resource for everything we need in living life with God in the fullest way possible (2 Peter 1:3-4).

The world's greatest teacher

The Basic Training Manuals are most effectively used by following the example of how Jesus Christ helped his followers learn. He was the world's greatest teacher and he continues to be the most influential teacher in all history. We learn two things from his example; **what** he taught his followers and **how** he taught his followers.

- **What he taught his followers.** The first and most important thing Jesus taught his followers was about their Father in heaven (John 17:3-6). This is why we have Book 1, Basics about God. The second thing he taught his disciples was how to live their lives in close relationship with him and the Father (John 15:9-17). That is what Book 2 is all about.
- **How he taught his followers.** In the accounts of Jesus' life (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John) there are 71 times that he had conversations with his personal disciples. They discussed many different subjects. Discussion was the primary way, or method, that Jesus used for teaching and training his followers. He not only taught truth to them but also explained how to apply truths to their lives.

Personal discussions with people who want to follow Jesus is also the best way for us to use the three Basic Training Manuals. Here is some practical advice on how to use these tools:

1. Find one or more people who want to know God and grow with him.
2. Decide when and where to meet together.
3. Decide how often to meet together. The more often, the better, but maybe only once a week is possible, or maybe just once a month.
4. Do at least two things when you meet together:
 - Pray for each other about the things happening in your lives.
 - Have personal conversation about the Bible with the people in the group. Use one of these Basic Training manuals to help with this. Follow the instructions found at the beginning of each book.
5. Continue to do this with all three of the Basic Training Manuals, and all the people in the group will make progress in their life with God!

For more detailed instructions about helping others grow by using the tools in these manuals, please see the end of the **Guidelines** section in Book 2: **"How to follow Jesus' example by using the Basic Training Manuals."**

Training for new Christians and for pastors

In summary, these manuals cover the basics that Jesus and Paul taught their followers.

- The training manuals are good for helping a new Christian and for training mature Christians.
- The manuals can help people become strong parents and strong leaders.
- They have all the basics for someone to become a pastor, and they can help pastors be more effective.

Instructions for Using Book 1

How you will get to know God through *The Basics about God*.

In all his greatness, our Creator has given us the Bible, which contains a variety of accounts that describe what he did in people's lives along with many kinds of instructions. As we understand these accounts of what God has done in past history, we learn more of his greatness and the basic truths of who he is and how he works with people. The more you understand who God is, in all his characteristics and in the promises he has given, the more you will love him and want to adjust your life to him. At the same time, your relationships with people will also be transformed more than you've experienced before. This transformation happens as you get to know God in every aspect of his greatness. This manual, *The Basics about God*, can help you see and understand these aspects of God. It is outlined according to the different ways God has revealed himself. There are four parts:

Basics about God

1. God's Greatness Shown in History
2. God's Salvation
3. God's Characteristics
4. God's Promises

Instructions

While you study the first section titled "God's Greatness Shown in History" (which is a study of events and people in the Bible), you will continually see things about who God is and what he has done. You can write these observations in the journal sections titled, "God's Salvation," "God's Characteristics," and "God's Promises." Each of these sections are outlined on the "CONTENTS" page at the beginning of this manual.

Within the journal, in the sections "God's Salvation," "God's Characteristics," and "God's Promises," there are large blank spaces on the pages. If you print this manual, these blank spaces become places for writing observations about God while you study the events and people in the section "God's Greatness Shown in History" and also whenever you read the Bible.

For example, the first event listed in the section "God's Greatness Shown in History" is "Creation." Genesis 1 – 2 is given for the reading. In the very first verse, Genesis 1:1, you read the statement, "God created the heavens and the earth." This is a statement about God. What do you see about God in this statement? You see that he has the ability to create. Where can you write this observation? You will look in the section "God's Characteristics" because this observation isn't directly related to "God's Salvation" or "God's Promises." And when you turn to the section titled "God Characteristics" you will see a list of ten different categories of God's characteristics listed in the form of questions. The first one listed is "1. The Extent of God's **Power**." This is the category in which your observation best fits from Genesis 1:1 – that God has the ability to create. Now turn the page to the place where you see "The Extent of God's

Power.” printed on the top, with a large blank space under it. This is where you can write your observation about God by recording the reference, Genesis 1:1 with a comment after it, such as “God has the ability to create.”

You will follow this same procedure for all other observations about God that you will make from the Bible. Some of these observations will be about other characteristics of God and some observations will be about “God’s Promises” or about “God’s Salvation.” ***Whenever you read something about God in the Bible, turn to the page where you find a relevant place to write your note.***

In the months ahead, the more time you spend finding and writing different observations of who God is, the more you’ll discover amazement and encouragement! Ask God’s Spirit to teach you each time you read the Bible, and enjoy the changes that happen in your thinking and in your life.

God's Greatness Shown in History



History began at the Creation

History began when God created the world and the whole universe. It is intuitive that the complexities of the massive universe were designed by a highly-intelligent being, far beyond our abilities. And the complexities of small things in this world, such as the DNA of our cells, down to protons, neutrons, and photons also reveals the work of a highly-intelligent being, beyond our full understanding.

This is how the Bible begins: "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth."

(Genesis 1:1) God has shown his greatness at both the macro level (a vast universe) and the micro level (tiny molecules) of his creation.



Not only is the complexity of life amazing, but also its beauty and variety in so many different forms. The beauty and variety we see in thousands of species of butterflies around the world is absolutely astounding. And butterflies are only a subset of the millions of insects in many different sizes, shapes, styles, and colors. And insects are only a subset of many other kinds of animals and plants all over the world.

Not only does the beauty and variety of plants and animals make them amazing, but also the extensive variety of sounds they make, the actions they have, the habits they have, and their ways of reproduction.

All this extremely amazing design had to have been made by a designer who has greater intelligence than all the things he designed. This is why the Bible says, "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." (Romans 1:20)

God shows his greatness through history

God not only shows his greatness through his creation, but he also shows his greatness through history. When we study the Bible and the history of people over thousands of years, we see how much God has been in control (macro level). The same is true when we study the details of how God worked in a single person's life (micro level).

God revealed himself in both a macro way and a micro way to Abraham, one of the main characters at the beginning of the Bible, who lived about four thousand years ago. God carried out an extremely unusual event in Abraham's personal life (micro perspective), and at the same time He gave Abraham an idea of what he would do over thousands of years, far beyond his life time (macro perspective).

God told Abraham, "'...one coming from your own body will be your heir.' [Then] He took him outside and said, 'Look up at the heavens and count the stars – if indeed you can count them.' Then He said to him, 'So shall your offspring be.'" (Genesis 15:4-5)

The unusual event of Abraham's wife, Sarah, having a son when she was 90 years old required God to do some things at the molecular level of her body. And then God told Abraham that his son's life would multiply into the future in such a vast way that his descendants would be similar to the stars in the sky. God revealed himself both in a very detailed personal way to Abraham and Sarah and also through a large, extensive plan that spanned many generations into the future.

God's large plan for all history

The plan that God had for Abraham was part of an even larger plan God had in mind for people throughout history, even before he began creating the world with animals and people on it. We can never assume that we understand very much of God's mind, since his intelligence and ability is so far beyond ours, but in the first three chapters of Ephesians we read references to a plan that God had before the creation of the world.

- "For he (God) chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will – to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves. In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace that he lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding." (Ephesians 1:4-8)
 - God had a plan before he created the world.
 - God's plan included grace and forgiveness, which means that his plan allowed for rebellion against him.
 - God's plan included a demonstration of his grace and a demonstration of how extensive his grace is (the extent of the riches of his grace).
- "Although I am less than the least of all God's people, this grace was given me: to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, and to make plain to everyone the administration of this mystery, which for ages past was kept hidden in God, who created all things. His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms, according to his eternal purpose which he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Ephesians 3:8-11)
 - God wanted to show his wisdom to beings in the heavenly (spiritual) realm.
 - God's eternal purpose (plan) was accomplished in Christ Jesus.
 - God's purpose was to use the church (people who have a relationship with God) as part of his plan to show his greatness.

These statements, along with others in the Bible, help us know that God had a plan before he created the world, a plan to show his wisdom and grace. To accomplish this, God designed a world where people can make choices to reject his love and go against him. Love, as we understand it, would not be love if people did not have the freedom to respond to love in whatever way they wanted to.

The result of God's plan was the creation of a world and people on it whom he loves and who have the ability and freedom to accept or reject his love. God wanted to show his wisdom and grace, so he developed an amazing plan for the reconciliation and restoration of the people he

loves. This is God's big plan (grand plan) that we see described from the beginning of the Bible (Genesis) all the way to the end (Revelation).

Throughout history God has unveiled many subplans toward accomplishing his grand plan. These subplans are all interwoven together in such amazing ways over thousands of years that we will never be able to fully comprehend the complexity and beauty of God's wisdom and grace. But they are there for us to see and learn more about God and his greatness and to experience his love and greatness to whatever extent we would like.

Following is a summary of God's large (grand) plan for reconciliation and also three major subplans that he designed to support his grand plan.

God's GRAND PLAN for Reconciliation

God's grand plan

The most basic way that God revealed himself was, and still is, through creation, but after mankind rebelled against God (Genesis 3), God began to reveal a plan for reconciliation. God's plan from the beginning was to make reconciliation possible, which means all people can have a restored relationship with him, both now and for all eternity. God's awesomeness is increasingly apparent the more we understand his grand plan for reconciliation and how his subplans are all interwoven to fulfill the grand plan. Each of these subplans are interwoven with such complex detail, that God's abilities and character are amplified to great extents. The grand plan and all the subplans are still in the process of being fulfilled today, and they will continue until God's grand plan for reconciliation is fulfilled at the return of Jesus Christ to this earth as King of kings.

God's subplans

God designed various subplans toward accomplishing his plan for reconciliation. Each of the subplans has Jesus Christ as its primary focus. For example, one subplan prepared the way for Jesus Christ to come as a human, and another subplan was for the purpose of implementing the life-giving message of Jesus Christ to all the world. Jesus Christ is the primary focus in every subplan because God, himself, made reconciliation available to all people in the world when he became a human like us. Jesus Christ was our Creator in human flesh, and he did for us what we cannot do for ourselves. All of history, including the time in which we now live, is the stage for God to demonstrate his love and greatness to all people on this planet and also to all the spiritual beings! The more we understand God's grand plan for reconciliation and how all his subplans are woven together to accomplish it, the more amazed we become.

Following is a summary of the three primary subplans God designed.

God's SUBPLAN of becoming a human to show himself through Jesus Christ, the Sacrificial Lamb of God

This plan began in Genesis 3 and continues through the last chapter of Revelation. God began explaining and predicting this aspect of his plan to prepare for its implementation, which then

happened at the birth of Jesus Christ. Jesus only lived on earth for 33 years, but he became the pivotal point for all people in all of history, both before and after his short life on earth.

God's SUBPLAN of working through one family line (people of Israel)

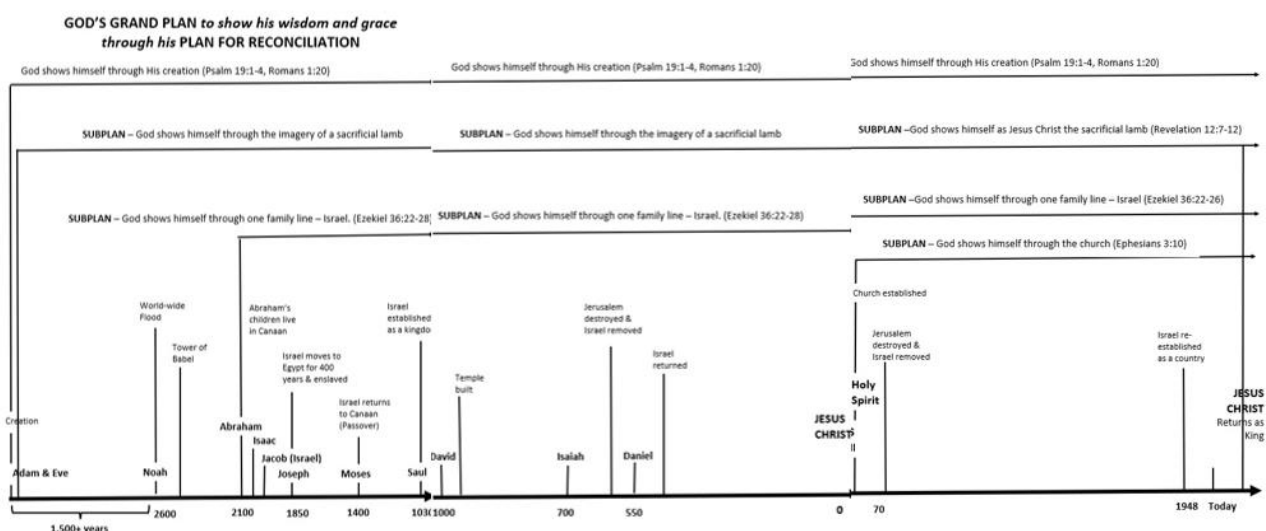
This plan began with Abraham in Genesis 12, and continues throughout history until the return of Jesus Christ as King of kings. This family line descended from Israel, the grandson of Abraham. They were the ones with whom God developed his plan for becoming a human on earth as a sacrificial lamb, explained above as one of the subplans to accomplish the grand plan. However, God's plan to bring salvation to the world through Israel did not mean the Jews were more favored by him. Rather, God chose to use one nation as the channel for rescuing the *whole* world from sin.

God's SUBPLAN of working through a spiritual group of people (the Church)

Jesus Christ implemented this plan by training the first leaders of a new group of people who were spiritually born into God's eternal family. In reality, people throughout history had become part of this spiritual group of people when they believed and put their trust in God's promise for them (described in Romans 4). The members of God's eternal family are the primary people he works through to carry out his grand plan.

God's grand plan of reconciliation, along with each of the subplans, demonstrates God's greatness both on the macro level and micro level. ***You can read a more detailed explanation of God's Grand Plan of Reconciliation and his three Subplans at the back of this manual in Appendix 3 – Evidence That God Controls History.***

A timeline to Illustrate God's Plan and Subplans



The above timeline summarizes God's grand plan of reconciling people back into a relationship with himself. (Note: a larger, printable version of the timeline follows this description.) The timeline also illustrates each of God's subplans that are woven together throughout history to accomplish his large grand plan.

The timeline includes God's subplans as major ways that God has revealed himself. Each subplan is represented by a horizontal line beginning at one point and continuing into the future. There is also a line across the top of the page to illustrate that God has revealed his intelligence and his abilities through his creation, from the first day he created the world and on into the indefinite future. The horizontal line at the bottom is the date line. Below it are numbers for the approximate dates for each event or person.

Following is a summary of the four horizontal lines on the timeline (not including the date line), illustrating the major ways that God has revealed himself on a **macro level** throughout history:

- **God shows himself through creation.** "For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities – his eternal power and divine nature – have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse." (Romans 1:20)
- **God shows himself through Jesus Christ, the Sacrificial Lamb of God**
- **God shows himself through one family line – Israel**
- **God shows himself through the church**

God's greatness is also shown on a **micro level** in the Bible. This aspect of God's work is all through the Bible and is shown on the timeline as:

- The **names of individuals**
- Specific **events**

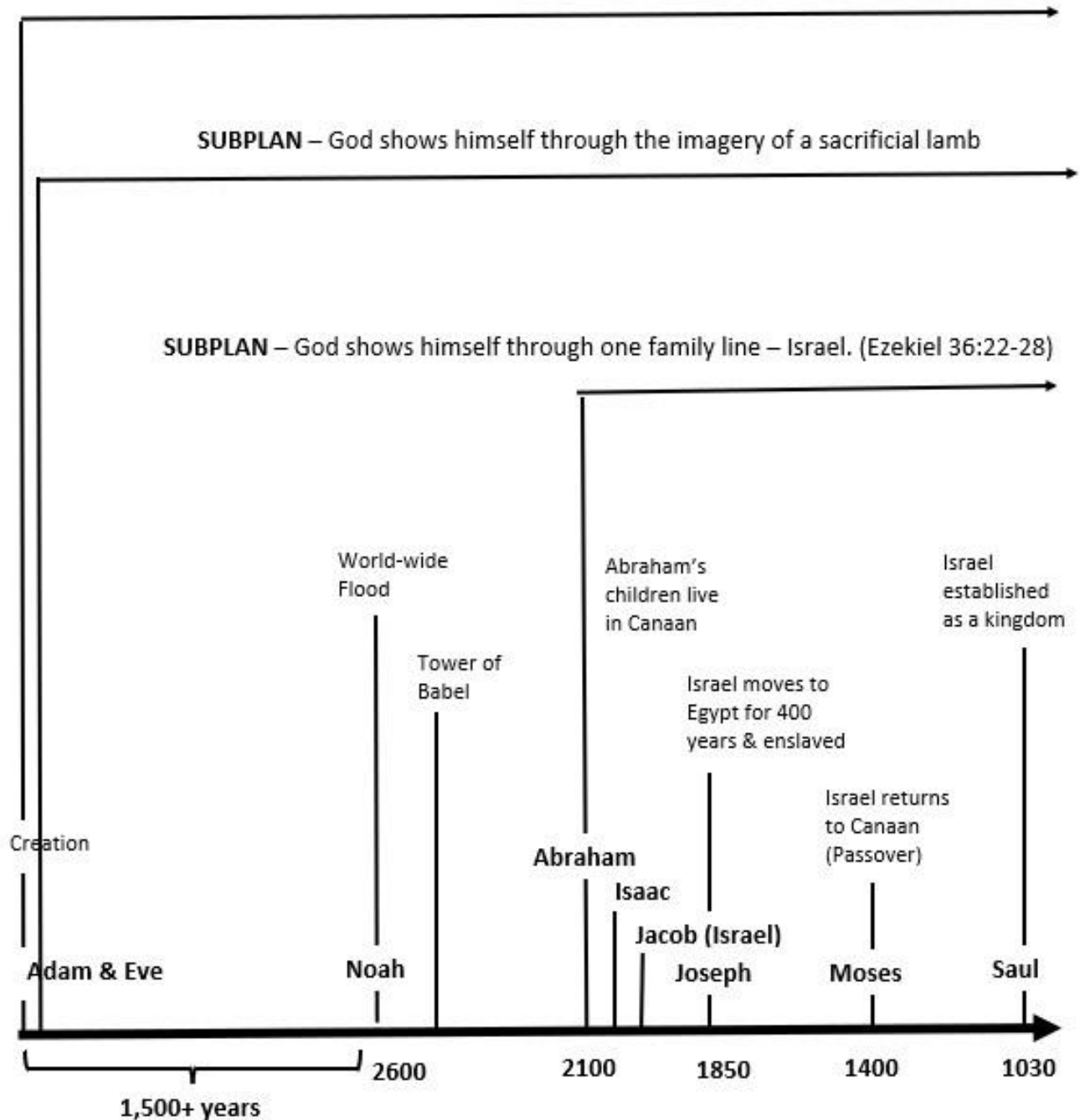
Each of God's subplans include the lives of many people and events. The more we understand what God did in the lives of each of these people and events, the more amazed we are at God's greatness in every way. Each of the people and events are all micro parts of the large subplans, which are part of God's grand plan.

As you read the Biblical accounts of how God has revealed himself in history, record your observations about God on the pages in the appropriate sections. These sections are described in the earlier part of this document titled "Instructions." By writing down observations and asking God to help you remember, your mind will be impressed with many aspects of his greatness.

<p>A full timeline is on the following three pages.</p>
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GOD'S GRAND PLAN *to show his wisdom and grace* through his PLAN FOR RECONCILIATION

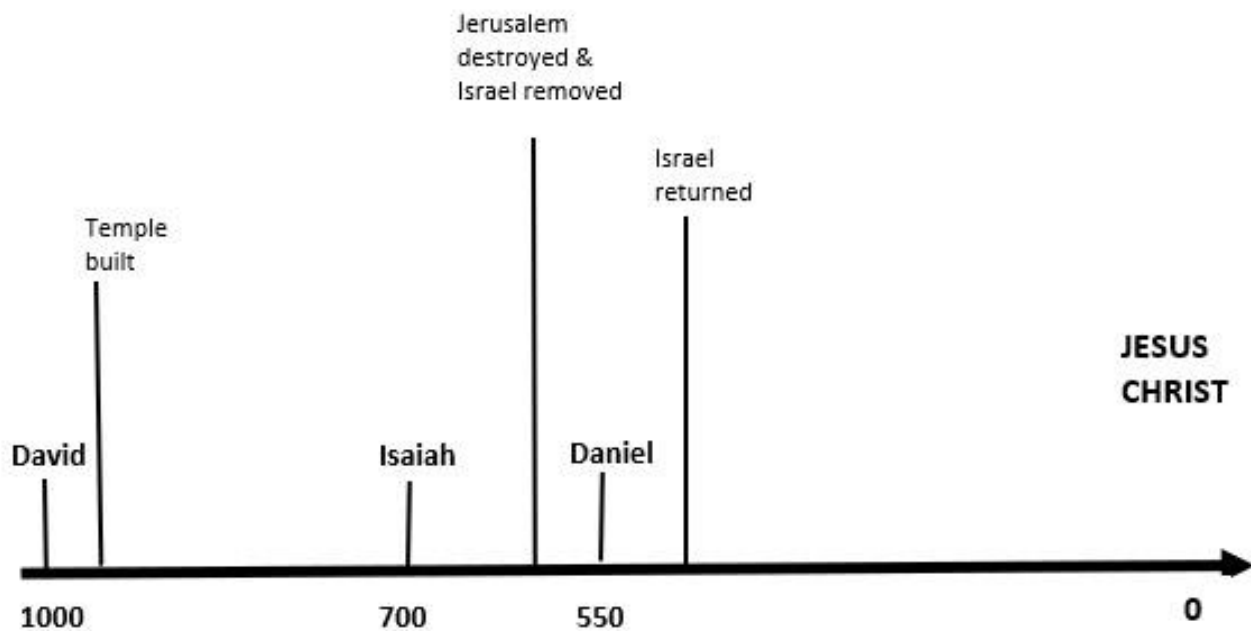
God shows himself through His creation (Psalm 19:1-4, Romans 1:20)



God shows himself through His creation (Psalm 19:1-4, Romans 1:20)

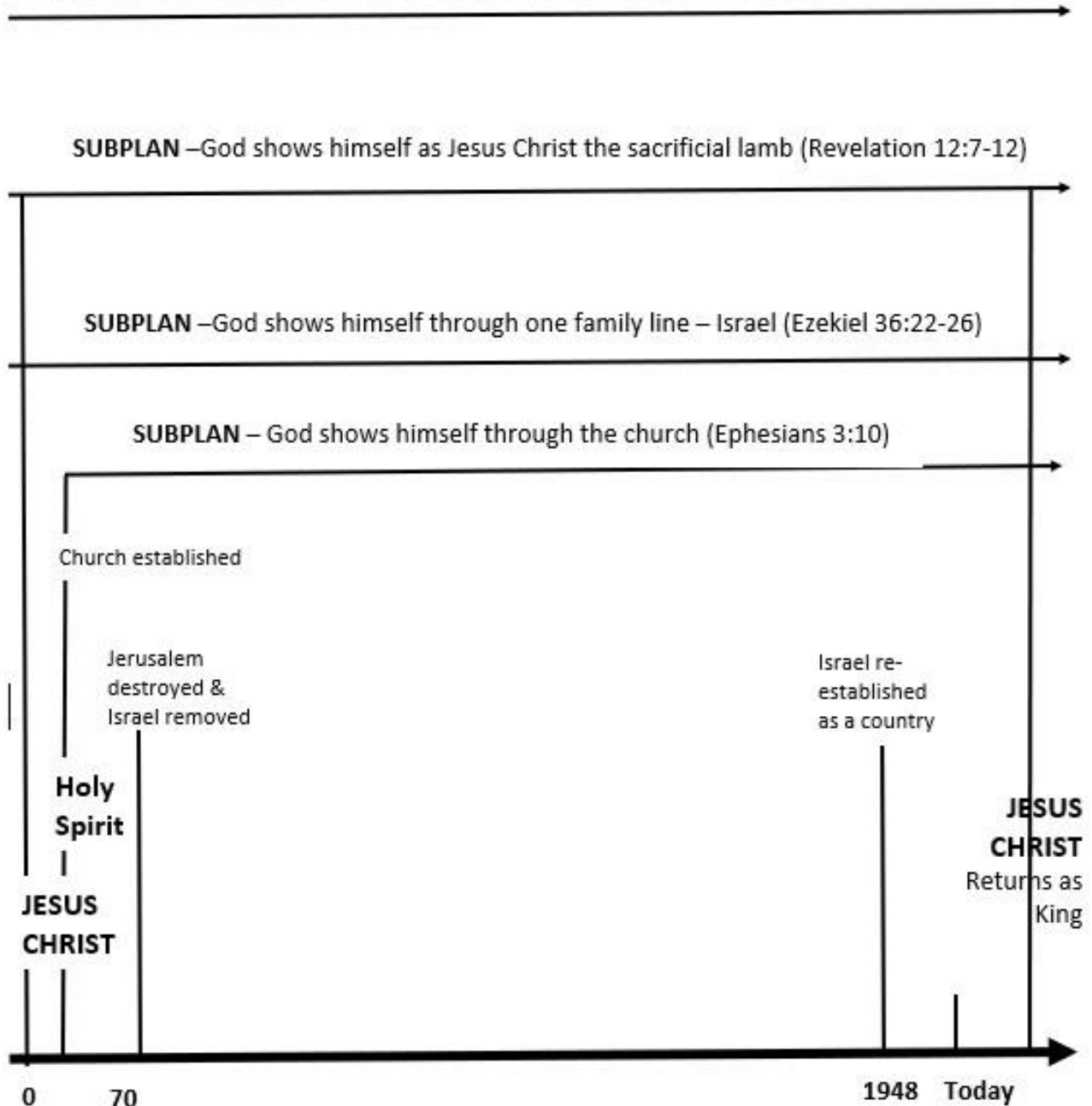
SUBPLAN – God shows himself through the imagery of a sacrificial lamb

SUBPLAN – God shows himself through one family line – Israel. (Ezekiel 36:22-28)



GOD'S GRAND PLAN *to show his wisdom and grace* through his PLAN FOR RECONCILIATION

God shows himself through His creation (Psalm 19:1-4, Romans 1:20)



Bible Passages for the Timeline Events

1. Creation – Genesis 1:1-31
2. Adam and Eve – Genesis 2:8-25
3. The Fall – Genesis 3:1-24
4. Noah and the Flood – Genesis 6:5 – 8:22
5. Tower of Babel – Genesis 11:1-9
6. Abraham and God's promise – Genesis 12:1-7
7. Isaac, Jacob – Abraham's descendants - Genesis 25:19-26. This was the beginning of the nation of Israel (Jacob was renamed Israel).
 - God made predictions about his plan for the world through Israel – a prediction that Jacob's descendants would live in the land forever. (This did not mean that Israel's descendants were more special than anyone else, but it was a means for God to show his sovereignty throughout history.)
8. Joseph – his life story explains how Israel ended up in Egypt – Genesis 37:1-36, 41:41-49, 45:1-11
9. Israel moves to Egypt for 400 years. All of Jacob's descendants, 70 people in all, left Canaan to go to Egypt, where Joseph was. Genesis 46:26-27
10. Moses, plagues and the Passover (a lamb was the substitute sacrifice so a person would not die) – Exodus 11:1 – 12:17, and 12:29-33
11. All people of Israel left Egypt to return to Canaan (600,000 men + women and children) – Exodus 12:37
12. The Ten Commands – Exodus 20:1-21
13. Tabernacle – designed by God to meet with him. Lambs were the primary animals sacrificed, Numbers 28-29, – Exodus 25:8-9, 29:38-46
14. David – 1 Samuel 17:1-58
15. David made king of Israel – 2 Samuel 5:1-5. David loved God and wrote many Psalms. Psalm 23 is a good example.
 - God made predictions about his plan for the world through Israel – God said the descendants of David would sit on his throne forever – Jeremiah 33:14-26
16. Temple built - Solomon was king at the height of Israel's power and built a temple to replace the tabernacle as the place to worship God. – 1 Kings 4:20 – 34
17. Israel was removed from Canaan by Assyria. Later Judah was the last tribe of Israel to be taken by Babylon – Jeremiah 39 - 44
18. Daniel – was captured by enemies and used by God to influence many in the world – Daniel 1-12
 - God made predictions about his plan for the world through Israel – Daniel 7:13-14 (Jesus quoted this passage and said he would fulfill it.)
19. Isaiah and Predictions of the Messiah - Isaiah 9:6, Isaiah 53:1-12, Micah 5:2
 - God made predictions about his plan for the world through Israel – God said that one of David's descendants would be king (Messiah), God, born in Bethlehem
20. Israelites (Jews) returned to rebuild Jerusalem and Israel (Judah) - Nehemiah
21. John the Baptist lived at the same time as Jesus, but began his ministry before Jesus did. (In John 1:29-31, John told the people that the Lamb of God had come.)

22. Jesus Christ – Claimed to be God - John 10:22-33. Said his purpose was to pay for sin - Mark 10:45. At the last Passover Jesus said the cup represents his blood instead of previously representing the lamb's blood – Luke 22:20.
23. Jesus Christ crucified – Luke 23:20-56 (at the same time the Passover lambs were being sacrificed!)
24. Jesus Christ's resurrection – Luke 24:1-12, 36-53.
25. Jesus Christ – His ascension and promised return – Acts 1:1-14, and his church (Acts 2:42-47)
26. Holy Spirit – began living in people when they put their trust in Christ – John 14:17
27. Paul – lived at the same time as Jesus Christ and received the highest education possible for his time. Wrote many of the books in the New Testament. In Acts 13:16-41, one of Paul's speeches is recorded. It summarizes the history of the Bible and explains that Jesus is the one who has provided forgiveness for sins. (Acts 13:38-39 are key verses)
28. Jerusalem was destroyed by the Roman government in 70 AD. They killed or carried away (into slavery) almost all the Jews who lived in Israel. The area was no longer called Israel and ceased to exist as a nation.
29. Israel was restored by the United Nations as a nation in 1948, right after World War 2. The Arabs attempted to destroy the new nation on the first day it was born, but it miraculously survived. It was another story similar to David and Goliath.
30. New heaven and earth with Jesus Christ as King – Revelation 21:1-27. Jesus is described as the Lamb. He also has the book of life, 21:27.

Details of Bible Events and People

As you read the Biblical accounts of how God has revealed himself in history, record your observations about God on the pages in the appropriate sections, as outlined in the instructions already given earlier in this document. By writing down observations like this and asking God to help you remember, your mind will be impressed with many aspects of his awesomeness.

Creation

Read Genesis 1-2

- God is creator of the whole universe, the world, and everything in it.
- What would you say about God's **power** when you read that he is the one who has created everything? Record your observations in the section Basics about God – his Characteristics, "How much **power** does God have?"
- Creation demonstrates that God has knowledge about everything in existence. From this account, describe the extent of God's **knowledge**. Record your observations in the section, "How much does God **know**?" in the Basics about God – his Characteristics.
- What other things do you observe about God in these first two chapters of Genesis? (Write your observations in the section, "God's Characteristics.")
- For thought or discussion – God created people in his own image (1:26-27). What does this mean?
- For thought or discussion – God created people to care for his creation (1:26). What should we do because of this truth?

Adam and Eve

Read Genesis 2:15 - 3:24

- God gave Adam and Eve instructions, also telling them that if they would disobey, they would die (2:17).
- God created men and women for close partnership (marriage). (2:18, 23-24)
- God created people for relationship with himself (2:8-9)
- God is so pure that no sin can be in his presence. Separation from God also means spiritual death.
- God is also so merciful that he allows people to continue living, even after they disobey him (although Adam and Eve became spiritually dead as soon as they sinned)! With God's standard of holiness, it's amazing that he puts up with people so long and that he still wants us to be restored to a close relationship with him!
- What other things do you observe about God in these first two chapters of Genesis? (Write your observations in the sections of this manual that have the titles "God's Salvation," "God's Characteristics," and "God's Promises.")

Noah

Read Genesis 6 - 9

God loves people and wants a loving relationship with them, but he will not force people to love him. He will not force people to live with him. This is demonstrated when God judged the world with a world-wide flood.

- God's heart was full of pain – pain beyond our imagination! His heart was full of pain because of the selfishness of people. (Genesis 6:6)
- Sin requires death, as God stated when he first created people. (Genesis 2:17)
- God judged the people, but his mercy must be kept in mind. Because of his mercy he allowed many people, for many years, to enjoy his care and provision, in spite of their self-centeredness, violence against each other, and rejection of God.
- We can be sure that everyone hated the flood, but God did not rescue them because they also did not want God. They wanted good things God gave them, but they did not want God, himself.
- What other things do you observe about God in these chapters of Noah and the flood? (Write your observations in the sections of this manual that have the titles "God's Salvation," "God's Characteristics," and "God's Promises.")

Tower of Babel

Read Genesis 11:1-9

- People united together to build a huge tower to heaven. God, in his love for people, broke apart their united desire to make themselves great. He did this by giving them different languages, which caused them to move apart to other locations, eventually throughout the world. As always, God's actions are for the purpose of helping people see their need for him and perhaps reach out and find him. (Acts 17:26-27)
- What other things do you observe about God in this passage? (Write your observations in the sections of this manual that have the titles "God's Salvation," "God's Characteristics," and "God's Promises.")

Abraham and Sarah

Read Genesis 11:27 – 25:11

- God asked Abram (later called Abraham) to move from Haran (present day northern Syria) to Canaan (present day Israel). (Genesis 11:31 -12:1) This was the land God promised to give Abraham's descendants for the remainder of history.
- Abraham was humble before Lot and let him choose the best land if he wanted it, which he did. Genesis 13:5-18. Abraham was confident God would take care of him.
- Sarah and Abraham came up with the idea of Abraham having a child through one of their servants, Hagar. They did this, but God said this could not be the child he would fulfill his promises through. (Genesis 16) Hagar's child was named Ishmael and became the father of the Arab people.
- Abraham and Sarah were childless until Abraham was 100 years old and Sarah was 90 (Genesis 17:17). Isaac was the name of their only child. (Genesis 21:1-7)
- God asked Abraham to offer his only son, Isaac, as a sacrifice to him. (Genesis 22:1-19) This seemed to be a contradiction of God's promise, but Abraham had a strong confidence that God would do something special to fulfill his promise (Hebrews 11:17-19). God intervened and provided a ram for the sacrifice, in place of Isaac.
- God asked Abraham to travel three days to the special location where he should offer his son. This was on one of the mountains of Moriah. (Genesis 22:2) This is the same location where Jerusalem was built and where Jesus was later sacrificed as God's only son. (2 Chronicles 3:1)

- Faith, not works, was the basis of Abraham's righteousness (Genesis 15:6). His faith is also referenced in Romans 4:1-5 and Galatians 3:5-8. Works (obedience) were the result of faith.
- What other things do you observe about God in these chapters of Genesis? (Write your observations in the sections of this manual that have the titles "God's Salvation," "God's Characteristics," and "God's Promises.")

Jacob and Joseph

Read Genesis 28 – 32 and Genesis 37 – 50

Abraham and Sarah had only one son together in their marriage, whom they named Isaac. Isaac then married Rebekah, as an answer to prayer (Genesis 24). They had two sons, Esau and Jacob. God's plan was to work through the descendants of Jacob (later named Israel), to show his greatness.

- Jacob had 12 sons through two wives. These sons became the origin of the twelve tribes of Israel, which formed the basis for the nation of Israel.
- Jacob had an unusual experience of wrestling with a man who represented God. (Genesis 32:22-32) After wrestling, the message was given that God would change his name from Jacob (means "he grabs the heel" or "deceives") to Israel (means "struggles with God").
- Jacob's life was saved by the apparent death of his son, Joseph. This resulted in a blessing for the whole family, which is a picture of what God has done through his son, Jesus, for all people.
- Evil seemed to prevail more than one time in Joseph's life, but it became clear God was in control of all of it, using evil events to bring about a large blessing for all of Jacob's family.
- God was caring for Jacob and his family the whole time, even when they were acting selfishly and even when it seemed everything was going wrong (Genesis 42:36, "Everything is against me!")
- Joseph was confident that God would be faithful to his promise to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, so he asked his descendants to take his bones back to the land promised to them by God (Gen. 50:24-26)
- What other things do you observe about God in these chapters about Jacob and Joseph? (Write your observations in the sections of this manual that have the titles "God's Salvation," "God's Characteristics," and "God's Promises.")

Moses

Read Exodus 1 – 20, 32-36, 40

Read Numbers 10:11 – 14:45, chapter 21

Read Deuteronomy 27 – 28, 31:1-8, 32:48-52, 34:1-12.

- The birth of Moses and God's call of Moses - Exodus 1 – 4.
- God told Moses he had not forgotten his plan, and that he would bring the descendants of Israel back to the land he had promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Israel).
- God judged the Egyptians for their treatment of the Israelites and for refusing to let them worship God. He judged them with 10 plagues, the last of which was death of the firstborn son (Exodus 7 – 11). But if the blood of a lamb was put above the door, the angel of death passed over the family. At this time God instituted the Passover in

memory of this event and as a picture of what he would do in the future so all people in the world could escape the judgement of death. – Exodus 11:1 – 12:17, and 12:29-33, John 1:29, 1 Corinthians 5:7, Revelation 5:12-13. **Note – record the things you see about God’s Salvation when you read about the Passover and Jesus being the lamb.** Record your observations in the section of this book titled “God’s Salvation.”

- God gave complete freedom from the Egyptians at the sea (Red Sea) – Exodus 13:17 – 14:31. This was a miracle that is still remembered and discussed today.
- God provided daily food for more than a million people in the desert – Exodus 16:1-36.
- God gave the Ten Commands to Moses on Mount Sinai (Exodus 19). The Ten Commands are listed in Exodus 20:1-21. These are a summary of how God has designed people to live. The first four are for our relationship with God. The next six are for our relationship with people.
- The tabernacle – Exodus 36-38. It was designed by God to meet with his people (originally it was the Tent of Meeting in Exodus 25:8-9, 33:7-11). The design shows what is necessary for sinful people to meet with God (sacrifices and washing were necessary).
- The many laws and penalties demonstrated the seriousness of sin and the purity of God. Sheep and animals were sacrificed because of sin – Exodus 29:38-46. They were given as analogies of eternal realities (Hebrews 8:1-5). **Record your observation about God’s Salvation on the pages of this manual.**
- Moses sent 12 spies into Canaan, most of whom gave a negative report about the difficult challenges – Numbers 13. What was the result when the people focused on the problem and forgot God’s promise – Numbers 14?
- Entering the land promised to Abraham and Israel – God used the Israelites to bring judgment on people who opposed God, followed after evil spirits, and offered children as sacrifices (Lev. 20:1-24). God also told the people of Israel that he would bring judgement on the Israelites in a worse way if they did not live in cooperation with him. (Lev. 26:14-39, Joshua 23:9-16)
- The Bible says Moses was the most humble man on earth (Numbers 12:3). Read what Jesus said about humility (Matthew 18:1-4 and 20:20-28) and compare this to Moses.
- What other things do you observe about God in the accounts of Moses? (Write your observations in the sections of this manual that have the titles “God’s Salvation,” “God’s Characteristics,” and “God’s Promises.”)
- Joshua was the one who took Moses’ place of leadership and then led the people in conquest of the land God had promised to them. Joshua 1:1-18

Ruth

Read Ruth 1-4

- Ruth was not an Israelite. Though she was from another country, God did special things in her life when she made choices to be with God’s people. (Ruth 1)
- God is eager to help people when they are humble and seek him.
- God included Ruth in his plan to bring the Messiah who would rescue people. (Ruth 4:16-22, compared to Matthew 1 genealogy)
- What things do you see that relate to the way that God has brought us as foreigners into a marriage with himself? Write these observations in the section of this manual titled “God’s Salvation.”

- What other things do you observe about God in the story of Ruth and Boaz? (Write your observations in the sections of this manual that have the titles “God’s Salvation,” “God’s Characteristics,” and “God’s Promises.”)

David

Read 1 Samuel, chapters 16 – 31

Read 2 Samuel, chapters 1 – 24

Read 1 Kings, chapters 1 – 2

David was an Israelite who trusted God from his youth through his whole life, even as king of Israel.

- David believed God’s promise about bringing Abraham’s descendants into the land, so he was willing to oppose a giant who opposed the Israelites from living in the land. (1 Samuel 17)
- King Saul became jealous of David’s success. As a result, Saul repeatedly tried to kill David until Saul was killed in a battle with the Philistines. (1 Samuel 18-31)
- David trusted God while running from King Saul (at least eight years). A good example is the event in the cave. (1 Samuel 24:1-22)
- David became king of Israel and promoted worship of God. (2 Samuel 5:1-5)
- God promised that one of David’s descendants would be ruler of Israel forever. This future king was called the “Messiah” (i.e. “Christ” in the Greek language) by the Israelites. (2 Samuel 7:11-16)
- David’s sin of adultery with Bathsheba and the murder of her husband is probably the best known fault of David. (2 Samuel 11-12) David wrote Psalm 51 in confession of this sin.
- One of David’s sons, Absalom, temporarily took over the kingdom from his father which was a great trial for David. (2 Samuel 15-18)
- The Bible includes a lot of David’s poetry which he wrote to express his varied feelings toward God. 2 Samuel 22 is one example, and many of the Psalms were written by him.
- God blessed Israel in many ways because David led them to trust and obey God.
- Read Psalm 145, which was written by David. What things do you observe about God? (Write your observations in the section, ‘Basics about God’ – His Characteristics.)
- Do the same with Psalm 27.
- What other things do you observe about God in the accounts about David? (Write your observations in the sections of this manual that have the titles “God’s Salvation,” “God’s Characteristics,” and “God’s Promises.”)

Solomon

Read 1 Kings, chapters 1 – 11

David’s son, Solomon, the first heir to David’s throne, was blessed by God and led Israel to its peak of greatness.

- Solomon was the son of David and Bathsheba, the woman who David committed adultery with. 1 Kings 1:11-35
- Solomon had more knowledge and wealth than anyone in history. 1 Kings 10:1-29
- Solomon’s rule was the peak of power for Israel in all history.
- Solomon did not cooperate with God, and so began the downfall of the nation of Israel. 1 Kings 11:1-26

- At the end of Solomon's life two other men took control of Israel (Jeroboam and Rehoboam in 1 Kings 11:26 – 12:33). Rehoboam only ruled the two southern tribes of Judah and Ephraim, which also included Jerusalem. Jeroboam ruled the ten tribes which made up the northern part of Israel. This was the beginning of much turmoil for the people of Israel. There were many kings ruling the two sections known as Israel (the northern tribes) and Judah (southern two tribes including Jerusalem). It was this way until the nation of Assyria carried the people of Israel into captivity (722 BC) and Babylon carried the people of Judah into captivity (587 BC).
- What other things do you observe about God in the account of Solomon? (Write your observations in the sections of this manual that have the titles "God's Salvation," "God's Characteristics," and "God's Promises.")

Isaiah

Read Isaiah 1:1-31, 6:1-13, 9:1-7, chapters 11, 12, 26, 40, 42, 49:1-26, 53:1-12, chapter 61, 66:1-24

Isaiah was an Israelite who lived during the time that the people of Israel were exiled out of their country into Assyria and Babylonia. Not much is said about his personal life.

- Isaiah made predictions under the reigns of four kings in Judah (Isaiah 1:1), which would be around 710 – 681 B.C.
- Isaiah made predictions about many of the neighboring countries such as Babylon (ch. 13-14, Philistia (Isa. 14:28-32), Moab (ch. 15-16), Damascus and Syria (ch. 17), Ethiopia (ch. 18), Egypt (ch. 19-20).
- As a prophet of God, Isaiah predicted both the destruction and captivity of Israel (such as Babylon taking Judah in chapter 39:1-8, and also the future return of the Israelites (chapter 49:1-26 and chapter 51).
- God revealed to Isaiah that a special baby would be born to a future Israelite. That child would be called The Mighty God, The Eternal Father (Isaiah 9:6). God was helping his people understand that the future Messiah (Christ) would actually be God born as a man.
- Isaiah wrote about the sufferings of God's servant in a way that could only describe the future suffering and crucifixion of Jesus Christ. (Isaiah 53)
- God revealed many things to Isaiah about his plan for the future to give hope to the Israelites.
- What other things do you observe about God in the account of Isaiah? (Write your observations in the sections of this manual that have the titles "God's Salvation," "God's Characteristics," and "God's Promises.")

Daniel

Daniel, chapters 1 – 10

Daniel was one of the people of Israel who was taken captive by the nation of Babylon.

Babylon was one of the world empires at that time. The Babylonians destroyed Jerusalem and took many of the Israelites captive to Babylon and its empire.

- Daniel is an example of someone continuing to trust God even though circumstances looked like the work of God was being destroyed.

- Daniel was repeatedly promoted because of his outstanding character and abilities. With all this responsibility in an enemy country, he lived to please God in every way. (Daniel 1 -2)
- God used Daniel to help the Babylonian King Nebuchadnezzar become a worshipper of God. Read this unusual story in Daniel 2 – 4.
- Under King Darius, who overthrew the Babylonians, many officials opposed Daniel and tried to kill him in the lions’ den, but God worked to show his greatness to this king also, who then proclaimed God’s greatness to the whole empire. (Daniel 6)
- God gave Daniel visions of future world events, which he recorded. (Daniel 7-8)
- God also showed Daniel the final judgement of the world and a vision of the “son of man” coming to earth, who would be worshipped as the supreme authority with the “Ancient of Days”, a title of God. (Daniel 7:9-14) All Jews viewed this as a prediction of their Messiah, which Jesus later claimed to be (Mark 14:62).
- What other things do you observe about God in the account of Daniel? (Write your observations in the sections of this manual that have the titles “God’s Salvation,” “God’s Characteristics,” and “God’s Promises.”)

Jesus

Read Luke, chapters 1 – 24

Read John, chapters 1 – 21

Jesus Christ is the primary turning point of all history. Even the world’s present dating system is based on the birth of Jesus. Jesus was also the turning point in how God worked with people. In the first major message given by Jesus (Sermon on the Mount), Jesus often said, “You have heard that ..., but I tell you ...” (Matthew 5:21, 27, 31, 33, 38, 43) Jesus placed emphasis on what was happening in people’s hearts, whereas the Old Testament placed more emphasis on people’s actions. There are four areas of reasons we know Jesus Christ is actually God, the Creator of the world. All these areas have the best historical documentation that was possible at that time.

- He fulfilled predictions made about him (the Messiah to the Jews) hundreds and thousands of years previous to his life.
- He claimed to be God to his enemies and to his followers.
- He demonstrated the supernatural powers of God.
- His followers spent their lives proclaiming he is God and they willingly died because they could not deny they had seen and touched Jesus in his resurrected body after he had been killed, just as he had predicted to them.

NOTE: The life of Jesus is very well depicted (very close to the Biblical accounts) in the movie “Jesus”. This movie of his life can be viewed online in hundreds of languages at this website: www.JesusFilmMedia.org. The script is taken from the book of Luke and is very accurate. It also reviews the creation, fall, Abraham, life of Jesus, the gospel, and trusting Jesus for salvation. Following are some highlights of the life of Jesus here on earth.

- Jesus was born as one of the descendants of Abraham, Israel, and David (Matthew 1:1-17), which was a fulfillment of many predictions.
- The location of Jesus’ birth was a fulfilled prediction. (Micah 5:2, Matthew 2:1, Luke 2:1-7)
- The events of Jesus’ birth were miraculous. (Matthew 1 -2, Luke 1:26 – 2:40)

- Jesus was such a powerful influence of European and western culture that the calendar system used around the world today is based on the date of his birth.
- Jesus knew he was God come as a man, even at age 12. (Luke 2:41-52)
- Jesus was baptized by John the Baptist. (Matthew 3:13-17)
- Jesus lived in complete poverty, without a home, yet he continually helped other people. (All through Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John)
- His many miracles of healing and control of nature were evidence that he was God in human form. (All through Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John) It is interesting to note that all his miracles were for the purpose of helping people in some way. He was not performing them simply to demonstrate his power.
- Jesus, himself, claimed to be God. (John 8:57-59, and John 10:30-33, 37-39) This was the reason the religious leaders said he must die, because he claimed to be God and the Messiah (John 19:7), but he had not overthrown the government as many thought the Messiah should do first of all.
- Jesus taught clearly about the Trinity, although he never used that word. Many times he talked about his Father, and at the Last Passover Supper he explained clearly about the Holy Spirit who would come to take the place of Jesus. (John 14 and John 16) It is clear that Jesus recognized his Father in heaven to be God, Jesus said that he, himself, is God, and that the Holy Spirit is God.
- Jesus also clearly taught about our greatest enemy, Satan (John 8:42-46).
- Jesus taught about eternal judgment (Matthew 25:31-46, John 3:16-18).
- Jesus knew that a primary purpose of his life was to be the ransom (payment) for many people (Mark 10:45), to rescue them from eternal judgment for their sins.
- Jesus understood that he was the focus of all history, from Moses to Revelation. He told his followers that his death was the fulfillment of the meaning of the Passover Lamb (a sacrifice to save the life of the firstborn). (Mark 14:12-25, Luke 22:14-20) He also said that the complete fulfillment would happen in the kingdom of God (Luke 22:16). In Revelation, Jesus is frequently referred to as the Lamb, because it is by his sacrificial death that every human being can be saved from eternal death into eternal life. (Revelation 7:9-17) This is why Jesus told his followers to share bread and grape juice together in memory of his sacrifice for our sin (Luke 22:19).
- Jesus predicted many times that he would be killed and return back to life three days later (Luke 18:33). Even his enemies understood this (Matthew 27:62-66). His disciples expected Jesus to set up his kingdom immediately, so they were very surprised when he was killed on the cross, and they did not expect him to come back to life (John 20:9).
- The resurrection of Jesus Christ is the strongest evidence for his claim to be God. (1 Corinthians 15:1-8)
- Jesus appeared to people over a period of 40 days after his resurrection. Then, while a group watched, Jesus ascended into the sky. Angels told the disciples Jesus will again return to earth in bodily form. (Acts 1:1-11)
- Jesus had previously told his followers that sometime in the future he would return as King, but no one knows the date. (Matthew 24:1-54)
- In the life of Jesus, what things do you observe about God? (Write your observations in the sections of this manual that have the titles "God's Salvation," "God's Characteristics," and "God's Promises.")

- **NOTE:** In Appendix 3, “Evidence That God Controls History,” there is more information on God’s Grand Plan and his “**Subplan – God shows himself through Jesus Christ – the Lamb of God.**” There you will find more amazing evidence of how God’s plan to become a human, as Jesus Christ, is the focal point of all history.

Holy Spirit

Read Acts 1:4-11, 2:1 – 41, 10:1-48, 19:1-7

The Holy Spirit is mentioned at the beginning of the Bible in Genesis 1:2. In the Bible, he is not mentioned as often as God, the Father. He is also not mentioned as often as God, the Son (Jesus Christ). But the Bible makes it clear that he is God, the Spirit. Here are some passages that help us understand who the Holy Spirit is:

- Romans 8:9-11 – Talks about God, Christ, and the Spirit as the same, yet working as different persons. This is difficult to comprehend with our limited minds. The three of them are the same Being, yet they function as different persons.
- John 14:15-17, 25-26 and John 16:5-15 – Jesus tells his disciples that he will send the Holy Spirit to take the place of Jesus in their lives. In these passages Jesus explains the things that the Holy Spirit will do.
- Acts 1:8 – Jesus promised to send the Spirit to enable his disciples to be witnesses of him.
- 1 Corinthians 3:16, 6:19, and Ephesians 1:13-15 – The Holy Spirit comes to live in the person who trusts Jesus Christ as his Savior.
- 1 Corinthians 12:1-31, Galatians 5:16-18, 22-23, Titus 3:5 – The Holy Spirit gives different gifts to believers and helps them grow.

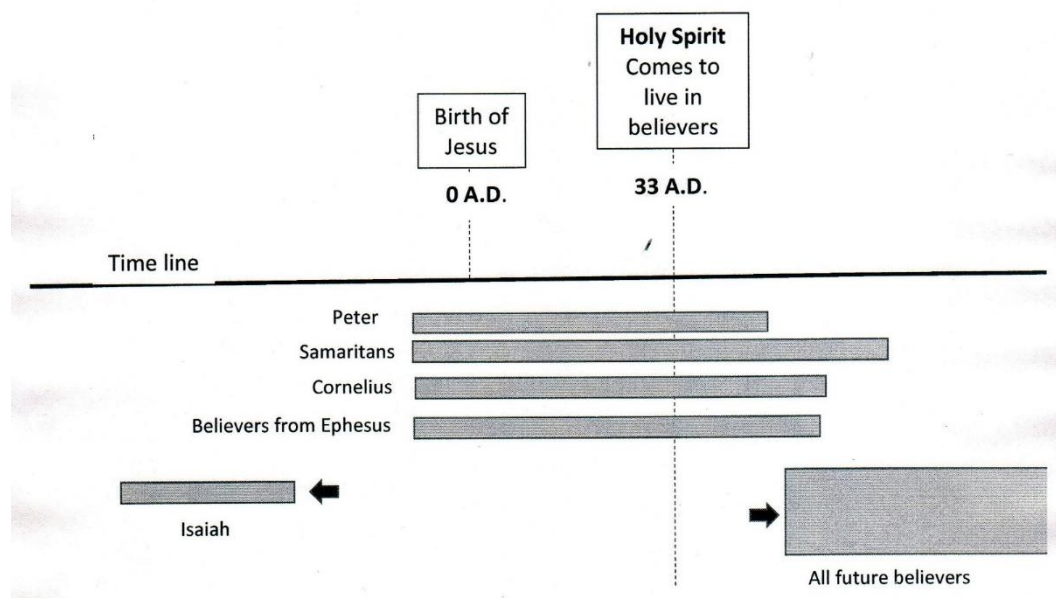
As we read in John 14:17 and 16:5-8, the Holy Spirit did not live in people at any time until after Jesus died, came back to life, and then ascended to heaven. In Acts we read different accounts of how the Holy Spirit came to permanently live in people. Today, he immediately comes to live in a person when they open their hearts to Christ. The book of Acts records the different events that God used to teach his children about this new role of his Spirit. The role of the Holy Spirit changed dramatically from the thousands of years before Jesus when he was WITH believers to the time he began to live IN believers after Jesus ascended back into heaven. Following are highlights of how this happened.

- God’s Spirit first came to live in those who believed in Jesus Christ ten days after Jesus ascended back to heaven. (Acts 1 – 2) This happened on the day Pentecost, which was the Jewish Feast of Weeks. This was 50 days after the Feast of Firstfruits (the same day Jesus rose from the dead).
- One of the first evidences of the Spirit coming to live in the believers was an ability to speak in a language they had not learned (Acts 2:1-13). This was very impressive to those around who spoke those languages and knew the first disciples had never learned the other languages. On that same day, there were about 3,000 Jews from many countries who believed in Christ and received the Holy Spirit. (Acts 2:5, 41) As far as we know, there were no Gentiles who believed in Christ on this occasion.
- Soon afterward, people in Samaria (half Jew and half Gentile) believed in Christ. Read Acts 8:14-17. Peter and John were sent to them, and after they prayed for the Samaritan believers, the Samaritans also received the Holy Spirit.
- The next step was for the Holy Spirit to come live in Gentiles (people who were not Jews at all). This first happened with Peter and Cornelius in Acts 10. When these Gentiles

believed in Christ, they had the same kind of experience that the first disciples had experienced at Pentecost, which meant that they also spoke in languages they had not learned (Acts 10:44-48).

- The last category of people to receive the Holy Spirit were some people who believed in God's message through John the Baptist (who came before Jesus), but had not yet heard about Jesus Christ. After hearing the gospel of Jesus Christ, they believed in him and received the Holy Spirit in the same way the first disciples did, even speaking in other languages (translated as "tongues" in some Bibles). Acts 19:1-7

NOTE: The Holy Spirit coming to live in believers was a major change in all history, but unseen by physical eyes. Believers who had lived before Jesus, such as Isaiah and Abraham, never had the Holy Spirit come to permanently dwell in them, although we will see them with the Lord. (See the diagram following this paragraph.) To help people understand this new blessing of the indwelling Holy Spirit, God gave some very unusual evidence when this indwelling first happened – the ability to speak in a language they had not learned. Then when other categories of people besides Jews experienced the same miracle, the Jews knew the Holy Spirit had also come to live in others because they saw the same unusual miracle of speaking in a language that had not been learned. (Those other categories of people were Samaritans (half Jew, half Gentile), Gentiles, and believers in John the Baptist before Jesus. After those four events, everyone else who came to believe in Jesus always received the Holy Spirit at the moment they believed without an accompanying miracle. This is what has happened to us (Eph. 1:13-14). After the historical transition period of the Holy Spirit coming to live in people, the miracle of talking in a real language (that had not been learned) was no longer given as evidence of the Holy Spirit coming to live in people. Today God can always give a miraculous ability to an individual for some specific purpose, but speaking an unlearned language is no longer given as evidence of the Holy Spirit coming to live in someone. The following timeline is a graph to show the sequence of events that God brought about to help his children understand the new ministry of the Holy Spirit.



NOTE: Today, some Christians and non-Christians imitate the miracle of speaking in an unlearned language by making gibberish sounds, saying it is supernatural. But no one is amazed or impressed by it in the way people were in the book of Acts because no one hears them speaking a real language. Paul addressed this imitation of the miracle in his letter to the Corinthians (1 Corinthians 14), saying it is much better if a speaker knows what he is saying and if the listeners also know what is being said. It is definitely possible for God to give someone the ability today to speak a language they haven't learned, but it will be an obvious miracle when the listeners hear them speaking in their own language!

- The most important evidence of the Holy Spirit living in a person is their expression of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, and self-control. These qualities are often called the fruit of the Spirit, as described in Galatians 5:22-23. Paul explains that love is so important that even if someone talks in a language they haven't learned, it is useless if love isn't evidenced (1 Corinthians 13:1).
- The Holy Spirit's "job description" was given by Jesus during the last supper (Passover) with his disciples. As you read what Jesus said in John 14:26 and 16:7-15, write down each of the things Jesus said the Spirit would do. These are important for you to understand because all of them are things the Holy Spirit has done or wants to do in your life.
- Gifts of the Spirit are different abilities and different motivations given to different Christians, as members of Christ's body. The two primary passages that describe these gifts are Romans 12:6-8 and 1 Corinthians 12:1-31. The purpose of these gifts is to build up other people, as stated in 1 Corinthians 12:7.

Remembering that the Holy Spirit is God, what qualities of God do you see in him? (Write your observations in the sections of this manual that have the titles "God's Salvation," "God's Characteristics," and "God's Promises.")

Peter

Read Luke 5:1-11

Read Luke 6 – 24

Read John chapters 13, 20 – 21

Peter (Simon Peter) was one of the 12 men Jesus chose to be his disciples and the apostles. Peter was very quick to say what he was thinking, which is probably the reason many things were written about him. He also wrote the Epistles of 1 and 2 Peter.

- Peter caught fish for a living before meeting Jesus. Jesus demonstrated his greatness to Peter by putting more fish into Peter's net than he had ever experienced (Matthew 5:1-11). After Jesus' resurrection, when Peter was still confused and went back to fishing, Jesus repeated the same miracle for him (John 21:1-14), even though Peter had denied knowing Jesus just before the crucifixion (John 18:15 – 27). Jesus then told Peter that Peter could show his love for Jesus by feeding his sheep (John 21:15-17).
- Jesus told Peter that his name meant "rock" and that Jesus would build his church on "this rock." (Matthew 16:17-19) What did Jesus mean when he said this to Peter? The best way to know what he meant is to see what Peter said about Jesus building his church on the rock. He wrote an explanation of this in his epistle, 1 Peter 2:4-8.

- Peter experienced how easy it was to become influenced by Satan. In Mark 8 he had a great insight about Jesus and then soon after that he made a remark to Jesus and Jesus said “Get behind me, Satan.” (Mark 8:27-33).
- Peter helped the early church leaders understand that God provides salvation to people whose hearts are humble before him and not according to their actions or how well they kept rules (Acts 15:8-11). This is true for Jews and all people.
- God used Peter to open the door for communicating the gospel to people who were not Jews (Gentiles). Previously, the Christians had thought that people had to become Jews before they could accept Jesus Christ as their Savior. Acts 10:1 – 11:18.
- In the life of Peter, what things do you observe about God? (Write your observations in the sections of this manual that have the titles “God’s Salvation,” “God’s Characteristics,” and “God’s Promises.”)

John

Read Luke 5:1-11

Read John chapters 1 – 21

Read 1 John, 2 John, and 3 John

Read Revelation 1 – 5, 21 – 22 (or all the book of Revelation as soon as possible)

- John was a fishing partner with Peter before Jesus called them to be his disciples. John’s brother, James, was also a fishing partner and also joined Jesus as his disciple.
- When John wrote the gospel of John, he sometimes referred to himself as “the disciple whom Jesus loved” (John 13:23).
- John also wrote 3 letters that became part of Scripture – 1st, 2nd, and 3rd John.
- John emphasizes that we can have eternal life through our belief in Jesus Christ. (John 3:16, John 5:24, John 20:30-31, 1 John 5:11-13)
- Near the end of his life John wrote Revelation, the last book of the Bible (Revelation 1:1-4). He wrote on the island of Patmos (Rev. 1:9), where he was exiled by Roman authorities. This book was primarily a revelation of what Jesus Christ would do in the end times (Revelation 1:1-2).
- The gospel of John, written about the life, death, and teaching of Jesus Christ, has many unique things recorded because his emphasis was on Jesus being God. John explains this purpose in John 20:30-31.
- In the life of John, what things do you observe about God? (Write your observations in the sections of this manual that have the titles “God’s Salvation,” “God’s Characteristics,” and “God’s Promises.”)

Paul

Read Acts 7:54 – 8:3, 9:1 – 31, 11:19 – 30, 12:25 – 28:31

Read Galatians 1:13-24

After Jesus Christ’s death, all his disciples told people about Jesus being the King of Kings and the Savior from our sin. Paul at first opposed the disciples (at which time his name was Saul), but after Jesus appeared to him, Saul also became a zealous messenger about Jesus Christ, (Acts 9:1-31). Later he was called Paul.

- Paul had received the highest education from the Jews of his day, which included intense study of the Old Testament, as we call it today. (Philippians 3:4-6)

- God knew Paul's intention was to obey God to the best of his understanding, so Jesus Christ revealed himself to Paul in his resurrected glory (Acts 9:1-31, 1 Timothy 1:12-13). This was the turning point in Paul's life.
 - Paul was sent out as a missionary from the church in Antioch (Acts 13:1-3). What do you see about God's work through his people in this passage? Record your observation in the section, "Basics about God – His Characteristics."
 - God used Paul to help the church leaders understand more clearly that salvation and life with God are based on God's grace and not on our performance or works. Paul explained this to the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15:19-21), and he also explained it to Peter and other leaders when they began to emphasize the Old Testament rules as necessary for salvation (Galatians 2:11-21).
 - Paul and his companions were the first ones to bring the gospel message of Jesus Christ to many of the cities from Antioch to Greece (Acts 13-21). In Acts 17:26-27, what understanding did Paul have about the way God works in people's lives? Write your observation in the section, "Basics about God – His Characteristics."
 - Paul revisited many of the cities where he started churches and wrote letters to them to help them grow in their life with Jesus Christ. Many of these letters were quickly recognized as part of Scripture by the original apostles, even during Paul's life. (2 Peter 3:14-16) Realizing that some of the letters were written while Paul was in prison (such as Philippians), what do you observe about God's characteristics? (Record your observations in the appropriate section.)
 - Paul's life is given as an example for us to follow in many ways (Philippians 3:12-17). His example of reaching people with the gospel message and starting churches has been followed throughout history.
 - Paul carefully taught theology and doctrine in many of his letters, especially Romans and Galatians.
 - What other things do you observe about God in the account of Paul? (Write your observations in the sections of this manual that have the titles "God's Salvation," "God's Characteristics," and "God's Promises.")
-

God's Salvation

(Journal pages)

Jesus Christ said He was sent into the world to save it from condemnation (John 3:17). How does this salvation happen?

When a religious leader came to talk with him personally about spiritual things, Jesus told him, "Very truly I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again (John 3:3)." Nicodemus, the religious leader, then asked how such a thing could happen.

Whether it's called salvation or new birth, here is a summary of what the Bible says about the way God has made eternal life available for anyone who wants it. The titles of the sections that give an understanding of God's salvation are listed below. Then following the list, each section is expanded with Bible passages. After each section there is also a blank space where you can write more Bible passages that help you understand these same truths.

1. **People's Problems**
2. **People's Inadequacies**
3. **God's Provisions**
4. **People's Responses to God**
5. **God's Assurances to His People**

Each of these five subjects is at the top of one of the following pages, with examples provided. The blank space below each example is available for you to write Bible references and explanations that relate to each of these five subjects. Each subject helps us to understand how God has helped people in many situations and to understand the eternal salvation from sin and death that God has provided in such an amazing way through Jesus Christ.

1. People's Problems

- Genesis 2:15-17, 3:1-19 – Adam and Eve lost their relationship with God when they committed the first sin.
- James 2:10 – One action of disobedience to God separates us from Him as much as any amount of sin does.
- Matthew 5:21-22, 27-28 – Wrong thoughts are equally serious as wrong actions in God's sight.

Sin of any kind separates us from God and causes spiritual death. Following are some passages that explain this:

- The wages of sin is death (Romans 6:23).
- The consequence for all kinds of sin is not only physical death but also eternal death (2 Thessalonians 1:9, Revelation 20:11-15 and 21:8), which is separation from God in eternal misery in a lake of fire.

ADDITIONAL BIBLE PASSAGES:

2. People's Inadequacies

- James 2:10 – No matter how much good a person does, it will never be enough to pay the spiritual death penalty every person deserves.
- Galatians 2:16, 20-21 – No matter how religious a person is, it will never be enough to pay his/her spiritual death penalty.
- Psalm 49:7-9 – Another person cannot pay the death penalty for someone because they need to pay their own penalty, which is eternal death.

ADDITIONAL BIBLE PASSAGES:

3. God's Provisions

- Ephesians 1:3-10 – God had a plan for rescuing (saving) people even before He created them.
- Romans 5:6-11 – Even though we were like enemies of God and utterly helpless to provide our own salvation, God took loving action and made salvation possible.
- Hebrews 10:8 – Sacrifices of animals were never enough to pay the death penalty for a human.
- God, who is our Judge, determined that a perfect human could take on the death penalty for other people (Hebrews 10:8-14). To make this possible, God Himself became a human, supernaturally conceived in Mary, about 2000 years ago. Mary's baby was named Jesus, and when He grew up he said he was the Christ (Messiah), so was called Jesus Christ. He told his followers he had come to pay the death penalty each one of us deserves (Mark 10:45).
- While Jesus Christ hung on the cross of execution, He cried out, "My God, My God, why have you forsaken Me?" (Matthew 27:46) At that time He was experiencing the full wrath of God's justice against the sin of people. (Romans 8:3-4, 2 Corinthians 5:21)
- Jesus Christ was the substitutionary payment (sacrifice) for our death penalty. This is symbolized in many ways from the beginning of the Bible to the end.
 - God provided a sheep for Abraham to sacrifice instead of his son – Genesis 22.
 - The Passover Lamb was sacrificed so the first born child would not die – Exodus 12:1-13.
 - Animal sacrifices had to be made at the temple to represent payment for sin – Leviticus 4:32-35, 5:1-19.
 - The Servant of God (Messiah) would bear our sins. – Isaiah 53
 - Jesus Christ is called the Lamb of God many times (31x) in Revelation. (Rev. 7:17, 15:3, 21:23)
- Jesus Christ gave proof that His sacrifice for sins is valid and all His words are true. He predicted to His followers that on the third day after his death, he would come back to life (Matthew 16:21). This would be a clear demonstration that all his claims are true and that He really is God who became a human to rescue us. (John 5:36) In spite of all that Jesus' enemies did to prevent his resurrection, on the third day he began appearing to his followers and others. He met with people for 40 days, and then while a group watched, he ascended into the clouds. Before he left, Jesus made it clear that he would again return as the Ruler of this world, after which would come the final judgement of all people. (Matthew 27:62-66, Acts 1:1-11)

ADDITIONAL BIBLE PASSAGES:

4. People's Responses to God

- John 1:12, Romans 10:9-13, Romans 5:15-17, 6:23, Ephesians 2:8-9 – All that is required for salvation is believing that God is offering his gift of salvation through Jesus Christ, and then accepting Jesus as God's gift for salvation.
- Romans 10:9-13, Acts 16:31 – Acceptance of God's gift is expressed by communication to God. This can be done verbally or by the thoughts of our mind.
- Luke 23:40-43 – The example of one of the thieves on the cross beside Jesus demonstrates how this gift of salvation can be accepted.

ADDITIONAL BIBLE PASSAGES:

5. God's Assurances to His People

Following are some Bible references that confirm we are part of God's eternal family after we have put our trust in Jesus Christ (the One who has provided salvation by setting us free from Satan and paying the penalty we deserve for all our sin).

- John 5:24
- Roman 8:1-4
- 1 John 5:11-13
- Hebrews 10:10-14
- Psalm 103:12

ADDITIONAL BIBLE PASSAGES:

God's salvation in Jesus Christ is the focus of history

Jesus Christ's sacrifice for salvation is the focus of all history – for the past, present, and future of all humanity for all time.

God's provision of salvation came through Jesus Christ. He lived a very simple life, completely poor, and with only three years of public ministry, but his life, death, and resurrection have had a stronger influence on this world than any other person. God had prepared the world for the arrival of Jesus by recording predictions long before they actually happened (Luke 24:25-27). God also brought about special events to help people be prepared for Jesus Christ, who is also called the Son of God, the Son of Man, and the Savior of the world.

- God continually narrowed the family line to which the Messiah (Christ) would be born, beginning with Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Judah, Ruth, David, and Solomon's descendants.
- God predicted the exact small town where the Messiah (the Christ) would be born (Micah 5:2), about four hundred years before the event.
- God also predicted more than 400 years before the event that this special baby born to an Israelite family would be the Mighty God (Isaiah 9:6).
- The location of Jesus' death was supernatural. Even though His enemies decided where to execute Him, it was on the same group of hills (Mount Moriah) where God had asked Abraham to sacrifice his son and where God had provided a sheep to be a substitute so a human would not have to die.
- The timing of Jesus' death was supernatural. Even though His enemies decided when to execute, it was at the same time as the Feast of the Passover when the Jews were killing lambs in memory of the Passover lambs killed in Egypt so people would not have to die.
- At the culmination of human history on earth as we know it now, Jesus Christ is depicted as the Lamb. In the last book of the Bible (Revelation), which depicts God's final work with the world, Jesus is called the "Lamb" thirty one times. The Lamb is the main character at the climax of history. He is called the Lamb because His sacrifice is the complete basis for sinful people to be restored to an eternal loving relationship with their Creator.

God accomplished this completely unique event to make eternal salvation possible for all humans who have ever existed and ever will exist. This most unique event of all history was done in such a way to demonstrate that it could only have been accomplished by the hand of our highly intelligent Creator whose abilities and knowledge are far beyond our comprehension. The more closely an honest person makes investigation, the more amazed they become at every aspect of the event. In a world full of suffering, pain, and confusion, the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ give hope to every person.

God's Characteristics

(Journal pages)

The Bible describes many things about God. It describes things God has done since the beginning of the world and also things he will continue to do until he makes a new world in the future. We learn things about God from: 1) studying the Biblical accounts of what he did in past history, and 2) studying the descriptions the Bible gives about God. We also learn things about God from studying his promises, which will be explored in the final section of this manual.

As you read the Bible, look for things about God and also things that demonstrate an attribute of God. Write down the reference and a brief summary of each thing on the page in this journal that is designated for the characteristic of God seen in the passage. This will help you review these things in the future. Following is a summary of the characteristics listed on the following pages. Each characteristic listed is on a separate page with space to write the passages you find. After each characteristic, a few examples from the Bible are already given. You can continue adding more as you find them.

1. The Extent of God's ***Power***
2. The Extent of God's ***Presence***
3. The Extent of God's ***Love***
(Including His ***Mercy, Compassion*** and ***Grace***)
4. The Extent of God's ***Knowledge***
5. The Extent of God's ***Justice***
6. The Extent of God's ***Control*** and ***Sovereignty***
7. The Extent of God ***Never Changing***
8. The Extent of God's ***Faithfulness***
9. The Extent of God's ***Perfection*** and ***Purity***
10. The Extent of God's ***Helpfulness***

As you write down things you see about God, your understanding of God will increase. And the more you understand about who God is, the more your life will be changed.

1. The Extent of God's Power

Many times throughout the Bible, God is referred to as the Maker or the Creator. We also learn he has the ability to control everything he has made. The Bible says many things about God's strength and power.

Genesis 1:1 –“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.”

Psalm 146:5-6 –“Blessed is he whose help is the God of Jacob, whose hope is in the LORD his God, the Maker of heaven and earth, the sea, and everything in them – the LORD, who remains faithful forever.”

Psalm 66:5-7 –God parted the Red Sea. “He rules forever by His power.”

ADDITIONAL BIBLE PASSAGES:

2. The Extent of God's Presence

Genesis 28:16-17 – God spoke to Jacob through a dream when he was sleeping outside. This convinced Jacob that God was there, even though he had been completely unaware of Him.

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

ADDITIONAL BIBLE PASSAGES:

3. The Extent of God's Love

(Including His ***Mercy, Compassion*** and ***Grace***)

Numbers 14:18 –“The LORD is slow to anger, abounding in love and forgiving sin and rebellion.”

Jonah 1-4 – God went to extra effort to help the people of Ninevah, a Gentile city that had a bad reputation for abusing and torturing other people. God wanted to bring them to himself!

Luke 13:34 –God loves all people, including those who hate him and rebel against him. This is demonstrated by Jesus when He cried, “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing.”

NOTE: In Scripture, God is defined with the following roles, all of which include a lot of love. You can write Bible references after each of these roles, as you find them.

- **Savior**
- **Father**
- **Husband**
- **Friend**

Genesis 6-9 – God loves people and wants a loving relationship with them, but he will not force people to love him. He will not force people to live with him.

- God's heart was full of pain because of the selfishness of people who ignored him and even turned against him. (Genesis 6:6).

ADDITIONAL BIBLE PASSAGES:

(continued) 3. The Extent of God's Love

(Including His ***Mercy, Compassion*** and ***Grace***)

(continued) 3. The Extent of God's Love

(Including His ***Mercy, Compassion*** and *Grace.*)

4. The Extent of God's Knowledge

Genesis 18:10-15 – When the Lord and two angels were visiting Abraham, the Lord knew what Sarah was thinking when he couldn't see her.

Psalm 147:5 – "His understanding has no limit."

Luke 12:6 – Jesus said that God knows every hair and every sparrow.

Psalm 139:1-4 – God knows every thought people have.

Luke 16:15 – God knows every motive that people have, "You are the ones who justify yourselves in the eyes of men, but God knows your hearts."

ADDITIONAL BIBLE PASSAGES:

5. The Extent of God's Justice

God loves people and wants a loving relationship with them, but He will not force people to love Him. He will not force people to live with Him.

Genesis 2:17 – God told Adam and Eve that whenever anyone sinned they would die.

This is demonstrated when God judged the world with a world-wide flood.

Genesis 6-9 –

- God's heart was full of pain because of the selfishness of people (Genesis 6:6).
- Noah spoke to the people about God (2 Peter 2:5), but no one wanted to join Noah, so God carried out His judgement on sin.
- We can be sure that everyone hated the flood, but God did not rescue them because they also did not want God. They wanted good things God gave them, but they did not want God, Himself.

ADDITIONAL BIBLE PASSAGES:

God's justice in dealing with nations in history:

Many people have said God was unloving and unjust when he required the Israelites to destroy large groups of people in Palestine. Read the following passages, pray, and make your decision.

- Deut. 9:4-6, 18:9-13, Psalm 106:34-38 – God's reasons for destroying groups of people.
- Leviticus 26:14-39, Deut. 28:15-68 – God would be even more severe with the Israelites if they did the same things (all of which God later did to Israel through Assyria, Babylon, and Rome).
- Genesis 2:15-17, Romans 6:23, Revelation 21:8 – God has the same standards for all people in all history.

6. The Extent of God's Control and Sovereignty

Genesis 37-47 – Many events in the life of Joseph fit together to make him a ruler next to Pharaoh, and later to rescue his brothers. The Midianite traders traveled by the brothers just as they were deciding what to do. Joseph was sold as a slave to Potiphar. The Butler and Baker were put in prison with him, and both had dreams, and then Pharaoh had a dream.

Genesis 50:19-20 – God used evil events to bring about His good plans.

ADDITIONAL BIBLE PASSAGES:

7. The extent of God never changing

1 Samuel 15:29 – God does not change.

Hebrews 13:8 – “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever.”

James 1:17 – God does not change.

ADDITIONAL BIBLE PASSAGES:

8. The Extent of God's Faithfulness

Genesis 13:14-17 – God told Abraham that his descendants would always inherit the land of Palestine. That is still true today, in spite of all the slaughter and destruction that the Jews have gone through.

Genesis 49:8-10 – compared with Revelation 5:5. God told Jacob that the future ruler (the Messiah) would come from Judah's descendants. This was later recorded in Revelation; that Jesus was from the tribe of Judah.

Psalms 146:6 – "...the Maker, ...the LORD, who remains faithful forever."

ADDITIONAL BIBLE PASSAGES:

9. The Extent of God's Perfection and Purity

Joshua 7:1-26 – God instructed the Israelite army to totally destroy Jericho and not take anything for themselves. Because only one soldier took some things for himself from Jericho, God did not help the Israelite army when it attacked the next city. Soldiers died because of this. Not until Achan's sin was dealt with did God help the army again.

Revelation 4:8 – "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God, the Almighty."

Habakkuk 1:13 – God's eyes are so pure that He cannot even look at evil. (Obviously God sees all evil, but there is some way He does not want to see it.)

ADDITIONAL BIBLE PASSAGES:

10. The Extent of God's Helpfulness

God is always teaching every person in the world in every aspect of their lives. He is always helping them know more of who he is and how they can experience his fullness.

Hebrews 12:4-11 – God uses trials to train us.

Psalms 71:17 – God taught the Psalmist from his youth.

Psalms 94:10-14 – God teaches people.

Psalms 32:8 – God leads and guides us.

Deuteronomy 8:2-5 – God teaches us and disciplines us.

ADDITIONAL BIBLE PASSAGES:

God's Promises

(Journal pages)

Peter gives a good summary of why God's promises are so important:

"His [God's] divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by His own glory and goodness. Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires." (2 Peter 1:3-5)

Following is a summary of promises God has given, listed by general categories.

1. God's Promises about **Salvation / Reconciliation**
2. God's Promises about **His Presence**
3. God's Promises about **Leadership / Guidance**
4. God's Promises about **Protection**
5. God's Promises about **Wisdom / Knowledge/ Understanding**
6. God's Promises about **Provision / Gifts**
7. God's Promises about **Healing / Restoration**
8. God's Promises about **Help / Strength**
9. God's Promises about **Trials and Suffering**
10. God's Promises about **His Relationship with Us**

As you read the Bible, write down promises you find according to these different aspects of life, which we all need. Write down the reference and a brief summary of each one you find. This will help you review them in the future. Following are pages where you can write the promises you find. Each page has space for each category of promises. In each category there are a few examples of promises already given. You can continue adding more as you find them.

1. God's Promises about Salvation / Reconciliation

Exodus 6:7 – “I will take you as my own people, and I will be your God.”

John 1:12 – “Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.”

Romans 6:23 – “For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.”

1 John 5:11-13 – “And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. Whoever who has the Son has life; whoever who does not have the Son of God does not have life. I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life.”

ADDITIONAL BIBLE REFERENCES:

2. God's Promises about His Presence

Genesis 28:15 – “I am with you and will watch over you wherever you go.”

Joshua 1:9 – “...the LORD your God will be with you wherever you go.”

Matthew 28:20 – “Surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

ADDITIONAL BIBLE REFERENCES:

3. God's Promises about Leadership / Guidance

Psalms 32:8 – “I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you and watch over you.”

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

ADDITIONAL BIBLE REFERENCES:

4. God's Promises about Protection

Psalms 34:19 – “A righteous man may have many troubles, but the LORD delivers him from them all.”

Psalms 46:1 – “God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble.”

2 Thessalonians 3:3 – “The Lord is faithful, and he will strengthen and protect you from the evil one.”

ADDITIONAL BIBLE REFERENCES:

5. God's Promises about Wisdom / Knowledge/ Understanding

John 14:26 – “The Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.”

James 1:5 – “If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him.”

ADDITIONAL BIBLE REFERENCES:

6. God's Promises about Provision / Gifts

Philippians 4:19 – “And my God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus.”

1 John 5:14-15 – “This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. And if we know that he hears us – whatever we ask – we know that we have what we asked of him.”

ADDITIONAL BIBLE REFERENCES:

7. God's Promises about Healing / Restoration

Exodus 6:6 – “I will heal you from being slaves to them.” (First to Israelites, and in principle applies to us being set free from slavery to sin.)

Exodus 15:26 – “I am the LORD, who heals you.”

Psalms 103:2-3 – “Praise the LORD O my soul, and don't forget all his benefits, who forgives all your sins and heals all your diseases...”

ADDITIONAL BIBLE REFERENCES:

8. God's Promises about Help / Strength

Genesis 50:20 – “You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives.”

Exodus 6:6 – “I will redeem you with an outstretched arm.” (Refers to Israelites first, and then to all of us.)

Romans 8:35-37 – “Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? As it is written: ‘For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered.’ No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us.”

ADDITIONAL BIBLE REFERENCES:

9. God's Promises about Trials and Suffering

2 Corinthians 4:16-17 – Our temporary trials help our inner being and accomplish an eternal glory.

James 1:2-4 – Be thankful for trials because you know they are building your character.

2 Corinthians 12:7-10 – God's power is made more obvious in our weakness.

ADDITIONAL BIBLE REFERENCES:

10. God's Promises about His Relationship with Us

John 14:21 – “He who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love him and show myself to him.”

John 14:3 – “I am going there (to my Father's house) to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.”

John 14:12 – “I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these because I am going to the Father.”

Appendix 1

Reasons We Know the Bible is God's Communication

The Bible claims to be God's communication

The Bible claims to be communication from God, but so do some other religious writings. Each document that claims to be from God needs to be evaluated from every angle. Following are reasons we know the Bible is produced by a being with more intelligence and ability than humans and that it really is a message of love from the one who created us.

The Bible's documents are reliable in every way

We know the documents in the Bible are reliable in every way for the following reasons:

- **The consistency within itself.** The Bible was compiled over a period of 2,000 years, by more than 30 authors, yet is consistent within itself and is consistent with proven history and science.
- **The quality of the account.** The quality and quantity of its accounts is equal to or superior to any other writing from its time period. The eyewitness accounts and documentation of its central figure, Jesus Christ, are closer in time proximity and more in quantity than for any other historical person from that time period (0 – 100 AD).
- **The quality of the copies.** Many copies of large segments of the Bible (some more than 2,000 years old), are available in museums, libraries, and private collections. The content of these Biblical manuscripts is consistent with the present versions of the Bible, demonstrating the unchanging reliability of the content. All translations in all languages today can be compared with early documents in the original languages for accuracy.
- **The consistency with history.** The Bible is made of many narrative accounts of how God worked throughout history, and these are consistent with proven history.
- **The fulfillment of predictions.** The Bible is full of predictions about future events in nations and governments, many of which have already come to pass, and it also includes unusual predictions of the nation Jesus grew up in, predictions which are happening today.
- **The central person of the Bible is unique in all history.** No one else in history besides Jesus Christ has claimed to be God and then backed up that claim with miracles of all kinds, even predicting his own death and resurrection and then fulfilling it. The eyewitness accounts of these events (compiled in the Bible's New Testament) are of higher quality than any other historical account from that time period in history, as stated before.
- **The authority of Jesus Christ's recommendation.** Jesus Christ, who claimed to be God (and then backed up that claim, as already described), taught that all the Bible written before he was born (today's Old Testament) was completely accurate, reliable, and is God's communication to people. Based on the authority of who he is, no higher recommendation is needed.

The Bible demonstrates God is in control of all history

Probably the most unique and amazing characteristic of the Bible is that its author (the source who is above the human authors who wrote the Bible) demonstrates he is in control of history by predicting events thousands of years before they happen. The Bible is written in a way that demonstrates that it is put together by a being with much higher intelligence than we have – an intelligent being that knows what will happen thousands of years before the events happen.

Not only does the Bible demonstrate God is in control of history, it also shows that the central figure of the Bible is the most influential person in history. The followers of Jesus Christ have influenced the history, the culture, the sciences, the medicines, and the academics in this world more than anyone else. Even the most accepted dating system in the world is based on his birth.

The Bible's solution for life with God is unique

All religions in the world tell people how to improve their lives and make themselves acceptable to God or a higher being. However, the message of the Bible and its central figure, Jesus Christ, is different from all other religions. The message of the Bible is that God, our creator, offers eternal life with him as a *gift* that he has provided. The Bible explains that people can never make themselves worthy for life with God, but God loves people so much that he became a human and sacrificed his life to make it possible for any person who wants life with him to be able to receive it as a gift from him. This central message of the Bible puts the emphasis on what God has done for people and not on what people should do for God. It's a message of God's sacrificial love for people. This helps us understand that the Bible is God's communication to the people he made and loves.

Appendix 2

The Most Influential Person in History

God is the focus of the Bible, from beginning to end, and Jesus Christ is the human revelation of God. In this way, he is the central person in the Bible. The beginning of the Bible tells how God prepared for the future coming of Jesus Christ. The Bible then explains how he came to provide salvation for the world, and the end tells how he will return as ruler of the world.

No other person in the world in all of history has had as much influence as Jesus Christ. Today, almost every person in the world recognizes his birth when they write the number of this year. The most commonly used dating system all over the world is based on the approximate year of the birth of Jesus Christ.

The number of people who identify themselves as Christians in the world is larger than any other religion. Many of them misunderstand Jesus Christ, but they are at least attracted to him. The Bible, where Jesus Christ is the central figure, has been the most read book in the world ever since the printing press was invented. In fact, the printing press was invented for the purpose of printing more copies of the Bible. Millions upon millions of copies of the Bible have been sold, far beyond any comparison with any other book in the world.

Jesus Christ not only has more followers than any other person in history, but also his teaching has had a stronger influence than any other single person. Many of the original universities in Europe, North America, and South America were started for the purpose of teaching the Bible. Many of the hospitals throughout the world were started by people of the Christian faith. The Red Cross organization, with its many branches, has provided help throughout the world. Its origin came from Christians who recognized Jesus Christ as the greatest savior of the world and is often represented by a cross to symbolize how he gave his life for all humanity.

Not only does Jesus Christ have the greatest influence in the world, he is also the most unique person in the world. He predicted how he would be killed, how he would be dead for three days, and when he would come back to life. No other person in all history has done this.

Not only did he come back to life according to his prediction, but Jesus Christ also claimed to be God, the Creator of the world, who came in the form of a person. To demonstrate his power, Jesus healed every kind of disease brought to him, removed all evil spirits brought to him, created large amounts of food with no resources, controlled the weather, and read people's minds. No one else in all history has ever made the claim to be God, the Creator of the world, and backed it up by predicting his resurrection to show his power over death, which is the greatest enemy of all people.

Along with Jesus Christ's claim to be God, he also explained that all of the Bible written before his birth was written to predict his coming and to prepare the world for his coming. In other words, Jesus Christ claimed to be the climax of history, also saying that in the future he will return to the world as the savior and supreme world leader.

Transformed lives happen because of Jesus Christ

It's not surprising that many lives have been transformed by a personal relationship with this unique person. The first followers of Jesus Christ learned many things from him and saw him do many miracles. They were intensely motivated to do whatever Jesus said, but when they saw their leader arrested and tortured, they lost their motivation to be identified as his followers and deserted him. They dramatically changed though, after Jesus appeared to them repeatedly in his resurrected body for a period of forty days, and even ate with them. Finally, after they watched him ascend into the sky, their thinking was so thoroughly transformed that they became life-long advocates for him, even to the point of their own deaths, killed by those who opposed them, because the followers of Jesus refused to back down on their testimony that they had seen Jesus Christ physically resurrected three days after his death.

Paul, an enemy of Jesus Christ, was also transformed by personally seeing Jesus Christ in his resurrected body. Paul then went on to become friends with the other followers of Jesus Christ and also wrote down the teachings of Jesus Christ for every person in the world.

Jesus Christ is the way you will be transformed

Just like the disciples and the Apostle Paul, the more you understand who Jesus Christ is and who God is, and the more you submit to his truth, the more your thinking will be changed and your life transformed. The more you contemplate the realities of God, especially as revealed through Jesus Christ, the more you will be a different person. That's why Paul prayed this prayer for the Christians he knew,

“I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so you may know him better. I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in his holy people, and his incomparably great power for us who believe.” Ephesians 1:17 - 19

Paul also wrote in 2 Corinthians 3:18, “And we all, with unveiled face, *continually* seeing as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are *progressively* being transformed into His image from [one degree of] glory to [even more] glory, which comes from the Lord, [who is] the Spirit.” (From the Amplified Bible)

Some people enjoy Jesus Christ as their Savior, and they enjoy reading stories about his life, but they don't realize that Jesus is also the model for how to have a loving marriage. Other Christians don't realize that Jesus is the model for helping another person become a Christian, and many don't realize that Jesus is the model for starting a church! In reality, Jesus is the most important model for every aspect of our lives!

- He is the model for every loving relationship.
- He is the model for leadership.
- He is the model for helping and serving.
- He is the model for work and investment.
- He is the model for education.

Appendix 3

Evidence That God Controls History

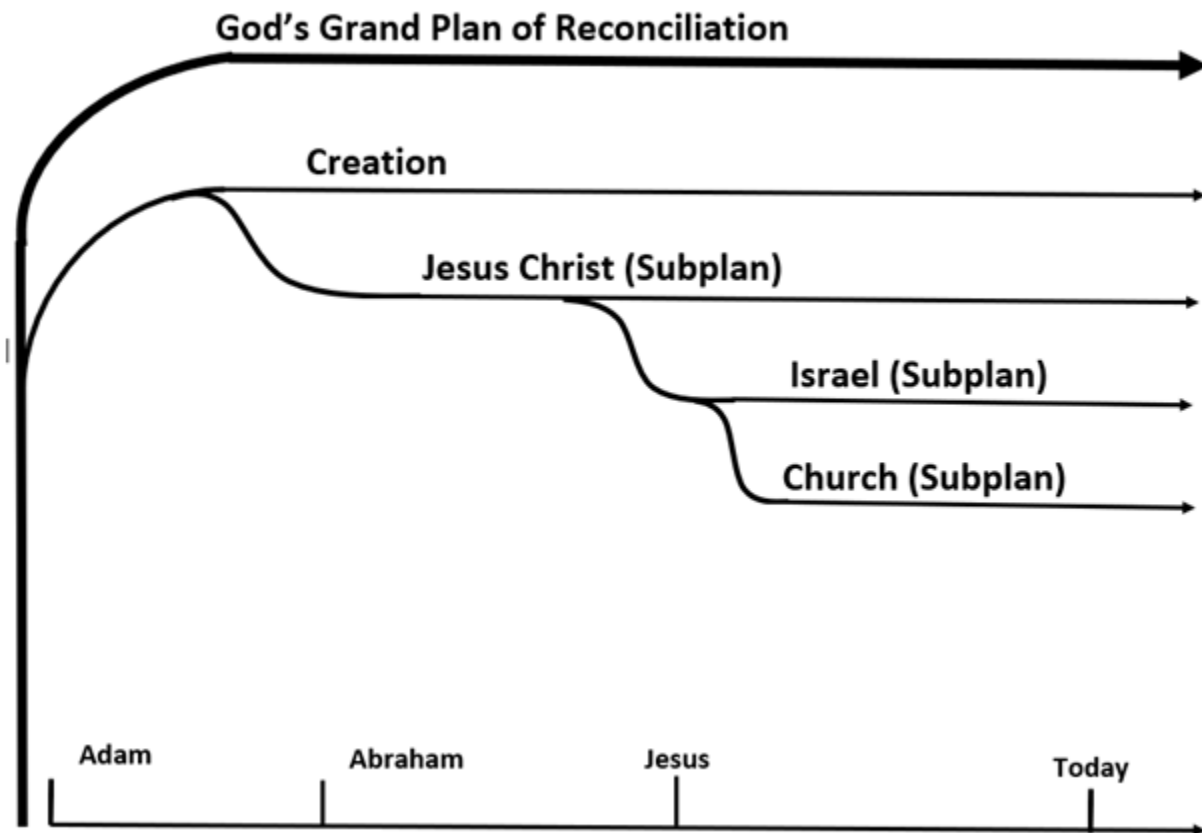
The Bible was written by human authors, who were led by God. One evidence of the Bible being originated by God is how it demonstrates that God is in control of history thousands of years before events happen.

The following section, “God’s Grand Plan and Subplans Explained” summarizes how the Bible demonstrates that God is in control of all history.

God’s Grand Plan and Subplans Explained

Pictured below is a diagram of God’s grand plan of reconciliation and each of the subplans. We know that God’s grand plan of reconciliation was in his mind before he created the world (Ephesians 1:4, 2 Timothy 1:9, Ephesians 3:7-11). Each of God’s subplans flow out of his grand plan. Notice the timeline at the bottom of the diagram. Notice also that all the plans are continuing today, and will continue until Jesus Christ returns as King of kings to usher in his kingdom and a new world.

The following diagram is one way the whole Bible and all of history can be summarized.



God's grand plan of reconciliation of people throughout history and throughout the world is explained in the complete Bible, from the beginning to the end. The following pages give an overview of God's grand plan of reconciliation and the three primary subplans he used to accomplish it.

God's GRAND PLAN of Reconciliation

Before the creation of the world God had a plan for creating people with the ability to accept or reject his love, and God also had a plan for how to reconcile them to himself after their rejection of him. Ephesians 1:3-10 refers to this plan. His plan began with the first man and woman he made and it has continued throughout all history. It will be completely fulfilled when God ends life on this planet as we know it now, and he continues life with his restored people in a new creation.

It is also good for us to remember that humans and God are not the only beings. Revelation 5:11 states, "Then I looked and heard the voice of many angels, numbering thousands upon thousands, and ten thousand times ten thousand [100,000,000]. They encircled the throne and the living creatures and the elders." God must have had beings like those in mind when Paul wrote that "His [God's] intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms, according to his eternal purpose which he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Ephesians 3:10) God's grand plan of reconciliation is at least partly for the purpose of demonstrating his wisdom to other spiritual beings.

God's grand plan of reconciliation covers a time span of thousands of years. Such a long time frame is daunting to our limited mind, but we can at least understand that some things become more amazing over longer periods of time.

- Faithful love becomes more amazing the longer it continues toward the same people.
- Fulfilled predictions become more amazing the longer the time period is which they cover.
- Memory of details and promises becomes more amazing the longer the time period is.

The awesomeness of God's grand plan of reconciliation also increases even more as we learn of its complexity. This complexity is multiplied as we learn that God designed at least three subplans to carry out his grand plan. These are listed here:

- **SUBPLAN – God shows himself through Jesus Christ, the Sacrificial Lamb of God**
- **SUBPLAN – God shows himself through one family line – Israel**
- **SUBPLAN – God shows himself through the church**

Each of these subplans is woven together with the other subplans, and together they accomplish the Grand Plan. Each of these subplans also contributes to the central focus of God's Grand Plan, which is God, himself, coming as a human, to make reconciliation possible.

Two other major factors add to the complexity and awesomeness of God's grand plan for reconciliation. These factors are:

- God created people with a free will, allowing them to reject him and do horrible things against him and his plans.
- God allowed spiritual beings (Satan and thousands of evil spirits) to oppose him by doing horrible things against him and his plans.

All these factors of complexity and opposition only increase the awesomeness of who God is – both in his character and his abilities! The Bible is full of historical accounts that describe what God has done with each subplan in the face of massive opposition. These Biblical accounts of the past show how God always uses opposition to accomplish his purposes in even more amazing ways! All this causes us to stand in awe of who he is. And there's still more to come in the future! In fact, the Bible says the opposition to his plans will increase as the end gets closer (Matthew 24:1-35 and Revelation 12-18).

The Bible summarizes the many aspects of God's grand plan, his subplans, and the opposition he allows. It is a book compiled to show God's awesomeness for our benefit, but it is written within our limitations. Later, when we see the fulfillment of God's grand plan of reconciliation, we will continue to reiterate what Paul said in Romans 11:33, "Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out!"

SUBPLAN –

God shows himself through Jesus Christ, the Sacrificial Lamb of God

As already stated, this first subplan is woven together with the next subplan. And all the subplans promote the central part of God's plan for reconciliation, which is God, himself, becoming a human to make reconciliation possible.

The first mention of God's plan to become a human (as the Son of God) is in Genesis 3:15 when God told the serpent (Satan), "I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel." This was the beginning of God's grand plan of reconciliation and also the beginning of God's subplan to become a man, Jesus Christ, to make reconciliation possible.

At the beginning of the Bible, in the book of Genesis, symbolic imagery of a lamb being a sacrifice for sins was introduced and then that symbolism appears throughout the Bible until the end in Revelation. Because the wages of our sin is death (Romans 6:23), the ultimate substitutionary sacrifice had to be a sinless human. Only the Son of God, living as a human, was able to be that sacrifice. That's why Jesus Christ is often referred to as the Lamb of God. Highlights of this lamb symbolism in the Bible are given below.

1. God asked Abraham to do an unusual thing. He asked him walk three days to a certain location to sacrifice his only son (Genesis 22:2). This place would later be the same location where Jesus Christ, God's only Son, would be sacrificed (2 Chronicles 3:1 – Moriah is a group of hills, not just one peak.) At that location, God provided a sheep so Isaac would not have to die (Genesis 22:1-19). This is a symbol of Jesus Christ, the **Lamb of God**, who would later be provided as the substitute sacrifice so we will not have to die.

2. Moses (a descendant of Israel) was used by God to free the people of Israel from slavery and go to the land God had promised to them. Moses instituted the Passover, where a ***lamb's blood was required*** for the angel of death to pass over a house. The Passover then became an annual celebration. Exodus 11:1 – 12:17, and 12:29-33
3. The Tabernacle was designed by God as a place to meet with him and to worship him (Exodus 25:8-9, 33:7-11). ***Lambs*** and sheep were used as sacrifices at the tabernacle, symbolizing the cost of sin, which is ultimately death. Numbers 28-29, Exodus 25:8-9, 29:38-46, Hebrews 9:1-28.
4. God also revealed to Isaiah some other unusual things about this same person, who would be a special servant who would suffer in the future. (Isaiah 52:13 – 53:12) This special servant would be pierced for our sin and crushed for our iniquities, and by his wounds we would be healed (53:5). Several times he said that this special servant would bear our sin (53:6, 11, 12) God even revealed to Isaiah that this special servant would be ***“led like a lamb to the slaughter”*** (53:7)!
5. John the Baptist lived at the same time Jesus did, but began his ministry before Jesus did. He told the people that the ***Lamb of God*** would come, referring to Jesus. John 1:29-31.
6. Jesus Christ, while he lived here as a physical man, claimed to be God - John 10:22-33. He said his purpose was to pay for sin - Mark 10:45. At the last Passover, Jesus said the ***cup represents his blood—the lamb of God*** instead of the blood of a sheep, which was a new explanation, since previously the cup represented a lamb's blood. Luke 22:20
7. Jesus Christ was crucified at the same time the Passover lambs were being sacrificed! Luke 23:20-56. His followers later referred to him as ***the Passover lamb*** sacrificed for us. 1 Corinthians 5:7
8. Jesus Christ's resurrection—***the resurrected Lamb***. Luke 24:1-12, 36-53, Revelation 5:6
9. The wedding of ***the Lamb*** will take place after the return of Jesus Christ as King. Revelation 19:6-21
10. God will create a new heaven and earth where God and the Lamb will rule. Revelation 21:1- 22:6. (Jesus is called ***the Lamb*** 31 times in the book of Revelation.)

Everyone who accepts Jesus as their substitute sacrifice for the penalty of their own sin is declared righteous in God's sight, and is set free from death and Satan, our greatest enemies! This is explained in 1 Peter 1:17-21 and many other places. Through Jesus Christ, God's grand plan of reconciliation is accomplished.

The Lamb of God to be a descendant of Israel

God's plan of his Son becoming human was revealed and accomplished through the descendants of Abraham, Israel, and David. In this way, the subplan of being a lamb was woven together with a subplan of being a descendant of Israel. This is evident from the first time God gave promises to Abraham. God told Abraham that he (God) would bless all people on earth through him. (Genesis 12:3) From that time on, God continued to give more explanations of how and when he would provide a Savior for Israel and for the world. Most of these statements were interpreted to be only applicable to the people of Israel, but after Jesus came, the Holy Spirit made it clear that Jesus Christ, the Messiah, was not only a deliverer for Israel but also the Savior for the whole world. (Acts 10:1-48 and Romans 4:1-25)

One of the things God did to show how much he is in control of world events was to make predictions about a future ruler and savior for the people of Israel and for all the world. Before Jesus came, people did not know what his name would be, but God made predictions about the coming of the man we now know as Jesus Christ. Following is a list of some of these predictions and an explanation about how they came true.

- At the beginning of the Bible, God told Abraham that his descendants would be a blessing to all nations through his son Isaac (Genesis 12:1-3, 17:19). Centuries later, God told King David (a descendent of Abraham and Isaac) that one of *his* descendants would be a king forever (2 Samuel 7:12-16). Then, after the birth of Jesus, two genealogies were written by Matthew and Luke, two close followers of Jesus. These two genealogies show that God kept His promise and prediction to Abraham and also his promise and prediction to David. The first genealogy is Matthew 1:6-16, which is the genealogy from Abraham to David to Jesus through the ancestors of Joseph—who became Mary’s husband after the birth of Jesus. The other genealogy is in Luke 3:23-31, which is the genealogy through Mary’s ancestors. Both Joseph and Mary were descendants of King David.)
- At the beginning of the Bible, God helped Jacob (Abraham’s grandson) understand that the future ruler of the nations would be a descendant of Judah, one of Jacob’s twelve sons (Genesis 49:10). More than 2,000 years later, Luke wrote in the genealogy of Jesus (Luke 3:33), that Jesus was a descendant of Judah.
- Seven hundred years before Jesus was born, God told Isaiah (Isaiah 7:14),
“The Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel (meaning ‘God with us’).”

The historian, Luke, who lived at the same time Jesus did, explained in Luke 1:26-38 that Mary was a virgin when the angel told her she would become pregnant and give birth to the future Messiah. Matthew, a close follower of Jesus, explained the same event and also recorded a problem that happened because of Mary becoming pregnant with Jesus while she was still a virgin:

“This is how the birth of Jesus Christ came about: His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be pregnant through the Holy Spirit. Because Joseph her husband was faithful to the law and did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly. But after he had considered this an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, ‘Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.’” (Matthew 1:18-21)

- Seven hundred years before Jesus Christ, God also gave more information to Isaiah about the special baby who would be born in the future to the people of Israel. This baby would have attributes of deity. He wrote:

“For to us [descendants of Israel] a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the greatness of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David’s throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever. The zeal of the LORD Almighty will accomplish this.” (Isaiah 9:6-7)

Later we read in the accounts of the close followers of Jesus Christ that Jesus made the claim to be God come as a man, and that he backed up this claim with the many kinds of miracles he did, including his resurrection from the dead. (John 10:29-33, John 8:58-59, Matthew 26:63-65, Colossians 1:13-20, Hebrews 1:1-12)

- About the same time as Isaiah (seven hundred years before Jesus Christ), God also told the prophet, Micah, that the future ruler of Israel, whose origin is from ancient times, would be born in Bethlehem of Judea (Micah 5:2). Then we read in Luke's account (Luke 2:1-7), who lived at the time of Jesus, that just before Jesus was born, his mother, Mary, and Joseph had to travel from Nazareth to Bethlehem to meet the demands of the Roman king at that time. That is where we read that Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea. He later grew up in Nazareth, because that was the home town of Mary and Joseph.
- About 500 years before Jesus Christ, Zechariah said that the future king of Israel, as the one who would provide salvation for Israel, would come to Jerusalem on a donkey, (Zechariah 9:9). One of the close followers of Jesus, Matthew, described how Jesus came riding into Jerusalem on a donkey (Matthew 21:1-11), and the people praised him as a coming king and called him the "son of David", which gave him the right to become king of Israel, according to his lineage. The people at the time of Jesus Christ were expecting him to become King of Israel and to lead them in over throwing the Roman rule, especially after all the miracles he had performed and the supernatural abilities he had shown. They were correct, that becoming king was part of the prediction about Jesus Christ, but the people then did not understand the order of events in God's plan. And even more importantly, they did not understand their need to be rescued from the slavery and penalty of their own sin, which was more of a priority than a new government being set up.
- God also gave Isaiah (700 years before Jesus Christ) the understanding that besides becoming king eventually, God's future servant would carry the iniquity (sin) of people.
"Surely he took up our pain and bore our suffering, yet we considered him punished by God, stricken by him, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed. We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; he was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth. By oppression and judgment he was taken away. Yet who of his generation protested? For he was cut off from the land of the living; for the transgression of my people he was punished. He was assigned a grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death, though he had done no violence, nor was any deceit in his mouth. Yet it was the LORD's will to crush him and cause him to suffer, and though the LORD makes his life a guilt offering, he will see his offspring and prolong his days, and the will of the LORD will prosper in his hand. After he has suffered, he will see the light of life, and be satisfied; by his knowledge my righteous servant will justify many, and he will bear their iniquities. Therefore I will give him a portion among the great, and he will divide the spoils with the strong, because he poured out his life unto death, and was numbered with the transgressors. For he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors." Isaiah 53:4-12

After the death and resurrection of Jesus, the writer of Hebrews described how Jesus' death was a sacrifice for the penalty of sin that we all deserve (Hebrews 7:26 – 10:18). Because he was a perfect man, he is the only one in all history who was able to pay our penalty. In this way, the prediction of Isaiah 53:4-12 came true.

- The greatest evidence for the fulfillment of these predictions came at the end of Jesus' life. Jesus often made the prediction that he would be killed and that on the third day after his death, he would come back to life (Matthew 17:22-23 and Mark 9:30-32). His resurrection and his subsequent appearances to his followers for 40 days became the event that his disciples proclaimed as final evidence that Jesus really was God who became man so he could sacrifice his life as payment for the sin of people everywhere in the world. According to historical evidence, ten of Jesus' twelve disciples were killed for proclaiming the resurrection of Jesus, which was an event they would never deny. They had actually seen him come back to life, so they were willing to die themselves rather than to lie and say that it hadn't happened. The two exceptions were, John, who was exiled for his faith on Patmos Island, and Judas Iscariot, who committed suicide after betraying Jesus.

SUBPLAN – God shows himself through one family line – Israel

God always had a plan for how he would bring salvation to the world, and at the same time he would show his greatness to the people of the world. Near the beginning of the Bible, God gave three promises to Abraham that laid the foundation for his plan to provide reconciliation for all humanity. The fulfillment of these promises demonstrates his greatness in a variety of ways.

Following are the three promises:

1. "I will make you into a great nation." (Genesis 12:2)
2. "All peoples on earth will be blessed through you." (Genesis 12:3)
3. "All the land that you see I will give to you and your offspring forever." (Gen. 13:14-17)

These promises are repeated for a total of **five** times, just in the book of Genesis!

- God repeated his promises to Abraham three more times (Genesis 17:3-8, 18:18-19, 22:1, 6-18).
- God later repeated these promises to Isaac (Gen. 26:3-4), and to Jacob (Genesis 28:14). He promised both of them that their descendants would always live in the land.

These promises of what God would do for the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (name later changed to Israel) are the foundation for God to demonstrate he is in control of all events in the world. Fulfillment of these unusual promises has shown God's greatness to the world! Even today God is in the process of fulfilling these promises for the people of Israel, who are the descendants of Abraham.

God's plan to use the people of Israel

God's plan to bring salvation to the world through the Jews does not mean the Jews are more favored by him. His plan is similar to the story about a father's plan when his family was

stranded in a lifeboat on the ocean. After floating for a day, he saw they were floating past an island. He found a rope in the boat and asked his oldest son to tie the rope around his waist and swim as hard as he could toward the island to pull the boat toward the piece of land. Did that mean the father favored his son more than his wife, daughter, and baby, who were also in the boat? Not at all! He chose this son to swim because that was the best plan to rescue the whole family! Likewise, God has chosen to use one nation as the subplan for rescuing the whole world, and in the process God has demonstrated his awesome ability to work throughout history.

The first promise to Abraham

The fulfillment of God's first promise, "I will make you into a great nation," is difficult to measure. During the reign of David and Solomon around 1,000 BC, Israel became a powerful nation, but that was the high point of their world influence. Today, Israel is an influential country, but it's difficult to define the meaning of "great".

The second promise to Abraham

The fulfillment of the promise, "I will bless all people on earth through you" has been primarily fulfilled by God revealing himself to the world through the people of Israel. God has done this in several ways:

- God has given his written word through the people of Israel, both the Old and New Testaments.
- God gave a model for worship to all people through the people of Israel. This was the tabernacle.
- God revealed himself as a human, Jesus Christ, by being born into the family line of Israel, and then he gave himself as a sacrifice for all of humanity.

These three ways in which God has blessed all people through Abraham are described here in more detail.

All people blessed through God's written word

This document does not describe how the written word of God came into being, but the Bible is the foundational revelation of God to all people everywhere. God worked through approximately 40 authors over a period of about 2,000 years, to write 66 books that make up the Bible.

All people blessed through God's model for worship

When God used Moses to lead the people of Israel back to Canaan from Egypt, God also gave a model for worship in the form of the tabernacle. A detailed description of the tabernacle is given in Exodus 25-31 and 35-40. Every part of the tabernacle and all the actions of the priests had symbolical meaning in the spiritual realm. Books have been written on this subject. A few key examples are the following:

- The Holy of Holies represented the Holy Presence of God, which no person can enter without sacrifice.
- The huge thick curtain between the Holy of Holies and the rest of the tabernacle represented the wall of separation between the Holy God and people with sin.

- The altar of sacrifice at the entrance represents the death that is the result of our sin, and then the future sacrificial death of Jesus Christ as the substitutionary atonement for our sin.
- All other parts of the tabernacle (wash basin, candles, bread, incense, Ark of the Covenant, and others) had special meaning in the spiritual realm.

The people of Israel practiced worship at the tabernacle, and then at the temple, which was built with the same design. They did this until the time of Jesus, and those who didn't recognize Jesus continued practicing after he ascended, until the temple was destroyed by the Romans in 70 AD.

An exciting miraculous event in the tabernacle happened at the time of Jesus' death and demonstrated the symbolism of how the death of Jesus made it possible for all people to have direct personal access to God and to worship him fully and completely. Matthew 27:51 says that at the moment of Jesus' death the heavy curtain in the temple was torn in two from top to bottom (demonstrating that only God could have made the tear). The tear symbolized the reality that Jesus' death opened the door for people to enter into the holy presence of God if they would like. Jesus had become the sacrificed lamb who made it possible for people to enter and live forever in the presence of their holy Creator.

All people blessed through God coming as a human

God's revelation of himself as a human (Jesus Christ) came about through the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Israel). Jesus himself said that salvation for people came through the Jews (John 4:22) and that he was the Messiah who would be the Savior (John 4:25-26).

The third promise to Abraham

The fulfillment of the promise, "I will give the land of Canaan to you and your descendants forever" can be measured by whether or not the descendants of Israel are living in the land of Canaan today – and they are! This fulfillment of the promise has had so much opposition throughout the events of history that the fact that Israel exists today in the land of Canaan is miraculous. Nothing like this has ever happened to any other country or group of people in the world. Now, because of the promise to Abraham in Genesis and the existence of Israel in Canaan, two things are made clear. These are:

- There is an Author of the Bible (God) who has a much higher intelligence than the human authors and is able to know the future events of the world thousands of years before they happen.
- God is in control of the events in the world throughout history.

Following is a summary of how God has fulfilled this third promise to Abraham.

The first removal from the land and the first return

When Jacob (Israel) was still living, God directed him to go to Egypt to join his son, Joseph, and to survive the famine in Canaan. (Genesis 46:1-4) At that time there were 70 descendants of Israel (Genesis 46:25) who all left Canaan and went to Egypt. That change of events would make it more difficult for the descendants of Israel to live in the land of Canaan! Following is a summary of what happened after that.

- Joseph clearly understood God’s promises. “Then Joseph said to his brothers, “I am about to die. But God will surely come to your aid and take you up out of this land to the land he **promised** on oath to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.” (Genesis 50:24)
- About 400 years later God called Moses to lead the people of Israel out of Egypt and back to Canaan (about 1450 BC). The basis for God calling Moses was to fulfill the promises he had made, “God heard their groaning and he remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac and with Jacob.” (Exodus 2:24)
- When God called Moses, he immediately referred to the promises he had made to Abraham, “And I have **promised** to bring you up out of your misery in Egypt into the land of the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites—a land flowing with milk and honey.’ (Exodus 3:17)
- God told Moses to tell the Israelites, “I will bring you to the land I swore with uplifted hand to give to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob. I will give it to you as a possession. I am the LORD.” (Exodus 6:8) NOTE: This statement is part of the Passover that the Jews still read each year at the Passover (Exodus 6:6-8), which includes the four promises for the four cups.
- Later, when Moses prayed for the people, he had a very clear understanding of these promises 500 years after they were made. He told God, “Remember your servants Abraham, Isaac and Israel, to whom you swore by your own self: ‘I will make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and I will give your descendants all this land I promised them, and **it will be their inheritance forever.**’” (Exodus 32:13) Seven other times Moses also referred to the land God had promised to the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Numbers 32:11, Deut. 1:8, 6:10, 9:5, 29:13, 30:20, 34:4).
- Moses, at the end of his life, was in awe of what God had done to keep His promises to Abraham and to bring the Israelites out of Egypt back to Canaan. He said,

“Ask now about the former days, long before your time, from the day God created human beings on the earth; ask from one end of the heavens to the other. Has anything so great as this ever happened, or has anything like it ever been heard of? ... Has any god ever tried to take for himself one nation out of another nation, by testings, by signs and wonders, by war, by a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, or by great and awesome deeds, like all the things the Lord your God did for you in Egypt before your very eyes? You were shown these things so that you might know that the Lord is God; besides him there is no other. ... Because he loved your ancestors and chose their descendants after them, he brought you out of Egypt by his Presence and his great strength, to drive out before you nations greater and stronger than you and to bring you into their land to give it to you for your inheritance, as it is today. Acknowledge and take to heart this day that the Lord is God in heaven above and on the earth below. There is no other. (Deuteronomy 4:32-39)
- About 500 years after Abraham (about 2000 BC), God talked to Joshua (about 1400 BC) and said, “Be strong and courageous, because you will lead these people to inherit *the land I swore to their forefathers to give them.*” (Joshua 1:6)
- After Joshua, during the time of the Judges, the Israelites drifted away from God and their enemies began to suppress them. It became so bad that it began to look like the Philistines would take control. The turning point came when the young boy David stood

against the Philistine giant, Goliath. David then led the Israelites in many victories against many of their enemies, and Israel became a powerful nation. This was about 400 years after Moses, and it motivated David and others to write about God's faithfulness to Israel as he kept his promise to Abraham and provided salvation for their enemies who were taking over. Psalm 98:1-3 is a good example,

"Sing to the Lord a new song, for he has done marvelous things; his right hand and his holy arm have worked salvation for him. The Lord has made his salvation known and revealed his righteousness to the nations. He has remembered his love and his faithfulness to Israel all the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God."

- In Psalm 105 the Psalmist recounts how God gave his promise to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and then he summarizes the amazing things God did through history to that point to keep his promise. He wrote,

"Give thanks to the LORD, call on his name; make known among the nations what he has done. ... Remember the wonders he has done, his miracles, and the judgments he pronounced. ... He remembers his covenant forever, ... the covenant he made with Abraham, the oath he swore to Isaac. He confirmed it to Jacob as a decree, to Israel as an everlasting covenant; 'To you I will give the land of Canaan as the portion you will inherit.'

The Psalm then goes on to review the history of what God did with Joseph in Egypt, Jacob in Egypt, Moses, the plagues and what God did to bring the people out of Egypt and back to Canaan (Psalm 105:1-45). In 1 Chronicles 16:12-22 the first part of this account is also recorded.

- Even when Israel forgot about God during the times of the kings, God remembered his promise, "But the LORD was gracious to them and had compassion and showed concern for them because of his covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. To this day he has been unwilling to destroy them or banish them from his presence." (2 Kings 13:23)
- David lived more than 1,000 years after Abraham, but he understood that the promise God gave to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob about their descendants being in the land was a promise that would never come to an end. David knew they will inherit the land until the end of time. 1 Chronicles 16:15-18.

God promised to remove Israel's descendants if they turned from him

When God was bringing the descendants of Israel (more than one million of them at the time of Moses) back to Canaan, he clearly warned that if they would turn away from him, he would remove them from the land, and their destruction would be even more awful than the destruction of the Canaanites who had already turned from God for many years before God brought the Israelites back to the land. Following is a list of places recording this strong warning.

- Leviticus 26:33-38 – Israelites would be removed from their country
- Deuteronomy 28:49– 68 – Israelites would be removed from their country and treated horribly in other countries, all because of their disobedience to God.
- Jeremiah 9:13-16, Ezekiel 20:23-24, 36:19-21 – Israelites would be scattered among the nations because of their disobedience to God.

Second removal from the land of Canaan

The promises to remove them from the land were fulfilled in 722 BC when Assyria slaughtered

and took captive most of the Israelites in the northern part of Israel. (Described in 2 Kings 17)
The remaining southern part of Israel was removed when Babylon took them captive in 586 BC.
(Described in 2 Kings 25, 2 Chronicles 36:20-21.)

God promised to return the people of Israel back to the land

When God removed the people of Israel from the land and destroyed many of them in the process, he also gave promises to return them at a later time so he could keep his promise originally made to Abraham.

- Deuteronomy 30:3-5 – God’s promise to return the people back to the land after he removed them.
- Isaiah 43:5-6, 49:1-23
- Jeremiah 16:14-15
- Ezekiel 28:25-26, 34:13, Ezekiel 37:10-14, 21-22
- Amos 9:14-15
- Joel 3:6, 20 – Israel would return to their homeland and be restored as a country.

The predictions continued to be fulfilled after the writing of the Bible was completed, and they are ***continuing to be fulfilled until the present day!*** It can only be the hand of a supernatural, highly intelligent being who is in control of all world events to bring about such a sequence of events.

Second return to the land

After the people of Israel were removed from the land Canaan by the Assyrians and Babylonians, their return happened slowly. The books of Ezra and Nehemiah in the Bible explain the events related to this second return of the Israelites to the land God had promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

538 BC -	Persia (who overthrew Babylon) allowed the Jews to return to their homeland.
516 BC	The temple was completed.
445 BC	Nehemiah returned to Jerusalem and rebuilt the walls.
0 BC	At the time of Jesus, many Jews lived in the land, but were under the control of the Roman empire.

Third removal from the land

66 - 70 AD – “The Great Revolt of 66 AD against the Romans and the siege of Jerusalem constitute one of the most important and horrifying events in Jewish history.” (Paul Johnson, *A History of the Jews*, Harper Perennial, New York, 1988. Print, p 137.) “The people were sold as slaves, or massacred, or saved to die in the arenas of Caesarea, Antioch, and Rome.” (Johnson, p 139) Tacitus wrote that 1,197,000 Jews were killed or sold as slaves from 66-70 AD (Johnson, p 148) Jerusalem was ruined by the Romans. The temple was destroyed and the walls were reduced to rubble. (Johnson, p140) 985 Jewish towns, villages, and settlements were destroyed. Nearly the entire land of Judaea was laid waste. (Johnson, p 142) The Romans destroyed Jerusalem and its surrounding towns and villages so completely that the Jewish state ended in 135 AD. (Johnson, p 142, cited from Cassius Dio, *Roman History*, book 69) The Jews who were taken

as slaves were dispersed throughout the world, but they retained their ethnic identity.

Third return to the land

After the Jewish people (descendants of Israel) suffered so much in Europe, especially under the hands of the Nazis in World War 2, many of the nations in the world had sympathy for them and designated the land of Palestine (Canaan) to be their homeland. This was not with the approval of the Arab Palestinians living there. The stories of how Israel survived in 1948 are stories of miracles similar to the story of David and Goliath in the Bible.

- 1948 AD - The United Nations gave the land of Canaan (Palestine) to become Israel, and many Jews were helped to return to their homeland. On May 14, 1948 Israel was recognized as an independent state by the United Nations. On that same day the armies of Egypt, Lebanon, Syria, and Iraq attacked to destroy the new nation. The rest of the world thought Israel had no chance of survival against such odds. Israel had not even established its own government when the four nations attacked, and each of the nations was far larger than Israel. Nine months later, in February, 1949, Egypt signed a peace treaty with Israel, after which Lebanon and Syria also signed treaties. Iraq simply withdrew her forces. ("Israel and the 1948 war," historylearningsite.co.uk)
- 1967 - In 1967, Nassir, President of Egypt, announced on public radio that the Arab countries bordering Israel (Egypt, Syria, and Jordan) would annihilate the country of Israel. (Phyllis Goldstein, [A Convenient Hatred: The History of Anti-Semitism](#), Facing History and Ourselves National Foundation, Brookline, Massachusetts, 2012. Print., p 329) Soon after this announcement, in June, 1967, Egypt, Syria, and Jordan moved tanks and soldiers to the borders of Israel. But before they attacked, Israel made a surprising offensive attack. In six days Israel crippled the armies of its neighbors and took land from each of them. None of the Arab nations could do anything to retaliate. (Goldstein, p 329)

God told Abraham that he would always give the land of Canaan to the descendants of Abraham as an everlasting possession (Genesis 17:7-8). And he had also warned them through Moses that if they did not obey him, he would remove them from the land and destroy many of them (Deuteronomy 28:15-68, especially vs. 58-65). This is exactly what has been repeated in history!

Conclusion

No other nation in the world in all history has been eradicated out of their country and then brought back at a later time to become the same country with the same name. With Israel it happened three times, even in the face of so much opposition! But this is what God had promised and predicted!

The conclusion restated is:

- **The author of the Bible (God) demonstrates control of all history**
- **The Bible shows that God is the author above the human authors**

SUBPLAN – God shows himself through the Church (Ephesians 3:10)

The third subplan of God to help fulfill his grand plan of reconciliation is his work through a spiritual group of people, the Church. Similar to the other subplans, Jesus Christ is the focus of God's plan for the Church. This subplan is also woven together with the other subplans, all working together to accomplish God's grand plan of reconciliation through Jesus Christ.

Definition of the spiritual group – the Church

The Bible explains that the Church is made of all people who have put their trust in God's promises so they can have life with God. In Romans 4, Paul explains that everyone who puts their belief in God's promises is a child of God. Abraham is given as the primary example of someone who did this. "Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness." (Romans 4:3) A few sentences later we read, "So then, he is the father of all who believe but have not been circumcised (people who are not Jews), in order that righteousness might be credited to them. And he is also the father of the circumcised (people who are Jews), who not only are circumcised but who also walk in the footsteps of the faith that our father Abraham had before he was circumcised." (Romans 4:11-12) In summary, the Bible says that all people for all time who have put their belief in God's promises are part of his eternal family. In that sense, the Church had its beginning back in Genesis!

Origin of the Church

The introduction of a spiritual group of people as the family of God was a process that took place after Jesus' resurrection and ascension to heaven. This process is recorded in the book of Acts in the New Testament. The Jews had previously thought that people needed to become Jews to become part of God's family. But the Holy Spirit helped the original disciples of Jesus understand that the door was open for every person in the world to become part of God's eternal family if they wanted to do so. All they needed to do was put their faith in Jesus Christ as their Savior because of his sacrifice for their sin and because of his resurrection from death, which demonstrated his victory over sin and its condemnation. (Romans 10:9 – 17)

The Holy Spirit used a step-by-step process to help the Jews understand that all people could become part of God's eternal family. First, the Holy Spirit came into the original followers of Jesus (Acts 2) and gave evidence of that by enabling them to speak in languages they had not learned, but which others who spoke those languages could understand. Then the same kind of miracle happened to other Jews who believed in Jesus after hearing about him (Acts 2). After that, the half-Jew, half-Gentile people of Samaria believed in Jesus and had the same evidence of the Holy Spirit coming to live in them (Acts 8). Soon after that, God led Peter to talk with a group of Gentiles (completely non-Jewish) who believed in Jesus, and they also began speaking in languages they had not learned, as did the original disciples (Acts 10). This convinced the Jewish Christians that all people in the entire world could now put their faith in Jesus and the Holy Spirit would come to live in them.

Growth of the Church

The followers of Christ then quickly began to go to many places throughout the world, telling people about God's amazing salvation provided by Jesus Christ. Since then, millions of people throughout the world have put their faith in Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit immediately comes to live in each one at the moment of their faith. The evidence of talking in other languages is no longer the sign of salvation as it was during the introductory period of the Holy Spirit coming to live in believers.

Believers enjoy their eternal relationship with God, even though they still struggle with problems and sin. Our hope is in Jesus Christ, who has made us God's children, and not in our ability to live a perfect life. People who call themselves Christians often have many problems, similar to other people in the world, but true Christians are in the process of being changed by God's Spirit.

God's Spirit lives in each person who has chosen to believe God's promise and has accepted Jesus as their Savior (Ephesians 1:13-14). Since we cannot see God's Spirit in another person's heart, it's difficult for us to know who actually is a true Christian and who is not. True Christians give evidence of their relationship with Christ when they increasingly have the same qualities of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, etc., which Jesus Christ continually evidenced. This happens to varying degrees, and only God can know for sure which people have his Spirit living in them. These are the people who make up the true Church. We can be completely sure of our own salvation and we can be fairly sure that others are God's children by what they say and do, but we need to be careful about saying with certainty that we *know* someone is a Christian for sure, or is for sure not a Christian, since we cannot see their true heart condition.

Purpose of God's Church

The people who have God's Spirit living in them are God's children forever. All of them are part of God's eternal family, the Church. Jesus said that eternal life is all about knowing God (John 17:3). Paul, who wrote much of the New Testament, also said that knowing God was his primary goal in life (Philippians 3:7-10). In fact, God is always using every event and all circumstances in the life of each of his children to become more like his Son, Jesus Christ (Romans 8:28-29).

Christians are weak people, but God is doing special things in the world through them (2 Corinthians 12:9). Each one is a messenger of God and a representative of God in this world (2 Corinthians 5:16-20). Before Jesus ascended to heaven, soon after his resurrection, he commissioned his followers with a huge opportunity and responsibility, "Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age." (Matthew 28:18-20)

God works through his children to help people in many ways. We read many examples of this in the New Testament. Besides helping people understand God's truth, God's children serve others in unlimited ways. God's children also ask him to work in the lives of other people and to intervene in the events of the world. Only God knows how much happens in the world as a result of the work and prayers of his people.

God's greatness is more evident as a result of the way he uses weak people who are still in the process of being changed. A strong example of this is when Jesus told Peter, "On this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven. Whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven." (Matthew 16:18-19) Peter and the other disciples had many weaknesses and problems, yet God's plan was to use them to build his beautiful, eternal church – the bride of Christ! This is one way that God is showing his greatness through the church.

Two of God's purposes of the church are stated in the following passages:

- "His (God's) intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms, according to his eternal purpose which he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord." Ephesians 3:10-11
- "... you will know how people ought to conduct themselves in God's household, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and foundation of the truth." 1 Timothy 3:15

Future of God's Church

At the end of the Bible we read that all people who have been made pure and clean by the blood of the Lamb of God (Jesus Christ) will be his bride to live with him forever.

- Revelation 19:6-9 – The wedding of the Lamb with his bride, made up of the saints made pure by the Lamb, Jesus Christ.
- Revelation 21:9-10 – The bride of the Lamb will be a holy city.
- Revelation 21:27 – The holy city will be filled with those who have their names written in the Lamb's book of life.
- Revelation 22:3-5 – "No longer will there be any curse. The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and his servants will serve him. They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. There will be no more night. They will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, for the Lord God will give them light. And they will reign for ever and ever."

According to the Bible, this large group of saints made clean by the blood of the Lamb will include all believers from all time; from the believers in Genesis until the final believers who will meet Jesus Christ when he returns to earth in person as the King of Kings and Lord of Lords (Revelation 19:11-16). We will be united with Abraham, Sarah, Noah, Moses, Miriam, Ruth, David, Esther, Daniel, Mary, Martha, Thomas, John, Aquila and Priscilla, along with millions more from all centuries in all history. What a massive celebration that will be, and it will only be the beginning of eternity with our amazing God and Savior!

God's Grand Plan and Subplans

Demonstrate His Control of All History

All of God's work throughout history helps accomplish his grand plan of reconciliation. God's three subplans –

- **SUBPLAN – God shows himself through Jesus Christ, the Sacrificial Lamb of God**
- **SUBPLAN – God shows himself through one family line – Israel**
- **SUBPLAN – God shows himself through the church**

All of these subplans helped accomplish God's grand plan, centered on Jesus Christ. All of these plans, woven together, show God's awesomeness beyond our full comprehension. The more a person understands God's grand plan and subplans, and how they all fit together, the more that person sees how much God is in complete control of all history. We have more than 4,000 years of historical records to demonstrate this, and there are still more predictions waiting to be fulfilled until, and when, Jesus returns as King of Kings and Lord of Lords! Revelation is the final fulfillment of all these predictions, and at that time God's awesomeness will be even more amazing!