

Gary Ray

REASONS TO **B**ELIEVE

Information to help you share your
faith with confidence

iAMA WATCHMAN .com

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I Am A Watchman
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The I Am A Watchman ministry desires to equip and encourage believers,
reach the lost, and see individuals prepared for the return of the King.

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ABOUT THIS BOOKLET

This discipleship resource has been prepared by Gary Ray for the *I Am The Watchman* ministry (IAmAWatchman.com).

The Reasons To Believe booklet provides a general overview of the history and structure of the Bible, and presents evidence that will embolden faith, strengthen one's witness, and provide support for believing that the Scriptures are true and inspired.

The desire is to help individuals know and powerfully share the Gospel message so that as many as possible will be spiritually prepared for the imminent return of Jesus Christ.

To be a disciple is to be a learner (Acts 17:11). To be a Christian is to be a 'doer' (James 1:22-25). To be a Watchman for the Lord is to lead in making the world aware of what God has done, what God is doing, and what God is going to do (Ezekiel 33:1-8). The prayer is that this booklet will help equip and encourage believers be the watchmen and witnesses that God has called them to be.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Gary Ray has served in pastoral ministry for more than 30 years. He is a student of the Word and has a passion for presenting Scripture in ways that are interesting and clear—particularly for those with limited or no church background.

Other books by this author include *The Discipleship Handbook*, *The Story of Jesus*, *The Story of Jesus Bible Study*, *The Prophecy Book*, and the “What Will the Post-Rapture World and Church Look Like and Why and How to Preach on Prophecy and Eschatology” booklets. You can request information on these books (and find an abundance of free discipleship resources) at the www.IAmAWatchman.com ministry website.

Informative and encouraging teaching videos by this author posted at [Vimeo.com/IAmAWatchman](https://www.Vimeo.com/IAmAWatchman).

Gary is happily married and lives in the Pacific Northwest with his wonderful wife, children and grandchildren. He is a Watchman for the Lord—and encourages you to be one too. He can be contacted through the I Am A Watchman ministry contact portal.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

SECTION 1 (APOLOGETICS)

INTRODUCTION TO APOLOGETICS	11
INFORMATION FOR SKEPTICS	13
RECENT ATTACKS ON THE INTEGRITY OF THE BIBLE	14
DEALING WITH APPARENT DISCREPANCIES IN THE BIBLE	17
HISTORICAL PROBLEMS SOLVED	20
ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVIDENCE VALIDATING THE BIBLE	22
THE DEAD SEA SCROLLS	23
HISTORICAL SUPPORT VERIFYING THE BIBLICAL RECORD	24

SECTION 2 (THE BIBLE)

GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT THE BIBLE	27
- HOW THE BIBLE CAME TO BE	28
- CRITERIA FOR ADMISSION INTO THE CANON	28
- THE APOCRYPHA	29
- "LOST BOOKS"	30
THE DEVELOPMENT OF ENGLISH TRANSLATIONS	31
THE NEW TESTAMENT	33
THE MIRACLES OF JESUS	36

TABLE OF CONTENTS

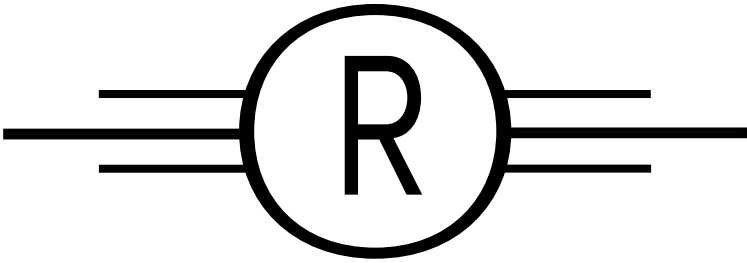
A PROFILE OF THE BOOKS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT	39
WHAT HAPPENED TO THE DISCIPLES OF JESUS?	43
TIMELINE: JESUS' MINISTRY IN THE GOSPELS	51

SECTION 2 (BIBLE PROPHECY)

A GENERAL OVERVIEW OF BIBLE PROPHECY	56
BIBLE PROPHECIES FALL INTO ONE OF THREE CATEGORIES	58
WHY THE EMPHASIS ON PROPHECY IN THE BIBLE?	59
A SYLLABUS OF PROPHETIC LANGUAGE	60

SECTION 3 (WITNESSING INFORMATION AND HELPS)

WHY WITNESS (SHARE YOUR FAITH)	61
HOW TO SHARE YOUR FAITH	68
LINKS TO FOLLOW-UP TEACHING VIDEOS	69
ABOUT THE I AM A WATCHMAN MINISTRY	71
NOTES PAGES	72



REASONS
to believe

APOLOGETICS REASONS TO BELIEVE

INTRODUCTION: Many ask: Is Christianity the only true religion? How can I know what is true when there are more than 3000 religions in the world? Having faith is important—having faith in what is right and true is essential. Having faith in what is right and true not only impacts the sense of purpose one experiences in the present but also determines the destiny of one’s eternal soul. The importance of putting one’s faith in the right God is paramount. God created humans with inquisitive minds, and in His mercy has provided both reasons and helps to believe.

Many religions speak of God, the Spirit, Jesus, love, heaven, eternity, Scripture, and peace. It is important to note that different religions define those terms differently. For example, in Islam, Jesus was an important teacher (Who’s true message has been corrupted by the west). The Jehovah’s Witnesses believe Jesus is Michael the Archangel. To Mormons, Jesus was the son of God as we are all children of God (though Jesus was created first).

To Christians, Jesus is the Son of God and one in essence with God (John 1:1; Col. 1:16, 2:8-10). To many, Jesus presented just one of many ways to heaven. To Christians, Jesus is the only way to heaven (John 14:6). Therefore, knowing the terminology is not enough. How one defines key terms is vital.

It is true that we are to “walk by faith and not by sight” (2 Cor. 5:7), but God in His mercy has provided an abundance of evidence to help those with questions discover the truth. I believe God has provided this evidence not only so we can be confident in His love, but also so that we can be confident in our faith, and be well positioned to provide a compelling defense for the what we know in our heart to be true.

Christians are called to impact the world for Christ and persuade individuals to believe (2 Cor. 5:11). It is not enough to state what we believe—to be a powerful witness; we must also be able to articulate why we believe what we believe.

REASONS TO BELIEVE

We live in a time when many have questions about God, faith, and Christianity, but we also live in a time when science and technology make gathering answers easier than ever before. Our world is in transition. After many centuries of numerical growth and significant influence on culture, the Christian Church has entered into a period of decline. There are more ministers than ever before—but a relatively small number hold conservative views consistent with the historic Christian faith. The number of churches is growing, but the percentage of ‘churched’ people is decreasing.

There are more Bibles in America than ever before—but the Bible literacy rate is arguably lower than ever before. We live in a time in history when there is an increasing number of questions about church doctrine—but few are well prepared to present a strong defense for their faith. Now is the time for followers of Christ to be the strong witnesses God has called them to be (Matthew 28:18- 20; Acts 1:7-8).

There are good reasons that good people have questions about faith. The message of the church seems, at times, to be confused or inconsistent. Rules and laws regarding morality seem subject to change. Many high-profile ministries and minister failings have led to a breach of trust. Satan capitalizes on every opportunity and area of weakness. With evil growing, there is an opportunity and need for the church to be the light God desires it to be. All believers are called to study (2 Timothy 2:15), to be prepared to provide answers (1 Peter 3:15) and to be a witness for the Lord (2 Timothy 4:2). Did you

INFORMATION FOR SKEPTICS

A summary of why many have questions:

- ➔ Many have argued that outside of the Bible, there is no literature supporting the existence of several main biblical characters including Moses, Joshua, Isaac, David, Jacob, and Abraham. If these people truly existed and interacted with other cultures as the Bible portrays, shouldn't historical records verify their existence?
- ➔ Many cultures have flood and creation stories similar to what is recorded in Genesis - some were written centuries before Moses wrote Genesis. Did Moses plagiarize the story?
- ➔ Some suggest that the Old Testament genealogy listing puts the creation of Adam and Eve at about 4004 B.C. This timetable seems to be at odds with the archeological evidence.
- ➔ The historical timeline/marker for the exodus found in 1 Kings 6 appears to be off by several centuries.
- ➔ There are apparent contradictions in Scripture: For example, the King James Translation notes that Judas is the brother of James (Acts 1:13); whereas, NIV, NASV and RSV translations refer to Judas as the son of James. Also, the King James Translation includes an expanded version of Matthew 6:13, which is not found in the NIV or RSV translations. Further, within each Bible translation there seem to be inconsistencies. For example, noting how many went to the tomb on the Sunday following the cross should be a rather straightforward endeavor; but Mark notes that there were three, Matthew's record shows two, and John mentions one. Can all these accounts be correct?
- ➔ There have been many changes in language through the ages - most who are proficient in English would be hard-pressed to read a thousand-year-old English text. Therefore, even if the Scriptures

were accurate at one time, how can these 2000+-year-old writings be accurately interpreted today?

- ➔ In the last 80 years, archeologists have found nine new Psalms, the Gospels of Thomas, Judas, and Phillip, and the writings of Mary Magdalene. Doesn't this prove that the Bible is incomplete?

There are legitimate reasons that many have questions about faith and the Bible. However, the answers are available. Presented on the following pages is an overview of how some have questioned and challenged the Christian faith over the years, and links to three teaching videos profiling reasons to believe.

SKEPTICISM AND PERSECUTION ARE NOT NEW

- ➔ Celsus wrote that Jesus was the illegitimate son of a Roman soldier and introduced what has become known as the 'Swoon Theory.' The 'Swoon Theory' postulates that Jesus was put into a drug-induced coma and was later revived. He writes: "The teachings of the Scriptures are altogether absurd" (True Doctrine, 178 AD).
- ➔ Roman Emperor Diocletian, wanting to eradicate Christianity from the imperial capital in 303 AD, ordered the burning of all collections of Scripture, and churches or houses in which they were found.
- ➔ Episcopal Bishop John Spong's 1992 book, 'Born of a Woman' presents the virgin birth as a myth and suggests that Jesus was born of a sexually violated girl.

RECENT ATTACKS ON THE INTEGRITY OF THE BIBLE

The book, 'The DaVinci Code' suggests that...

- ➔ Jesus was married to Mary Magdalene. She escaped the persecution

of the church leaders by fleeing to France (Gaul), and there had a daughter, Sarah (who carried-on the bloodline of Christ).

- ➔ “The New Testament is based on fabrications” (Pg. 341). “Nothing in Christianity is original.” (Pg. 232)
- ➔ The Church has two thousand years of experience pressuring those who threaten to unveil its lies.” (Pg. 407)

The “Jesus Seminar” (The mid-1980’s)

- ➔ Purports that Jesus said less than 20% of the sayings attributed to Him in the Gospels, and manifested very few if any miracles. The seminar classifies most of the Bible as myth.
- ➔ The Jesus Seminar doctrine rejects the Lord’s Prayer, the sayings from the cross, all claims to Jesus’ divinity, the virgin birth, most of Jesus’ miracles and His bodily resurrection. Only one verse in the Gospel of Mark is accepted as being authentic and accurate.

Strange quotes from Gnostic writings found in the last 60 years

- ➔ Gospel of Thomas: “Jesus will make her [Mary Magdalene] a male so that she may become a living spirit like the male apostles: for every woman who makes herself a man will enter the Kingdom of Heaven.”
- ➔ Gospel of Philip: “Those who say that the Lord died first and then rose up are in error...”
- ➔ “The world came about through a mistake.”
- ➔ “There are two trees growing in Paradise. One bears animals, the other...men. Adam ate from the tree which bore animals. He became an animal and brought forth animals. For this reason, the children of Adam worship animals.”
- ➔ The Infancy Gospel of Thomas: Depicts a five-year-old Jesus bringing dried fish and clay sparrows to life, and portrays him making a playmate drop dead after accidentally hitting his shoulder.

In many ways, the enemy seeks to cast doubt on the integrity of Scripture. It was foretold this would happen in the last days.

“But the Spirit explicitly says that in later times some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons...” (1 Timothy 4:1-2)

Let us remember that God is good and does provide answers to tough questions. If we seek them, we will find them (Jeremiah 29:11). Now is the time for believers to not just know what they believe—they must also know why they believe it and be able to articulate their convictions. The material in the next section supports that goal.



DEALING WITH BIBLE DIFFICULTIES AND APPARENT DISCREPANCIES

*Some of the information in this section is adapted from
Gleason L. Archer's, "Bible Difficulties"*

Most apparent discrepancies are easily resolved. Unraveling the mystery often begins by placing the apparent discrepancy into one of four broad categories. A notation of the four categories, and examples of how apparent discrepancies can be resolved are presented in this section:

- ➔ **Timing issues:** Not every book in the Bible was written in Israel, or with the Hebrew people being the primary target audience. Writing to different target audiences accounts for there being a number of apparent discrepancies. For example, there seems to be a contradiction between John 19:14 and Mark 15:25. One Gospel writer notes that Jesus was crucified at the 'sixth' hour and another notes that it was the 'third' hour. This apparent contradiction is easily resolved when one understands that one Gospel writer is using a Roman system of timekeeping, while the other is referencing a Hebrew system. This is the same as noting Noon, 12:00 PM, or 1400 hours.
- ➔ **Weights and measures:** The fact that the Bible was written over a period of 1500 years and a wide geographic area contributes to the Bible referencing a number of different systems for weights and measures. This can be confusing. For example, 2 Chronicles 24:14 references 100,000 talents of gold. 1 Chronicles 29:4 (same story) notes that there were 3000 talents of gold. Is this a contradiction? No. One references a Royal Shekel and the other the Mosaic Shekel. Two different (but similarly named) measurement systems are being referenced - similar to 1 pound equals 454 grams.

Cultural issues

- ➔ In Matthew 13:31-32 Jesus notes that the mustard seed is the smallest of seeds. However, scientists note that there are several seeds smaller than the mustard seed. Was Jesus' teaching in error? Does this prove the Bible to be in error? No. Resolving this issue begins with realizing that Jesus was not speaking as a scientist or botanist. He was speaking to an agricultural community, in common language, in broad terms, to make a spiritual point.
- ➔ The timing for Nebuchadnezzar's first raid into Palestine: Daniel 1:1 notes that it was in the 3rd year of his reign. Jeremiah 46:2 notes that it was the 4th year. This discrepancy is reconciled by recognizing that in Babylonian culture, the first year of a new reign was not counted as it was considered an 'ascension year.' Daniel is writing in a Babylonian context, so he records the timing of the raid in the Babylonian system of recording time. Jeremiah, writing in a pure Hebrew context, references the more standard was of identifying the starting point of the king's reign.
- ➔ Was Jesus mistaken in John 12:25 and Matthew 13:31-32 in saying that a grain of wheat dies (rather than saying that it germinates)? No, Jesus as with the mustard seed illustration, Jesus was not making a scientific statement, He was making a spiritual point.

Perspective issues:

- ➔ Absalom's sons: 1 Sam. 14:27 notes that Absalom had three sons. 2 Sam. 18:18 notes that Absalom did not have any sons and moves to erect a monument to maintain his name. The stories do not present contradictory accounts. The fact is, Absalom did have children, but his three sons died in infancy (hence the monument).
- ➔ Was the commandment to 'Love' (John 13:34-35) a 'new' commandment? Isn't the commandment to love found in the Old Testament (Lev. 19:18)? The commandment to love in John 13 does

have a new component in that the level and scope of love is new (we are to love others as Jesus loves us).

The Resurrection

- ➔ There are differences in the Gospel accounts regarding who was at the tomb on the Sunday morning after the crucifixion. These differences do not indicate discrepancies, but rather add detail to, and substantiate the reliability of, the resurrection story. In a court of law, if multiple independent accounts are the same, the witnesses are likely to be discredited on the grounds of collusion.
- ➔ The resurrection story is credible because the chief witnesses are women--in the first Jewish century women were not allowed to testify in court. If one were making up a story, one would not have the chief witnesses be women. Further, one of the witnesses (Mary Magdalene) had such a negative past that she would normally not be considered a credible witness even among women.
- ➔ The resurrection story is cited by Paul in his first letter to the Corinthian Church (a writing that predates the Gospels). Paul's reference to the resurrection is part of a credal statement, which indicates that within 20 years of the cross, the entire resurrection story was well-known and commemorated with formal credal statements.
- ➔ The resurrection story is cited by the Roman historian Tacitus as being so meaningful to the followers of Christ that many willingly suffered a martyr's death rather than deny what they believed to be the truth.

The Triumphal Entry

- ➔ Matt. 21:2 notes that there was a donkey and a colt at the Triumphal Entry. Luke 19:30 notes only that there was a donkey. The stories do not present contradictory accounts—they note a difference in perspective. There were two animals. Mark's focus is on Jesus' entry to Jerusalem. Matthew, writing to a Jewish audience, focuses on how the Triumphal Entry is the fulfillment of the Zech. 9:9 prophecy (that prophecy notes that there would be two animals).

HISTORICAL PROBLEMS RESOLVED

Many have tried to prove the Bible to be in error by pointing to apparent problems regarding historical references. However, as with the previous section, research has always proven the biblical record to be accurate. This affirms the inspired nature of Scripture (2 Peter 1:21). What follows is a brief response to a few of the common apparent historical issues.

- ➔ **Christ and the census:** Until very recently, there were no nonbiblical records of Caesar Augustus ordering non-Romans to be registered. There are records of Augustus ordering Roman citizens to be registered, but only in 28 BC, 8 BC and 14 AD. The only known census that Quirinius, governor of Syria ordered is in 6 AD, which is nearly a decade after the death of Herod, a key figure in the nativity story. New Testament Scholar Nigel Turner suggests that the Luke 2:2 passage: “This was the first census that took place while Quirinius was...” should read, “This was the census taken before the census taken while Quirinius was governor.” This is because the word for FIRST and BEFORE is the same word in Greek (Protos). PROTOS is always translated before in the Gospels when followed in the genitive case, as it is in this verse.
- ➔ **Christ and the slaughter of infants:** There is no non-biblical record of Herod giving an order for infants in the region of Bethlehem to be killed. However, it is certainly plausible that an order like that could have been given. Herod is known to have had Torah scholars burned alive for removing Rome’s golden eagle from the Temple Gate in Jerusalem. He had his wife, and several sons murdered because he considered them a threat to his throne. To assure there would be great mourning associated with his death, he ordered thousands of men locked inside the Hippodrome, and ordered that they be massacred when he died. Caesar Augustus is quoted saying, ‘I’d rather be Herod’s

pig than his son.' It is also important to note that some scholars suggest that the population of Bethlehem 2000 years ago would likely to have been in the 1000 range. This would have meant the number of infant males could be as few as 10-15. Killings of this magnitude could easily have gone unnoticed by historians of the day, particularly in a period of constant human suffering and slaughter.

- ➔ **Conquest cities:** Archeologist have found 16 cities that are said to have been destroyed by Joshua, yet only three show signs of being destroyed in the late Bronze Age (Hazor, Lachish, and Bethel). Joshua 10 can easily be understood to mean that Israel smote, laid siege to, or captured cities, and/or that the inhabitants were annihilated, but the actual cities were left standing. For example, Josh. 10:20 notes that the army 'wiped out' its enemy, but in the very next phrase Scripture notes what became of 'the survivors.' This is typical period writing. Note: A 15th century BC. Egyptian Stele commemorating the exploits of Thutmose III notes that 'The heads of the Asiatics were severed, none escaped death.' However, a few lines later the Stele references thousands of prisoners were captured. Further, Joshua 13:1 notes that when Joshua was 'very old' there were 'still very large areas of the land to be taken.'
- ➔ **Exodus timeline:** 1 Kings 6:1 provides a historical marker for the time of the exodus (480 years between the exodus and the fourth year of Solomon's reign, 962 BC). This does not seem to fit with Exodus 1:11, which notes that the Hebrews were 'building the supply cities Pithom and Ramses,' an event that took place 200 years after the exodus date (extrapolated from 1 Kings). The 1 Kings 6:1 timeline reference has symbolic value. It references 12 generations of 40 years, 40 being a number representing a long, God-ordained period of time (see 1 Sam. 4:18; Num. 14:33; Josh. 5:6; 2 Sam. 5:4; Jud. 3:11, 5:31). Further, based on the date in the books of 1-2 Kings, another 480 years elapsed from the 4th year of Solomon's reign (marking the building of the temple) and the end of Israel's exile in Babylon. Hence, the Bible writer wanted to place the building of the temple as a central historical marker.

- ➔ **Did the disciples receive the Spirit right after the resurrection (John 20:22) or about 40 days later (Mark 15:25)?** The answer is both. The disciples received a special anointing of the Holy Spirit in Mark 15 and the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit in John 20.
- ➔ **The voice from heaven:** Acts 9:7 notes that those with Saul heard the voice from heaven—Acts 22:9 seems to suggest those with Saul did not hear the voice. This apparent contradiction is resolved by noting that there are two different words in the original Greek text translated as hear/hearing in our English text. One of the words means to hear with understanding (i.e., to hear a conversation). The other word means to hear without understanding (as in to hear an indiscernible noise). Therefore, in this story, the men with Saul did hear the voice but did not understand the conversation as the words were meant for Saul alone.

ARCHEOLOGICAL EVIDENCE VALIDATES THE INTEGRITY OF SCRIPTURE

More than 100 significant archeological finds in the last 125 years verify the accuracy of the biblical record. There has never been an archeological find showing the biblical record to be in error. Presented below are a few examples of recent archeological finds which validate the biblical record:

- ➔ The Amarna Tablets, discovered in 1988, confirm the disputed biblical account of Joshua's battles at Gezer, Ashkelon, and Lachish.
- ➔ The first (non-biblical) reference to Nebuchadnezzar (verifying that he was an actual historical figure) was found in 1899.
- ➔ The biblical city of Bethel was found in 1919.
- ➔ The biblical city of Jericho was found in 1930.
- ➔ The Mari Tablets were found in 1933. These tablets confirm the existence of the disputed city, Nahor, as recorded in Gen. 24:10.
- ➔ The Dead Sea Scrolls, discovered in 1947, confirm the accuracy of the Old Testament.

- ➔ The only lithic (and non-biblical) reference to Pilate found in 1961.
- ➔ The biblical city of Nazareth was found in 1963.
- ➔ The Elba Tablets were found in 1970. These verify the existence of the long-disputed listing of cities Moses recorded in Genesis 14.
- ➔ The burial chamber of the High Priest Caiaphas was found in 1990. Its contents verified several aspects of the crucifixion story.
- ➔ The biblical city of Dan was found in 1993.
- ➔ The biblical city of Hazor was found in 1996.
- ➔ The first non-biblical reference to David was found in 1976.
- ➔ The Roman Historian Tacitus wrote that Jesus was executed under Pilate during the reign of Tiberius and was the head of the Christian movement known as The Way.
- ➔ The Jewish Historian Josephus wrote that “Jesus was a wise man... who performed surprising deeds and was a teacher...of truth. He won over many Jews and many of the Greeks. He was the Messiah. And when upon the accusation of the principal men among us, Pilate had condemned him to a cross...He appeared to them on the third day restored to life, for the prophets of God had foretold these things...” [Jewish Antiquities, 18.3.3 §63].

THE DEAD SEA SCROLLS VERIFY THE INTEGRITY AND ACCURACY OF SCRIPTURE

- ➔ The Dead Sea Scrolls are comprised of approximately 830 documents dating from 250BC—65AD. The documents were found in 1947, near the ancient village, Qumran, and are thought to have been written by an isolated Jewish community known as the Essenes. The documents were discovered in a complex of 11 caves. Of the more than 800 documents, 202 are biblical texts; the others are legal and historical documents, poetry, etc. The biblical scrolls include all Old Testament books in the Protestant canon of Scripture (except Esther).

The great question was: What would happen if the Dead Sea Scrolls Old Testament (Cir. 100 BC) was compared to the next oldest complete Hebrew Bible (Cir. 900 AD). The two Bibles were copied in different ways, by different people, more than 1000 years apart—would the text be similar? Careful comparison work was done, and the two Old Testaments were found to be 99+% identical—and the less than 1% variance did not pertain to matters of doctrine, but rather, variant spelling of proper nouns. This affirms the accuracy and integrity of Scripture.

ADDITIONAL HISTORICAL SUPPORT

- ➔ **Slave Commerce:** Genesis 37:28 notes that Joseph was sold into slavery for 20 silver shekels. Egyptologist Kenneth Kitchen notes that this precisely matches the price of slaves in Joseph's region during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries BC, as affirmed by documents recovered from ancient Mesopotamia and Mari (modern Syria). Move the story forward 100 years and the price moves to 60 shekels. Move the story forward 200 years, and the price becomes 120 shekels. The Genesis account is precisely accurate, and could not be a 5th century BC work as some suggest.
- ➔ **The Mari Tablets:** This is a collection of legal documents found in Northern Syria, dated to the early second millennium BC. These documents note the particular pattern (and stipulations) for oaths, agreements, and treaties made in a particular region, at a particular point in history. This information matches perfectly with the form and structure of the treaties Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob entered into with their neighbors, as described in Gen. 21, 26 and 31. This nullifies the argument that Genesis was written more than a thousand years later than Bible Scholars contend as someone writing at in the 5th or so century BC would not be aware of these subtle but important cultural practices and customs.

- ➔ **Ancient Law:** Genesis 49 provides instructions regarding inheritance law. A few hundred years later, Deut. 21:15-17 notes a change in the inheritance law. This matches perfectly with the timeline for changes in the law in the Mesopotamian region and validates the dates for Moses and Joseph and the Genesis record. It is true that Egyptian writings do not specifically mention the Hebrews, Moses or the exodus. However, Josephus, citing Egyptian sources, notes that a group of people known as the Hyksos (Egyptian for ‘captive shepherds’) were in Egypt as the biblical record notes. That Joseph could rise to power in Egypt is plausible as writings note that an ‘Asiatic’ named Irsu came to power in Egypt during a period of hardship about 1200 BC. A stele at the Karnak Temple in Luxor notes that in the middle of the sixteenth century BC, Egyptian rulers in Thebes waged war against ‘Asiatic interlopers.’ Following this conflict, the political environment in Egypt would have been decidedly unfriendly against Semitic people who remained in the eastern delta. This sudden turn of events lays a foundation for the biblical account of the events leading up to the exodus—a new king arose, who did not know Joseph and conscripted the Hebrew people into forced labor.
- ➔ **Leiden Papyrus 348:** An ancient Egyptian document known as the Leiden Papyrus 348, which dates to the time of Moses, notes an order that food was to be distributed to the ‘Apiru who were dragging stones for the great project.’ Apiru = non-Egyptians.
- ➔ **The Merneptah Stele:** (circa 1217 BC), commemorates Ramesses II, and references the Israelites’ servitude.
- ➔ **Hazor:** Hebrew University Professor Amnon Ben Tor found the city of Hazor in 1996. The temple areas had been razed by fire, mud bricks had melted and turned into glass, and statues of Canaanite deities were decapitated and strewn about the Temple. This perfectly matches the Deut. 7:5 record.
- ➔ **Jericho:** An Archaeological Review publication notes that “...evidence has shown that fiery destruction did occur at Jericho, in uncanny

detail, just as the Bible describes it. The upper brick portion wall of the city collapsed outward, piling up at the base of a lower wall to form a narrow ramp of debris large enough to allow an invading army to clamber into the breach.”

- ➔ **Jesus:** The Roman Historian Josephus wrote: “Jesus is widely known as a doer of amazing deeds and a teacher who won over many Jews and Greeks.” The Babylonian Talmud (a compendium of Jewish law and commentary) notes: “On the eve of Passover, Yesju was hanged... because he practiced sorcery and led the people of Israel astray.”



WHY BELIEVE THE BIBLE IS BOTH TRUE AND INSPIRED?

The mandate is clear...

“Be ready at all times to answer anyone who asks you to explain the hope you have within you.” (1 Peter 3:15)

“...Proclaim the Message with intensity; keep on your watch. Challenge, warn, and urge your people. Don’t ever quit. Just keep it simple.”

(2 Tim. 4:2) MSG

To be ‘ready at all times’ with spiritual answers requires a deep, intimate knowledge of Scripture. A deep and intimate knowledge of Scripture is facilitated by having strong confidence in its unique and inspired nature. Information in this section is designed to show that the Bible is not just special, historically accurate, or even unique—but rather that it is divinely inspired, and has been miraculously preserved by God through the ages.

General information about the Bible

- ➔ The Bible is amazingly consistent, despite being written by about 40 different human writers over a period of about 1500 years. There are no definitive contradictions in the Bible.
- ➔ The Bible has been read by more people and published in more languages than any other book in history.
- ➔ More than 2000 times in Scripture the writers note that they are speaking or writing the Word of the Lord and not their own.
- ➔ The Bible is unique in that it is totally honest: It notes how Abraham lied, how David was involved in adultery and murder, and how Peter had great lapses in his faith.

- ➔ There are about 3000 faith groups in the world today—many have ‘sacred writings.’ What sets the Bible apart is not its age or its historical accuracy. What sets the Bible apart is its inspired nature.

How the Bible came to be

The Bible is a collection of 66 books—this collection is called a Canon. The term Canon indicates a fixed, unchangeable collection. The phrase, “The Canon of Truth” was first used in the year 367 AD.

Criteria for admission into the Canon

- ➔ Writings must be viewed as divinely inspired (Deuteronomy 18:18; 2 Peter 1:21).
- ➔ Writings must be consistent with established truth (Gal. 1:8).
- ➔ The prophet and his prophecies must be rejected if marked by error (Heb. 2:3-4).
- ➔ New Testament material must be written by an eye-witness to the ministry of Jesus and/or birth and expansion of the New Testament Church, and/or someone working in conjunction with an Apostle (for example, the physician Luke).

The development of the Old Testament

The writings of the Old Testament were divided into sections (i.e., the Law, the Prophets, etc.) and were, in most cases, immediately accepted as divinely inspired.

- ➔ Old Testament writings were translated from Hebrew to Greek in the 3rd century BC. This translation of the Hebrew Bible is known as the Septuagint and was instrumental in making Old Testament writings much more available throughout the Roman Empire. Jesus often quoted from this version of the Hebrew Bible.
- ➔ Old Testament material (the Law, the Prophets, History Literature, Wisdom Literature, etc.) was compiled into a single volume/work to form a sacred Canon (a complete, unchangeable collection) at the Council of Jamnia in 97 AD.

The development of the New Testament

Old Testament writings were, with few exceptions, quickly and easily recognized as holy and inspired. The New Testament Church adopted the Old Testament canon formalized at the Council of Jamnia in 97 AD, and recognized the writings of Paul and the Apostles as inspired as well.

- ➔ The writings of the Apostle Paul and the Gospels were quickly accepted as divinely inspired and were copied and circulated throughout the Roman Empire with unprecedented speed.
- ➔ The church moved underground in the second and third centuries as persecution increased. In 303 AD the Roman Emperor Diocletian issued a decree that all copies of Scripture be destroyed. For a time, the intense persecution of believers and swift expansion rate of the New Testament Church made it difficult for all church leaders to have access to all New Testament material. Consequently, some churches or regions had access to one or more of the Gospels and some of Paul's writings, whereas others had all the Gospels, some of Paul's writings and the Epistles of Peter, James, Jude, and John. As persecution of the Church eased in the fourth century, church leaders from various parts of the Roman Empire gathered to pray and discern God's leading regarding the formation of a uniform Canon of New Testament material.
- ➔ A Canon of Scripture (Old and New Testaments) was finalized at the Synod of Hippo in 393 AD.

The Apocrypha

- ➔ The Apocrypha is a collection of fifteen books written between 300—30 BC. The collection includes I & II Esdras, Tobit, Judith, additions to Esther, Wisdom, Ecclesiasticus, Baruch, the Song of the Three Children, the Story of Susannah, Bel and the Dragon, the Prayer of Manassas, and I & II Maccabees.
- ➔ Because Apocryphal books were written before the birth of Christ, they would technically be Old Testament material, but were not included in the Septuagint translation of the Hebrew Bible. A further testimony

against their inspired nature is the fact that Apocryphal writings were never quoted by Jesus or any of the New Testament writers, and they were not included in the official Canon of Old Testament material (finalized on at the Council of Jamnia in 97 AD).

- ➔ The formal and official church Canon of Scripture (from the Synod of Hippo, 393 AD) did not include the Apocrypha.
- ➔ Though Apocryphal writings include some interesting and accurate historical information, NO Apocryphal book claims to be inspired—and several specifically deny that they are inspired (see 1 Maccabees 9:27 and 2 Maccabees 2:23, 15:38).
- ➔ The Apocrypha was not officially recognized by the Catholic Church (as being divinely inspired) until 1546.

Are there “Lost Books?”

There are more than a dozen books referenced in the Bible, but not included in the Bible. For example, Numbers 21:14-15 quotes from the “Book of Wars,” Exodus 24:7 references the “Book of the Covenant.” Genesis 5:1 references the “Book of the Generations of Adam.” Joshua and Samuel quote from the “Book of Jashar.” 1 Kings 11:41 references the “Book of the Acts of Solomon,” 1 Kings 14:19 references the “Book of the Annals of the Kings of Israel,” and 1 Kings 14:29 references the “Book of the annals of the Kings of Judah.” This does not indicate that the Bible is in error or incomplete. In fact, the Apostle John notes (John 21:25) that the all the books in the world could not do justice to what Jesus said and did. A wise pastor said it well: “We may not have it all, but we have is more than enough.” What the Bible includes is sufficient for leading to salvation and spiritual life development. Further, it is important to note that though the Bible references other writings, it does not implicitly indicate that those writings are divinely inspired. Rather, it indicates that either they were historically accurate and/or were known to ancient peoples in such a way that their mere reference somehow reinforced what is now the biblical narrative.

ENGLISH BIBLE TRANSLATIONS

BETWEEN THE 5th AND 17th CENTURIES, MOST BIBLES WERE ONLY AVAILABLE IN LATIN. A brief overview of the development of English translations is noted below.

Wycliffe Translation

- ➔ John Wycliffe was known as “the morning star of the Reformation.” Born about 1324, he was the first person to translate the complete Bible into English.
- ➔ John Wycliffe translated the Bible from the Latin Vulgate, not from the Hebrew Old Testament and Greek New Testament Scriptures.
- ➔ In 1414, Catholic officials forbid possessing or reading the Bible in English (affirming a Latin-text only position). The Church Council of Constance declared that Wycliffe was a heretic. In 1428, over forty years after his death, his bones were dug up, crushed and burned.
- ➔ 170 copies of his work have survived to this day. One copy sold at auction on 5 December 2016 for \$1.6 million USD! Noted below is a copy of his translation of John 14:8-10 (middle English).

“Filip seith to him, lord schewe to us the fadir, and it sufficith to us. ihesus seith to hym, so long tyme I am with you: and han ye not knowen me? Filip, he that seith me seeth also the fadir, bileuest thou not that I am in the fadir and the fadir is in me; the words that I speke to you, I speke not of my self; but the fadir hym silf dwellinge in me, doith the work is...” (John 14:8-10)

Tyndale Translation

- ➔ William Tyndale was born in 1494. He has been called “the father of the English Bible.”

- ➔ Persecution was so great in England that Tyndale had to do his translating work in Germany.
- ➔ William Tyndale translated from the original Hebrew and Greek text. A contemporary wrote: “He [Tyndale] was so skilled in seven languages (Hebrew, Greek, Latin, Italian, Spanish, English, and French) that whichever he spoke you would suppose it was his native tongue.”
- ➔ In 1536 Tyndale was betrayed by a trusted coworker named Phillips. Phillips was a spy sent by the Pope to trap Tyndale. When he was 42 years old, Tyndale was strangled to death, and his body was burned.

The last five centuries

- ➔ King Henry VIII of England broke with the Catholic Church in 1534. This opened the door for the translation and printing of English Bible translations. The most notable early translation being the King James Bible (1611).
- ➔ The discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls (and several ancient families of Greek manuscripts) in the 20th century prompted a number of new English translations, including the RSV, NASV, NIV, ESV, and others.
- ➔ Warning: In recent years there have been moves to compromise scholarship and key doctrinal points in some modern translations. The A Gender-neutral Bible (where God is not referenced by the words **He** or **Father**), and a Bible which relates the word God with Allah (to make the reading of Scripture more acceptable in the Asian theater) are two such examples.

THE NEW TESTAMENT

The New Testament is one of God's great gifts to humanity. It contains the story of Jesus, the history of the development of the New Testament Church, and eternal wisdom for the ages. The New Testament does not negate the Old Testament; it fulfills and builds upon it. It is important that believers have a working knowledge of both its structure and content. What follows is a general overview of the New Testament:

- ➔ Number of books in the Bible: 66
- ➔ Number of Books in the New Testament: 27
- ➔ There are four categories of New Testament books (see below)

Historical Books

- ➔ Matthew
- ➔ Mark
- ➔ Luke
- ➔ John
- ➔ Acts

Pauline Epistles to churches

- ➔ Romans
- ➔ 1 & 2 Corinthians
- ➔ Galatians
- ➔ Ephesians
- ➔ Philippians
- ➔ Colossians
- ➔ 1 & 2 Thessalonians

Paul's Letters to Individuals

- ➔ 1 & 2 Timothy

- ➔ Titus
- ➔ Philemon

The General Epistles

- ➔ Hebrews
- ➔ James
- ➔ 1 & 2 Peter
- ➔ 1, 2, 3 John
- ➔ Jude
- ➔ Revelation

Criteria for admission to the New Testament canon

How was material approved for inclusion in the New Testament?

- ➔ Writings needed to be inspired (Deut.1 8:18; 2 Peter 1:21).
- ➔ Writings had to be consistent with established truth (Gal. 1:8).
- ➔ The prophet and his writings were to be rejected if marked by error (Heb. 2:3-4).
- ➔ New Testament material must be written by an Apostle, or an eyewitness to the ministry of Jesus, the birth of the New Testament Church, and/or by someone working in conjunction with an Apostle (such as the historian Luke).

HISTORY OF THE FORMATION OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

- ➔ Early 40's: The oral traditions regarding the ministry and teachings of Jesus began to be recorded in writing.
- ➔ 50–70 AD: The earliest New Testament works appear (James, Mark and Paul's Epistles). These were followed by Matthew, then Luke. Note: Paul never quotes a written work about Jesus.
- ➔ 95 AD: Clement of Rome refers to the "Words of Jesus," but doesn't quote specific writings.
- ➔ 95 AD: The book of Revelation is written by John—this will close the canon of New Testament Scripture.
- ➔ 90–130 AD: The Epistle of Barnabas refers to a teaching of Jesus by saying, "As it is written..."

- ➔ 107-120 AD: The writings of Ignatius of Antioch is filled with allusions to, and paraphrases of, New Testament texts.
- ➔ 140–155 AD: Polycarp cites a letter of Paul, calling it “Scripture.”
- ➔ In the 140’s Marcion (who was deemed a heretic) constructed his own canon which included most of Paul’s letters in edited form, along with Luke’s Gospel.
- ➔ 150–160 AD: Justin (the Martyr) refers to a written Gospel and quotes from Luke.
- ➔ 160-220 AD: Tertullian of Africa supported the idea of a New Testament canon of 22 books, including the four Gospels, Acts, the thirteen Epistles of Paul, 1 Peter, 1 John, Jude, and Revelation. He did not consider Hebrews to be canonical.
- ➔ 170-175 AD: Tatian, a disciple of Justin, created a harmony of the four orthodox Gospels known as the Diatessaron.
- ➔ 170–180 AD: Irenaeus refers to a “New Testament,” and refers to four Gospels, comparing them to the four directions (north, south, east, and west) and thus suggesting completeness.
- ➔ As early as 200 AD: The Muratorian Fragment, considered by many to be proof of a Christian canon by 200 AD, is a document whose actual date is widely disputed. It omits the books: Hebrews, 1 and 2 Peter, and 3 John. Many scholars date this document much later (some say after 350 AD).
- ➔ 195-225 AD: Early Church leaders such as Clement of Alexandria (195-202 AD) and Tertullian (205-225 AD) were prolific writers referencing every New Testament book except 3 John and Jude.
- ➔ 334–336 AD: Constantine, the Roman ruler who converted to Christianity, commissions New Testament material to be copied and circulated, but these Bibles include writings such as the Shepherd of Hermas and Didache, which were not accepted in later canons of the New Testament.
- ➔ 367 AD: Athanasius wrote a Festal Letter (a religious writing on the

occasion of a festival) that contains a listing of the 27 books of the New Testament canon as it is known today (he was also the first to use the word “canon” in reference to this list). Historians agree that this is the oldest clear expression of a finalized New Testament canon.

- ➔ 393 AD: The first time a Church Council ruled on the list of “inspired” writings was at the Synod of Hippo.
- ➔ 397 AD: A list (canon) of New Testament books was confirmed at the third Synod of Carthage.

THE MIRACLES OF JESUS

	MIRACLES OF HEALING	MATTHEW	MARK	LUKE	JOHN
1.	Jesus Heals an Invalid at Bethesda				5:1-15
2.	Jesus Heals a Man With Dropsy			14:1-6	
3.	Jesus Heals Two Blind Men	9:27-31			
4.	Jesus Heals Ten Lepers			17:11-19	
5.	Jesus Heals Many Sick in Gennesaret	14:34-36	6:53-56		
6.	Jesus Heals a Deaf and Mute Man		7:31-37		
7.	Jesus Heals Peter's Mother-in-Law	8:14-15	1:29-31	4:38-39	
8.	Jesus Heals Many Sick in the Evening	8:16-17	1:32-34	4:40-41	
9.	Jesus Heals a Blind Man at Bethsaida		8:22-26		
10.	Jesus Heals a Man Born Blind				9:1-12

11.	Jesus Cleanses a Man With Leprosy	8:1-4	1:40-45	5:12-14	
12.	Jesus Heals a Centurion's Servant	8:5-13		7:1-10	
13.	Jesus Heals a Paralytic	9:1-8	2:1-12	5:17-26	
14.	Jesus Heals a Man's Withered Hand	12:9-14	3:1-6	6:6-11	
15.	Jesus Heals a Woman in the Crowd	9:20-22	5:25-34	8:42-48	
16.	Jesus Heals a Blind, Mute Demoniac	12:22-23		11:14-23	
17.	Jesus Heals a Crippled Woman			13:10-17	
18.	Jesus Heals a Servant's Severed Ear			22:50-51	
	MIRACLES OVER THE ELEMENTS	MATTHEW	MARK	LUKE	JOHN
19.	Jesus Turns Water into Wine				2:1-11
20.	Jesus Walks on Water	14:22-33	6:45-52		6:16-21
21.	Jesus Calms a Storm	8:23-27	4:35-41	8:22-25	
22.	Jesus Withers the Fig Tree	21:18-22	11:12-14		
	POWER OVER LIFE	MATTHEW	MARK	LUKE	JOHN
23.	Jesus Raises Jairus' Daughter to Life	9:18,	5:21-24, 35-43	8:40-42, 49-56	
24.	Jesus Raises a Widow's Son in Nain from the dead	23-26			
25.	Jesus Raises Lazarus from the Dead				11:1-45

	GREAT NEEDS MET	MATTHEW	MARK	LUKE	JOHN
26.	Jesus Heals a Man Unable to Speak	9:32-34			
27.	Jesus Feeds 4,000	15:32-39	8:1-13		
28.	First Miraculous Catch of Fish			5:1-11	
29.	Jesus Feeds 5,000	14:13-21	6:30-44	9:10-17	6:1-15
30.	Miraculous Temple Tax in a Fish's Mouth	17:24-27			
31.	Second Miraculous Catch of Fish				21:4-11
	POWER OVER THE SPIRIT REALM	MATTHEW	MARK	LUKE	JOHN
32.	Jesus Drives Out an Evil Spirit		1:21-27	4:31-36	
33.	Jesus Heals a Gentile Woman's Demon-Possessed Daughter	5:21-28	7:24-30		
34.	Jesus Casts Demons into a Herd of Pigs	8:28-33	5:1-20	8:26-39	
35.	Jesus Heals a Demon-possessed boy.	17:14-20	9:14-29	9:37-43	
36.	Jesus Restores Sight to Bartimaeus	20:29-34	10:46-52	18:35-43	

THE MINISTRY OF JESUS WAS ASSOCIATED WITH MIRACLES TO SHOW THE LOVE OF GOD, AND TO FULFILL PROPHECY.

[The Messiah would] "heal the brokenhearted...proclaim liberty to the captives...[open prison doors for] those who are bound... proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord...comfort all who mourn...that He may be glorified." (Isaiah 61:1-3)

A GENERAL PROFILE OF THE BOOKS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

Matthew: Though placed first in the New Testament, the book of Matthew was the second Gospel written. His writing is unique in that it was written in Hebrew, to Hebrews, whereas the other Gospel writers present their writing in Greek and have a more Gentile audience in mind. Matthew's name was not always Matthew. Before he was a follower of Jesus, he was known as Levi. He was a Jew who worked for the Roman government as a tax collector. As a tax collector, he was despised by the Hebrews and considered an outcast by religious leadership. Yet, Jesus saw in him great potential and extended to him a call to be His disciple. He immediately accepted Jesus' invitation and promptly threw a party, at his own expense, inviting many of his friends to meet and listen to the Messiah—a great example for new believers today.

Mark: Mark was a follower of Jesus. He was related to Barnabas (a leader in the early Church), and also had close ties to Peter. Many Bible scholars believe Mark was Peter's scribe and that the Gospel of Mark is Peter's account, but penned by Mark. Mark was the first Gospel written.

Luke: Like Mark, Luke was not one of the 12 disciples of Jesus. Luke was a physician. The Gospel record, and his account of the development of the church in the 30 years that follow the cross (the book of Acts), are detailed and scholarly. Luke writes as a historian and is the only Gospel writer to present his material in chronological order.

John: John was the last Gospel to be written and was written by the only disciple who did not suffer a martyr's death. John lived a long life and wrote not only the Gospel of John, but also 1 John, 2 John, 3 John, and the book of Revelation. The focus of John's Gospel is to present Jesus as being much more than a man—his focus is to present Jesus as the Son of God, and one with God. John's Gospel is an apology (a theological term for making a legal case) for the divinity of Christ. John writes with an extremely limited vocabulary (about 600 words). Though

his vocabulary, puts his writing on a 3rd to 4th grade reading level, there are a number of complex spiritual truths woven into his writing.

Acts: The book of Acts was written by Luke. His goal was to carefully record the moving of God and development of the New Testament Church in the 30 or so years that follow the cross.

Romans: Romans is a profound, theological writing that profiles the sinful plight of man, the holiness of God, and the offer of salvation made possible by the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ.

1 Corinthians: Whereas Ephesians is concerned with the “universal church,” First Corinthians provides a glimpse inside one struggling first century local church. The primary issues this book addresses include marriage and divorce, purity, liberty and responsibility, and the exercise of spiritual gifts.

2 Corinthians: In this letter, the Apostle Paul defends his apostleship, the Gospel message, and rebukes heresies and false teachers who were finding their way into the church.

Galatians: In this weighty work the Apostle Paul encourages believers to move away from legalism and focus on the New Covenant of grace, and justification by grace alone. This book also notes how believers are blessed with the anointing power of the Holy Spirit.

Ephesians: The theme of the book of Ephesians is love (love for Christ and the love believers are to show for each other). This letter begins and ends with references to love (1:4, 6, 6:23-24).

Philippians: Paul wrote the book Philippians when in prison in Rome. His letter is a “thank you” to believers in Philippi for their for their generous support and encouragement. In this book, Paul shares his affection for the believers and addresses several issues in the church (2:3-4; 3:1-3; 4:2).

Colossians: The rise of Gnosticism prompted Paul to write this letter. In this writing Paul argues for the deity of Christ (1:18; 2:9), and implores believers to move toward spiritual maturity (1:28; 2:6-7).

1 Thessalonians: In this epistle, Paul encouraged believers to persevere despite their persecution, and he refuted false teaching— particularly regarding the return of Christ.

2 Thessalonians: In this epistle, Paul continues to address false teaching, and warns of apostasy and the coming Antichrist.

1 Timothy: This pastoral epistle is addressed to Timothy, Paul’s coworker and “child in the faith.” It is a highly personal and practical writing addressing matters of church order and leadership.

2 Timothy: Paul was a prisoner in Rome when he wrote this, the last of his pastoral epistles. He knew his death was imminent, but had no fear, and used his circumstances to encourage others to remain faithful.

Titus: Titus was a Gentile convert. He was a courageous and faithful companion to Paul, and leader in the New Testament Church. After serving with Paul for several years, Paul left Titus in Crete to provide leadership for the dozens of churches there (Titus 1:5). This epistle addresses matters of church leadership and the need for faithfulness.

Philemon: Philemon was a wealthy man. His slave, Onesimus, had stolen from him and run away. According to Roman law, the punishment was death. By divine providence, Onesimus came in contact with Paul, who led him to Christ. Realizing that Onesimus had a responsibility to his master, Paul had him return with this letter (the book of Philemon). Onesimus was forgiven, released, and became a valued co-worker in Paul’s ministry.

Hebrews: The authorship of the book of Hebrews is not certain, though many believe that the author was Paul. The book provides a strong argument for faith

in Christ and particularly addresses the needs and questions of unbelieving Jews.

James: Most scholars believe this letter was authored by James, the half-brother of Jesus (Matt. 13:55; Gal. 1:19). This letter was addressed to those driven from their homes due to growing persecution. His writing is exceedingly practical and speaks to how to live out the Christian faith.

1 Peter: First Peter was written to Christians who were persecuted and scattered across the Roman Empire. Peter challenged believers to remain faithful.

2 Peter: The focus of this book is to warn against the rise of evil, apostasy, and events associated with the last days.

1 John: This epistle challenges believers to be united and strong in their walk with the Lord.

2 John: This letter (along with First John) addresses the growing Gnostic heresy (which denied the deity of Christ and condoned sensuality).

3 John: This encouraging letter was written to a believer (Gaius) who exhibited well the gift of hospitality. The letter affirms generosity, service, and obedience. **Jude:** Most scholars believe Jude was the brother of James and half-brother of the Lord Jesus (Matt. 13:55). The brief book reminds believers there is a spiritual realm, and that a judgment is coming.

Revelation: The book of Revelation is the last book in the New Testament, and was the last book to be written (an important notation as the Bible is not presented in chronological order, and the book of Revelation closes the canon of divinely-inspired writings). The title of the book (Revelation) means, the revealing. The book provides a glimpse into Tribulation period happenings.

WHAT HAPPENED TO THE DISCIPLES OF JESUS?

(1) THE APOSTLE JAMES, SON OF ZEBEDEE

James, the Apostle of the Lord, was the second recorded martyr after Christ's death (Stephen was the first). Clemens Alexandrinus and Eusebius (Ecclesiastical History II.2) both note that when the executioner witnessed the courage and faith of James, he was convinced of the resurrection, became saved, and was executed along with the Apostle.

- ➔ Date of Martyrdom: 44-45 AD.
- ➔ According to the Book of Acts in the New Testament, James was killed by Herod:

“And at that time Herod the king threw on his hands to oppress some of those of the church.” (Acts 12:1)

“And he killed James the brother of John with the sword.” (Acts 12:2)

- ➔ This is confirmed by Hippolytus:

“James, his brother, when preaching in Judea, was cut off with the sword by Herod the Tetrarch, and was buried there.”

- ➔ Eusebius described more precisely what was done:

“First Stephen was stoned to death by them, and after him, James, the son of Zebedee and the brother of John, was beheaded...” (Book 3, Chapter 5)

(2) THE APOSTLE PETER

Peter, just as Jesus indicated in John 21:18-19, was crucified by Roman executioners. Peter was at first slow to bring the Gospel to the Gentile world, but after a vision (Acts 10), he became a dynamic witness in the west, following

Paul through Grecian and Roman cities. Peter, like Mark and Paul, was martyred in Rome, under Nero. According to Eusebius, he thought himself unworthy to be crucified in the same manner as his Master, and, therefore, he asked to be crucified “head downward.”

- ➔ Date of Martyrdom: Cir. 64 AD.
- ➔ Eusebius, quoting Papias of Hierapolis (Cir. 110 AD), records a tradition that the Gospel of Mark preserved the Gospel as preached by Peter:

“Mark having become the interpreter of Peter, wrote down accurately whatsoever he remembered...he accompanied Peter...” (Book 3, Chapter 39)
- ➔ Irenaeus (180 AD) records a similar tradition, and mentions that Peter and Paul founded the Church in Rome:

“Matthew also issued a written Gospel among the Hebrews in their own dialect, while Peter and Paul were preaching at Rome, and laying the foundations of the Church. After their departure, Mark, the disciple and interpreter of Peter, did also hand down to us in writing what has been preached by Peter...” (Irenaeus, “Against Heresies,” Book 3, Chapter 1)
- ➔ Eusebius records that Peter was put to death under Nero in Rome:

“It is, therefore, recorded that Paul was beheaded in Rome, and that Peter likewise was crucified under Nero. This account of Peter and Paul is substantiated by the fact that their names are preserved in the cemeteries of that place even to the present day.” (Book 2, Chapter 25)
- ➔ Hippolytus confirms that Peter was crucified by Nero in Rome:

“Peter preached the Gospel in Pontus, and Galatia, and Cappadocia, and Betania, and Italy, and Asia, and was afterward crucified by Nero in Rome with his head downward, as he had himself desired to suffer in that manner.”

(3) THE APOSTLE ANDREW

Andrew, who introduced his brother Peter to Christ, was martyred six years after Peter. After preaching Christ's resurrection to the Scythians and Thracians, he too was crucified for his faith. As Hippolytus tells us, Andrew was hanged on an olive tree at Patrae, a town in Achaia.

➔ Date of Martyrdom: 70 AD.

➔ According to Hippolytus:

“Andrew preached to the Scythians [modern day Georgia] and Thracians [modern day Bulgaria], and was crucified, suspended on an olive tree, at Patrae, a town of Achaia [Greece]; and was buried there.”

(4) THE APOSTLE THOMAS

Thomas is known as “doubting Thomas” because of his reluctance to believe the other Apostles’ witness of the resurrection. After being told that Jesus was alive, Thomas stated “Except I shall see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into His side, I will not believe” (John 20:25). After this, Jesus did appear to him, but Thomas believed and was faithful all his days (though he was tortured with hot plates of steel, pierced with spears and burned alive).

➔ Date of Martyrdom: 70 AD.

➔ Hippolytus records that Thomas was a missionary and that he traveled first to Syria, then to India. Tradition has Thomas preaching to the Parthians, Medes, Persians, Hyrcanians, Bactrians, and Margians. Hippolytus notes that he was thrust through in the four members of his body with a pine spear at Calamene, the city of India, and was buried there.

(5) THE APOSTLE PHILIP

Philip was corrected by Christ when he asked Jesus to “show us the Father,

then this will be enough for us” (John 14:8). Jesus responded, “Have I been so long with you, and yet you have not come to know Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; how can you say, ‘Show us the Father?’” (John 14:9). Philip grew to become a powerful evangelist in North Africa and parts of Asia. When in Phrygia (Turkey), hostile Jews had him tortured and then crucified. Date of Martyrdom: 54 AD.

- ➔ According to Hippolytus, Philip preached and was executed in what today is eastern Turkey. Philip preached in Phrygia and was crucified in Hierapolis in the time of Domitian and was buried there.

(6) THE APOSTLE MATTHEW

Matthew (Levi) was a former tax collector and strong disciple and evangelist for Christ. He had a particular heart for the Jews and originally wrote his Gospel in Hebrew. After the great persecution he fled Jerusalem and rewrote his Gospel in Greek. He preached the resurrected Christ in Ethiopia and then in Persia. He was beheading at Nad-Davar, Ethiopia.

- ➔ Date of Martyrdom: 60-70 AD.
- ➔ According to Hippolytus:

“Matthew wrote the Gospel in the Hebrew tongue, and published it at Jerusalem, and fell asleep at Hierees, a town of Parthia.” [Parthia is near modern day Tehran]

(7) THE APOSTLE NATHANAE (BARTHOLOMEW)

Nathanael’s name means “gift of God.” He was among the first to profess that Jesus was the Son of God (John 1:49). A great traveler and evangelist, Nathanael is said to have ministered in India with Thomas, Armenia, Ethiopia and Southern Arabia. Unwilling to recant of his proclamation of a risen Christ, he was martyred in what is now the Republic of Georgia by being flayed and then crucified.

- ➔ Date of Martyrdom: 70 AD.

- ➔ According to Hippolytus, Bartholomew preached in India:

“Bartholomew, again, preached to the Indians, to whom he also gave the Gospel according to Matthew, and was crucified with his head downward, and was buried in Allanum, a town of the great Armenia” [modern day southern Georgia].

- ➔ Eusebius confirms the ministry of Bartholomew in India, and adds an eyewitness account:

“About that time, Pantaenus, a man highly distinguished for his learning, had charge of the school in Alexandria... Pantaenus...is said to have gone to India. It is reported that among persons there who knew of Christ, he found the Gospel according to Matthew, which had anticipated his own arrival. For Bartholomew, one of the Apostles had preached to them and left with them the writing of Matthew in the Hebrew language, which they had preserved till that time.” (Book 5, Chapter 10, Church Histories)

(8) THE APOSTLE JAMES (THE LESSER)

This James is noted as the head of the Jerusalem church in Acts 15-16. His ministry was in Syria and the greater Jerusalem area. In an attempt to force James to deny Christ's resurrection, hostile Jews positioned him at the top of the Temple for all to see and hear. James, unwilling to deny what he knew to be true, was cast down from the Temple, stoned, and beaten to death with a fuller's club to the head.

- ➔ Date of Martyrdom: 63 AD.
- ➔ Hippolytus identifies that James was stoned to death in Jerusalem:

“And James the son of Alphaeus, when preaching in Jerusalem, was stoned...by the Jews, and was buried there beside the temple.”

(9) THE APOSTLE SIMON (THE ZEALOT)

Simon was a Jewish zealot who in his younger years strived to set his people free from Roman oppression. After the resurrection, he assisted the leadership of the Jerusalem Church (becoming a bishop there after James) and then became a great traveling evangelist. He preached the Gospel in Egypt, Cyrene, Africa, Mauritania, Britain, Lybia, and Persia. Tradition notes that he was martyred (perhaps by crucifixion) by a governor in Syria for refusing to worship a local deity (sun god).

- ➔ Date of Martyrdom: 74 AD.
- ➔ According to Hippolytus, Simon the Zealot was the second Bishop of Jerusalem:

“Simon the Zealot, the son of Clopas, who is also called Jude, became bishop of Jerusalem after James the Just, and fell asleep and was buried there...”

(10) THE APOSTLE JUDAS THADDEUS (THADDAEUS IS ALSO KNOWN AS LEBBAEUS).

Judas was martyred while preaching in what is now Beirut. He was attacked by pagan priests and beaten to death with sticks.

- ➔ Date of Martyrdom: 72 AD.
- ➔ Hippolytus records: “Jude, who is also called Lebbeus, preached to the people of Edessa, and to all Mesopotamia, and fell asleep at Berytus, and was buried there.”

(11) THE APOSTLE MATTHIAS

Matthias replaced Judas Iscariot (the betrayer of Christ who hanged himself) as the twelfth Apostle of Christ (Acts 1:26). It is believed by most that Matthias was one of the seventy that Christ sent out during His earthly ministry (Luke 10:1). Matthias, of which the least is known, is said by Eusebius to have preached in Ethiopia. He was later stoned while hanging upon a cross.

- ➔ Date of Martyrdom: 70 AD.

(12) THE APOSTLE JOHN

John is the only one of the twelve Apostles to have died a natural death. Although he did not die a martyr's death, he did live a very difficult life. He was exiled to the Island of Patmos under Emperor Domitian for his proclamation of the risen Christ. It was there that he wrote the book of Revelation. Some traditions note that he was thrown into boiling oil before the Latin Gate, in the hope that he would recant his faith. He never did.

➔ Date of Martyrdom: 95 AD.

➔ Eusebius wrote of the reason that John wrote his Gospel:

“Matthew and John have left us written memorials, and they, tradition says, were led to write only under the pressure of necessity...And when Mark and Luke had already published their Gospels, they say that John, who had employed all his time in proclaiming the Gospel orally, finally proceeded to write for the following reason. The three Gospels already mentioned having come into the hands of all and into his own too, they say that he accepted them and bore witness to their truthfulness; but that there was lacking in them an account of the deeds done by Christ at the beginning of his ministry.” (Book 3, Ch. 24).

➔ According to Hippolytus, John was banished by Domitian to the Isle of Patmos, and later died in Ephesus:

“John was banished by Domitian the king to the isle of Patmos, in which also he wrote his Gospel and saw the apocalyptic vision; and in Trajan’s time he fell asleep at Ephesus, where his remains were sought for, but could not be found.”

(13) THE APOSTLE PAUL

Paul's name was once Saul—Saul was a leading Pharisee and chief persecutor of the Christian faith (Galatians 1:13). He was brought to repentance on his way to Damascus by an appearance of the risen Christ. After his encounter with Jesus, Paul devoted his life to Christ and served as an evangelist and missionary to the

Gentile world. His ministry was marked by danger and trials.

Writing to the Corinthians, Paul tells of his sufferings for the name of Christ: “In labors more abundant, in beatings above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths often. Of the Jews, five times received I forty stripes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods, once was I stoned, three times I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; In journeys often, in storms on the water, in danger of robbers, in danger by mine own countrymen, in danger by the heathen, in danger in the city, in danger in the wilderness, in the sea, among false brethren; In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness.”

(2 Cor. 11:23-27)

- ➔ Paul was sentenced to death and was beheaded in Rome under the orders of Emperor Nero.

- ➔ Date of Martyrdom: (Cir. 67 AD.)

TIMELINE OF JESUS' MINISTRY IN THE GOSPELS

PART ONE: Leading Up to the Birth of Jesus

The nature of the Messiah (John 1:1-5)

- ➔ The genealogy of Christ (Matthew 1:1-17)
- ➔ The parents of John the Baptist (Luke 1:5-22)
- ➔ The announcement of the birth of Christ (Luke 1:26-38)

PART TWO: The Birth of John and Jesus

- ➔ The birth of John the Baptist (Luke 1:57-80)
- ➔ The birth of Christ (Matthew 1:18-24; Luke 2:1-16)

PART THREE: Infancy and Childhood

- ➔ The Infancy of Jesus (Luke 2:21-28)
- ➔ The visit of the Magi (Matthew 2:1-12)
- ➔ The flight into Egypt (Matthew 2:13-23)
- ➔ Jesus at 12 years old (Matthew 2:40-43/Luke 2:44-52)

PART FOUR: The First Year of Ministry

- ➔ The Messiah announced by John the Baptist (John 1:6-9; Matt. 3:1-6)
- ➔ The ministry of John the Baptist (Luke 3:15-18; Matt. 3:13-17)
- ➔ The temptation of Jesus (Luke 4:1-13)
- ➔ The calling of the disciples (John 1:10-12, 35-51)
- ➔ The first miracle (John 2:1-12)
- ➔ Jesus cleanses the temple (John 2:13-21)
- ➔ The meeting with Nicodemus (John 3:1-21)
- ➔ Ministry in Judea (John 3:22-36)
- ➔ Ministry in Samaria – “The woman at the well” (John 4:5-43)

PART FIVE: THE SECOND YEAR OF MINISTRY

- ➔ Opposition in Nazareth (Luke 4:16-30)
- ➔ Opposition in Capernaum (Luke 4:31-36; Mark 3:8-12)

- ➔ Jesus heals Peter's Mother-in-law (Luke 4:38-44)
- ➔ The Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7)
- ➔ The compassion of Jesus (Mark 1:40-45)
- ➔ The listing of the disciples (Luke 6:12-16)
- ➔ The affirmation of John the Baptist (Matt. 11:2-19)
- ➔ A lesson on gratitude (Luke 7:36-50)
- ➔ The source of Jesus' power (Matt. 12:22-45)
- ➔ Jesus teaches in parables (Matt. 13:1-52)
- ➔ Women support the ministry of Jesus (Luke 8:1-3)
- ➔ Jesus calms the sea (Mark 4:34-41)
- ➔ Jesus heals a demon-possessed man (Mark 5:1-20)
- ➔ Jesus heals a paralytic (Luke 5:18-26)
- ➔ The call of Levi (Matt. 9:9-13)
- ➔ Jesus heals on the Sabbath (Matt. 12:1-14)
- ➔ Jesus heals Jairus' daughter (Mark 5:22-43)
- ➔ Jesus heals one blind/demon-possessed (Matt. 9:27-34)
- ➔ Jesus heals a lame man (John 5:1-15)
- ➔ Jesus sends the twelve (Mark 6:7-13; Matt. 10:14-42)
- ➔ Jesus speaks of His true nature (John 5:16-47)
- ➔ Jesus as Lord of the Harvest (Matt. 9:35-38)
- ➔ The death of John the Baptist (Matt. 14:1-12)
- ➔ Jesus feeds the 5000 (John 6:1-15)
- ➔ Peter walks on water (Jn. 6:16-20/Matt.14:28-31 Jn. 6:21/Mk. 6:53-56)
- ➔ Jesus speaks of commitment (John 6:22-71)

PART SIX: THIRD YEAR OF MINISTRY

- ➔ Jesus is confronted by the Pharisees for not following their traditions (Mark 7:1-15)
- ➔ Jesus privately instructs His disciple (Mark 7:16-23)
- ➔ Jesus helps the daughter of a Greek woman (Mark 7:24-30)
- ➔ Jesus heals the deaf and mute (Mark 7:31-37)
- ➔ Jesus feeds the 4000 (Matthew 15:32-38)

- ➔ The Pharisees demand a sign (Matthew 16:1-8,12/Mark 8:18-21)
- ➔ Jesus heals a blind man in Bethsaida (Mark 8:22-26)
- ➔ Peter proclaims Jesus as the Christ (Matt. 16:13-38)
- ➔ The Transfiguration (Luke 9:28-36)
- ➔ Jesus heals the demon-possessed mute (Mark 9:14-30)
- ➔ Jesus speaks again of His coming suffering (Mark 9:31-32)
- ➔ The miracle of the coin in the mouth of the fish (Matt. 17:24-27)
- ➔ Teaching in Capernaum (Mk. 9:33-35; Lk. 9:47-48; Matt.18:5-9)
- ➔ Jesus teaches about forgiveness and confrontation (Matthew 18:10, 13-35; Mark 9:38-40)
- ➔ Jesus delays going to the Feast (John 7:1-9)
- ➔ Jesus at the Feast of Tabernacles (John 7:10-42)
- ➔ Temple guards are sent to arrest Jesus (John 7:43-52)
- ➔ A woman is caught in the act of adultery (John 7:5)
- ➔ The Pharisees challenge Jesus (John 8:12-59)
- ➔ Jesus heals a man born blind (John 9:1-41)
- ➔ Jesus as the Good Shepherd (John 10:1-17)

PART SEVEN: THE LONG JOURNEY TO JERUSALEM

- ➔ Jesus begins the long journey toward Jerusalem (Luke 9:51-56)
- ➔ Jesus speaks of commitment (Luke 9:57-62)
- ➔ Jesus speaks of accountability (Matthew 11:20-24)
- ➔ The great invitation (Matthew 11:25-30)
- ➔ Jesus heals ten lepers (Luke 17:11-19)
- ➔ The seventy are sent out (Luke 10:10-1-20)
- ➔ The greatest commandment (Luke 10:25-29)
- ➔ The Good Samaritan (Luke 10:30-37)
- ➔ Mary and Martha wait on Jesus (Luke 10:38-42)
- ➔ Jesus urges believers to be ready for His return (Luke 13:1-13)
- ➔ Jesus at the Feast of Dedication (John 10:22-39)
- ➔ Jesus teaches about salvation and heals a man with dropsy (Luke 13:22-35; Luke 14:1-6)

PART EIGHT: SIX MONTHS BEFORE THE CROSS

- ➔ Jesus speaks of the importance of humility (Luke 14:7-23)
- ➔ Jesus speaks of the cost of discipleship (Luke 14:24-33)
- ➔ Jesus speaks of our witness (Luke 14:34-35)
- ➔ The parable of the lost sheep (Luke 15:1-7)
- ➔ The parable of the lost coin (Luke 15:8-10)
- ➔ The parable of the prodigal son (Luke 15:11-32)
- ➔ The parable of the shrewd manager (Luke 16:1-15)
- ➔ The parable of the rich man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19-31)
- ➔ Jesus teaches about the sovereignty of God (Matthew 20:1-16)
- ➔ Jesus teaches about the power of prayer (Luke 18:1-17)
- ➔ Jesus speaks to the rich young ruler (Luke 18:18-34)
- ➔ Jesus teaches about divorce (Matthew 19:3-12; 20:1-16)
- ➔ The raising of Lazarus (John 11:1-57)
- ➔ The Pharisees plot to kill Jesus (John 11:53-57)
- ➔ The request for preferential treatment (Mark 10:35-45)
- ➔ Jesus heals the blind at Jericho (Mark 10:46-52)
- ➔ Jesus ministers to Zacchaeus at Jericho (Luke 19:1-10)
- ➔ The parable of the talents (Luke 19:11-27)

PART NINE: THE LAST WEEK

- ➔ Mary honors at a dinner (John 12:1-11)
- ➔ Triumphal Entry (Luke 19:28-35, 39-49; Matt. 21:4-16)
- ➔ Jesus curses the fig tree (Mark 11:12-18)
- ➔ Greek Jews seek an audience with Jesus (John 12:20-36)
- ➔ Jesus speaks in parables (Matthew 21:33-44)
- ➔ The Herodians attempt to trap Jesus (Matthew 22:15-22)
- ➔ The Sadducees attempt to trap Jesus (Luke 20:27-40)
- ➔ The Pharisees attempt to trap Jesus (Matthew 22:34-40)
- ➔ Jesus rebukes the Pharisees (Matthew 23:13-36)
- ➔ The widow's offering (Mark 12:41-44)
- ➔ Jesus foretells the destruction of the Temple (Luke 21:5-7)
- ➔ Jesus speaks of end-time events (Matthew 24:4—25:46)
- ➔ Jesus seeks to comfort the disciples (John 12:27-35)

- ➔ Jesus pleads with people to believe (Luke 21:37-38; John 12:37-38)
- ➔ Jesus at the Feast of Unleavened Bread (Luke 22:1-13)
- ➔ The Last Supper [Luke] (Matt. 26:20; Luke 22:15-20)
- ➔ The Last Supper [John] (John 13:1-9)
- ➔ Jesus washes the feet of the disciples (John 13:10-39)
- ➔ Jesus speaks of His leaving and the Holy Spirit (John 14:1-31)
- ➔ Our calling and God's expectation (John 15:1-27)
- ➔ The coming of the Holy Spirit (John 16:1-33)
- ➔ The high priestly prayer (John 17:1-26)
- ➔ Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane (Matthew 26:36-46)
- ➔ The arrest of Jesus (Matthew 26:47-56; John 18:4-10)

PART TEN: THE CRUCIFIXION AND ASCENSION

- ➔ The trial of Jesus (Matthew 26:57-68)
- ➔ Peter denies Jesus (Matthew 26:69-74; Luke 22:61-62)
- ➔ Jesus before Pilate (Luke 22:66-71; Matthew 27:2-10)
- ➔ Jesus before Herod (Matthew 27:11-14; Luke 23:7-12)
- ➔ Pilate orders Jesus beaten (Luke 23:13-16)
- ➔ Pilate seeks to release Jesus (Matthew 27:15-26)
- ➔ Pilate turns Jesus over to be crucified (Matthew 27:27-31)
- ➔ Simon carries the cross / Jesus is crucified (Matthew 27:32-36; Luke 23:27-31; John 19:18-22)
- ➔ The mocking crowd (Matthew 27:39-43; Luke 23:39-43)
- ➔ The death of Jesus (Matthew 27:45-56)
- ➔ The legs of those crucified with Jesus are broken (John 19:31-37)
- ➔ Joseph of Arimathea and the tomb (Matthew 27:57-61)
- ➔ Pilate orders the tomb secured (Matthew 27:62-66)
- ➔ The resurrection (Mark 16:1-4; Luke 24:4-8)
- ➔ At the tomb / Mary's encounter (Luke 24:9-11; John 20:3-17)
- ➔ Religious leaders try to conceal the truth (Matthew 28:11-15)
- ➔ Jesus meets with the disciples (Luke 24:13-36; John 20:20-29)
- ➔ Jesus at the Sea of Tiberias (John 21:1-15a)
- ➔ Jesus restores Peter (John 21:15b-22)
- ➔ The Great Commission (Matthew 28:16-20)
- ➔ The ascension of Jesus (Luke 24:50-52; John 20:30-31, 21:24-25)

A GENERAL OVERVIEW OF BIBLE PROPHECY

Many are aware that there are prophecies in the Bible, but few realize that more than 27% of the 31,124 verses in the Bible are prophetic. The J. Barton Payne's Encyclopedia of Biblical Prophecy notes that there are 1,239 prophecies in the Old Testament and 578 prophecies in the New Testament, for a total of 1,817. These encompass 8,352 verses. There are two schools of thought regarding how to count Bible prophecies.

General: Some record prophecies in a broad or general way – this is appropriate but does reduce the number of prophecies by about 50%.

The Bible records that Jesus was a descendant of David, who was a descendant of Jacob, Isaac, and Abraham. A general way to view the fulfillment of this prophecy is to acknowledge that Jesus was a descendant of Abraham—hence, one prophecy was fulfilled.

Specific: Most Bible scholars record prophecies in a more precise way—counting each part of the fulfillment of a general prophecy as an independent prophecy fulfillment. For example, the Bible notes that Jesus was a descendant of David, who was a descendant of Jacob, Isaac, and Abraham. Therefore, four prophecies (not one) are fulfilled—Jesus was a descendant of Abraham (1), and Isaac (2), and Jacob (3) and David (4).

The precision of prophecy:

Most psychics today speak in very general terms and offer what I call 'Fortune cookie-type counsel.' It is important to note that Bible prophecies are specific and measurable. And though many have tried, no one has been able to prove a Bible prophecy to be in error. There are approximately 1000 general prophecies in the Bible; about 900 have come to pass, 895 have been verified to be true. 5 are unverifiable at this time, but as they are unverifiable they cannot be used to prove the prophecies are false. Jesus fulfilled more than 120 specific prophecies.

Scholars note the probability of Jesus fulfilling just eight prophecies picked at random is approximately 1 in 10^{17} . These odds approximate the likelihood of blindly picking the one marked silver dollar mixed in with coins two feet deep in an area the size of Texas. Scholars have noted that the probability of Jesus fulfilling just 48 prophecies is 1 in 10^{157} – that is one, followed by 157 zeroes! Which is roughly the number of atoms in the universe.

It is not difficult to illustrate the precision of Bible prophecy. Ezekiel 4 provides one example. The prophet Ezekiel wrote at a time in history when his nation, Israel, had fallen to invaders. Many were forced to serve as slaves in Babylon. Ezekiel chapter 4 notes how long it would be before Israel would again be a sovereign and independent nation. Let's take a look at this prophecy.

Ezekiel chapter 4 records that the prophet was bound on his left and right sides for a certain number of days. The number of days (430) prophetically point to the number of years it would take before Israel would be restored as a nation (Ezek. 4:4-6). To represent the duration of Israel's and Judah's judgment, respectively, Ezekiel was bound with cords and lay on his left side for 390 days, and on his right side for 40 days (Ezek. 4:4-8). Again, the 430 days (390 days for Israel plus 40 days for Judah) in Ezek. 4:6 represents 430 years. Jeremiah prophesied that the period of captivity would last exactly 70 years. Historians note that Babylon captured Israel (and took inhabitants away as slaves) in the spring of 606 BC. and that exiles were allowed to return precisely 70 years later (just as foretold) in the spring of 536 BC.

The fulfillment of Jeremiah's prophecy of 70 years of exile (Israel not being an independent nation) took place in 536 BC. when exiles returned to Jerusalem. However, that still left 360 years of judgment to be served (430 - 70 years = 360 years). Though exiles were allowed to return to Israel, Israel would remain part of the Persian Empire for some years. One might ask: What happens 360 years later? Did Israel become an independent nation at that time (176 BC)? The answer is no. In fact, when Jesus ministered on the earth, Israel still had not re-established as a nation. At the turn of the 20th century, Israel still had not

become an independent nation, and this is why Leviticus 26:18 indicates that in the face of stubborn rebellion, the Lord “will punish you seven times more for your sins.” Many Hebrews returned to Israel, but most quickly fell away from true faith.

Therefore, the 360 years noted were to be multiplied by seven, equaling a total of 2520 biblical years [360-day years]. To convert the 2,520 prophetic years into solar [365.25 day] years, one must multiply 2,520 by the 360 days in the prophetic/biblical year (907,200 days). The next step is to divide 907,200 days by 365.25 (the length of a solar year). The answer is 2,483 calendar years, 9 months, 21 days. Therefore, Ezekiel’s prophecy indicates that the end of Israel’s displacement/judgment would occur 2,483 calendar years, 9 months, 21 days after the end of the Babylonian exile (which took place on July 23, 537 BC). When one adds 2,483 calendar years, 9 months, 21 days to July 23, 537 BC (the year in which the Babylonian captivity ended), they arrive at May 14, 1948 (the precise day Israel regained their independence under UN Charter).

BIBLE PROPHECIES PRINCIPALLY FALL INTO ONE OF THREE CATEGORIES

Prophecies concerning Israel: There are many prophecies about the land of Israel. They speak of the formation of the nation of Israel, wars against Israel, the exile of the Hebrew people and their return to the land, the restoration of the nation of Israel and prophetic events in and near Israel in the last days.

Prophecies concerning the Gentile World: Many prophecies profile the rise and fall of Gentile kingdoms; for example, Daniel 11-12 presents more than 100 such prophecies.

The Messiah: There are several hundred specific prophecies concerning the Messiah. During His first coming the Messiah fulfilled more than 120 specific prophecies – scores more will be fulfilled in the last days.

WHY IS THERE SUCH AN EMPHASIS ON PROPHECY IN THE BIBLE?

The gift of prophecy is an expression of God's love. Because He loves us, He warns us. God wants His people to know He is aware of what is happening, and what will happen. Prophecy is given as an empirical proof for the existence of God. It shows God is master of past, present, and future, and can be used to validate the integrity of Scripture. The 100% accuracy rate of biblical prophecy is unmatched among the religious writings of the world.

Speaking of prophecy, the prophet Isaiah noted: "I declared them (prophecies) to you long ago, before they took place I proclaimed them to you, lest you should say, 'My idol has done them...'" (Isaiah 48:5). God uses prophecy to declare that He is the author of all that is good. He is in control, He has a plan for the future, and nothing takes Him by surprise. Noted below are a few prophetic verses which provide insight regarding what to expect in the last days.

Key Verses:

"But you, Daniel, shut up the words and seal the book UNTIL the time of the end many shall run to and fro and knowledge shall increase" (Daniel 12:4). This verse indicates that the ability to understand the meaning of the more difficult Bible prophecies will increase in the last days.

"I will pour out My Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions. Even on My servants, both men and women, I will pour out My Spirit in those days. I will show wonders in the heavens and on the earth, blood and fire and billows of smoke. The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord. And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved" (Joel 2:28-31).

NOTE: This verse indicates that prophetic visions will be given (to the young, old and the unlikely) in the last days.

A syllabus of prophetic language:

The language of prophecy: The language of the Old Testament is Hebrew. Therefore, it is essential to interpret Old Testament prophecies in light of ancient Hebrew culture. For example, in our culture, someone might say, "After I watch the Hawks and 49ers on the 60" plasma, I'm going to drive the Ford to SeaTac then catch the Red Eye to the Windy City. Most today would have little difficulty understanding that sentence. However, if we went back in time just 100 years the sentence would not make sense. Remember, Bible prophecies are more than 2000 years old, and are presented in a different cultural context. Therefore, interpreting prophetic words and phrases must be done with great care. A few common words with uncommon meanings follow.

- ➔ Days = often equal years.
- ➔ Week = a week of years or 7 years.
- ➔ Horn = represents power.
- ➔ Biblical years = 360 days (the ancient calendar followed lunar cycles).
- ➔ Animals can be used to represent kings and kingdoms.
- ➔ Wind = can describe a war or a unique working or moving of God.
- ➔ Water = means life or cleansing; it can also represent judgment.
- ➔ Oil = a sign of blessing.
- ➔ Virgin = signifies purity.
- ➔ Prostitute/harlot = unfaithful or false church.
- ➔ The numbers 3, 7, 10, 12, 40, 70, 120, 1000, 144,000 have spiritual (and symbolic) importance.
- ➔ The number 1000 = was considered perfect and often, uncountable.
- ➔ A generation = 40, 70 or 80 years (depending on the verse or specific context).
- ➔ Fire and various signs in the heavens warn of or announce divine judgments and appearances.
- ➔ End days/Last days/End times = the period from Pentecost to the end of the Great Tribulation.
- ➔ Birth Pangs/Birth Pains = The end of the Last Days to the beginning of the Tribulation period.
- ➔ The Tribulation = The last 7 years.
- ➔ The Great Tribulation = The last 3 1/2 years.

WHY AND HOW TO SHARE YOUR FAITH

BEING A WITNESS FOR THE LORD

This article is a challenge—it is not for the faint of heart. Believers living in the post-rapture world will need to have formidable courage to fulfill their calling. The good news is, God will help you to be what He wants you to be.

The post-rapture/Tribulation-era world will be the most dangerous time in history. As the seven-year Tribulation unfolds, war, pestilence, civil unrest, divine judgments and severe oppression will sweep the earth. Laws will change. Christian literature and gatherings will be banned. Worshipping the Beast (Rev. 13) will be mandated. Refusing to recant Jesus will be punishable by death. It seems that the logical choice may be to run, hide, or build a bunker. And God may, in fact, direct groups of believers to flee and hide to escape the enemy (Rev. 12). However, my best guess is that during this unprecedented time in history, God will want believers to seek opportunities to proclaim His name boldly. I believe that in a dark world, Jesus will want believers to point individuals to the Light. Will you be a bold witness for Him?


Did you know that in the original text of the New Testament (Greek), the word Christian and the word martyr are related. At this point in history, the goal for believers should not be to start well—it should be to finish well. It should not be to live long, it must be to live-out their faith. It must not be, to be safe, it must be, to be a witness. Will there be a cost? Probably. But whatever is suffered or lost in this world in the name of Christ will be rewarded in the next. Yes, great will be the reward for those who demonstrate great faith and great courage.

Jesus calls every believer to share their faith. A Christian is not just a believer in Christ, they are a follower-of Christ, and must try to emulate the actions of Christ. In the early days of the New Testament Church, the term Christian was a pejorative—as in, those folks are crazy, acting like Christ. To be a Christian is to

be Christ-like, and Jesus Christ was a great and powerful witness. The Apostle Paul wrote that all believers should be too. To inspire a young body of believers in Rome, he wrote, “I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes...” (Romans 1:16). Dare to be bold for God. Ask Him to guide your steps and help you see opportunities to share your faith. Do not step in front of His leading, but courageously do what He leads you to do.

Good Watchmen are good witnesses—they know how to share their faith, and do. What follows are a few suggestions regarding how to grow in being a witness for the Lord.

WHAT TO KNOW

- ➔ All are called to serve and share. Acts 1:8 notes that individuals receive the Holy Spirit so they can effectively “...be [His] witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, and the uttermost parts of the earth.” Though the dynamics of the Spirit’s working may be different now than it was before the rapture, I believe God will still assist and empower believers to accomplish great things in these last days. Remember, you are assisted and saved, to serve and share. God expects believers to share the insight and grace they have received from Him.
- ➔ Be courageous but be careful. Most are aware that one of the early Christian symbols is the image of a fish (). What many do not know is that this symbol originated as a secret greeting—a way to identify whether or not a person you were talking to was a believer (an important question as there were times when being a Christian was considered a crime punishable by death). In an attempt to discern if a situation was safe to talk about one’s faith openly, a careful individual would subtly sweep an arc (semi-circle) in the sand. If the person you were facing was a believer and it was safe to talk about Christ, they would repeat the action (completing the image of a fish), and the conversation would move forward. I am not suggesting that

every believer share only with believers, and only when it is safe. I am, however, noting that there is a place for prudence. Be bold, but do not take unnecessary risks—particularly if you do not sense God’s leading to do so. Jesus commended the shrewd steward (Luke 16), and urged His disciples to be “wise as serpents and harmless as doves...” (Matthew 10:16).

- ➔ Know the time is short. In most sports, if the clock is about to run out and points are needed, the coach will call a play requiring risk in an all-out effort to secure the win. Friends, it is important to realize that the hour is late. The Tribulation period will end seven years after the signing of a peace agreement between Israel and her enemies. After that time, the eternal fate of all humans will forever be sealed. Do not delay in doing the work and sharing the message God has given you. Take advantage of every opportunity. Please see the Bible Prophecy videos posted at www.vimeo.com/IAMAWatchman for more information on the Tribulation, the Antichrist, and what is next on the prophetic timeline.
- ➔ Hospitality opens doors for witnessing. We are to share the Gospel whenever and however the Lord leads. Opportunities can come at any time, and we are called to be ready for these unexpected opportunities to share. However, you can create excellent opportunities to share by showing initiative in the area of hospitality. You can create an opportunity for spiritual discussion by inviting a person over for a cup of coffee, or for a meal. The objective is to build relationships with those who do not yet believe in Christ and look for opportunities to share your faith.
- ➔ You often have opportunities to share with those you serve. Look for opportunities to help and serve. This may be someone who is ill or sad, or in need of assistance with a project. Be generous with your time. Invest in helping others as this will create platforms for witnessing. Remember, leading in kindness often leads to opportunities to share the Gospel.

WHAT TO DO

- ➔ Pray for and spend time building relationships with those who are not saved. We tend to listen well to the people we know well. This means, our evangelistic message will likely be best received by people who know us and trust us. This also means we must make time to build relationships with those who do not know the Lord to be well positioned to win them to the Lord. Begin with people you know. Believe that God has put a few individuals in your circle of influence so that you can witness to them. Pray and ask God to reveal to you who those people are. Ask God for wisdom to know how to invest your time and build relationships so that there will be opportunities to share your faith.
- ➔ Share what you know. It is tempting to reason that you should leave witnessing to the experts. Many defer involvement in personal evangelism thinking that first they should feel more comfortable, memorize more Scripture, acquire more training, or have more answers at the ready. The desire to learn more is commendable, but do NOT allow that desire to keep you from your duty today. An amazing witness does not need to be astoundingly articulate; A powerful witness does not need to be extremely polished—the message just needs to be true, point to Jesus, and come from the heart. Jesus invited Andrew to learn more by simply saying, “Come and see” (John 1:39). The Samaritan woman in John 4 was a powerful witness by simply telling others about the amazing things Jesus did. The blind man in John 9 did not have theological training but his witness was powerful when he testified of how the Lord had been good to him saying, “One thing I do know. I was blind, but now I see!” Share what you know. Practice sharing your testimony—a short version (less than 90 seconds), and a longer version. Look for opportunities to share, for when you seek them, you will see them.
- ➔ Do not be afraid to share, but speak in truth and love. In Proverbs 10:10a we are told, “Whoever winks the eye causes trouble...” Our culture suggests that in the name of tolerance and peace, we should ignore sinful behavior. Proverbs 10:10 notes that the opposite is true.

Further, Proverbs 24:25 notes that “...it will go well with those who convict the guilty...”

This does not mean condemn, reject, shame, or excommunicate, it means care enough about the wayward brother or lost person to let them know what Jesus expects. One verse later we read: “An honest answer [the truth] given is like a kiss of friendship” (Proverbs, 24:26, NLT). A true friend will share about Jesus and His promised, imminent return. It is not OK to be judgmental, but when the motive is pure, and words are spoken in love, it is OK to make judgments about what is right and wrong and voice truth. This is the calling of a Watchman. For additional information on this subject, please click this link to an article entitled, Is It Ever OK To Judge? <https://iamawatchman.com/is-it-ever-ok-to-judge/>

- ➔ “Do the ask.” Over the centuries many individuals (even preachers) did a fine job sharing about Jesus but fell short when it came to asking individuals if they are ready to surrender, confess, and enter into a relationship with Jesus. Watchmen will wisely and boldly do the ask. Pray and strive to be sensitive to the Spirit’s leading in this, but always be looking for that open door to ask, “Are you ready to become a Christian?” Then, of course, be prepared to concisely and clearly explain what that means and how that can be accomplished.
- ➔ Prioritize knowing the Word and knowing how to respond to common spiritual questions. 1 Peter 3:15 notes that believers are to “...Be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have.” The 1 Peter 3:15 directive is for ALL believers (not just clergy). Believers must study the Word (2 Timothy 2:15), have it embedded in their heart (Psalm. 119:11), and be ready to share it (1 Peter 3:15). It is generally true that the more spiritual answers we can provide, the more compelling our witness will be. Commit to being a lifelong learner. This will honor God, support you in your spiritual walk, and strengthen your witness. Noted below are a few links to video teachings and articles designed to help you know how to

lead someone to Christ, and respond to common spiritual questions:

- ➔ A document on Salvation: <https://iamawatchman.com/how-to-become-a-christian/>
- ➔ A video teaching on God's gift of salvation: <https://vimeo.com/260646426>
- ➔ Consider if news headlines present an opportunity to witness. In these last days many current events will tie into the fulfillment of biblical prophecy. Read the PROPHECY BOOK and view the prophecy videos in this Kit of material to become aware of how current events lay a foundation for, or are the fulfillment of, Bible prophecy. This is an age of skepticism; the vast majority doubt the integrity and reliability of the Bible. This is also an age when Bible prophecies are being fulfilled at a pace not seen in over 2000 years. Be aware of current events, and become comfortable sharing how the fulfillment of prophecy proves the Bible is true. It will provide an open door for spiritual discussions and strengthen your witness.
- ➔ Use social media to share God's message. Be careful here—there are ways for individuals to identify who is posting and sending Christian content on most computers and phones. However, prayerfully consider safe ways to utilize social media/online platforms to spread the Gospel. When posting, be wise and positive—do not use truth as a club. The goal here is to look for opportunities to post, comment, correct, inform, exhort, inspire, and encourage, all for the glory of God (1 Cor. 10:31-33).
- ➔ Expect opposition. Satan knows his time is short, and he is in a rage (Rev. 12:12). His minions spy to see who is serving and sharing. They will attempt to stop the work. Doubt and discouragement are two of Satan's favorite weapons. Do not let him steal your joy, slow you down, or hold you back from doing what God wants you to do. Consider this: If you were selected to be on a championship football team, suited up, walked on the field to play, and then came into possession of the ball, you would think it normal that members of the opposing team would chase you, try to tackle you or somehow stop you from completing

your objective. And if in the game you were blocked, hit, pushed, or tackled and thrown to the ground, you would not cry foul, pout, run off the field, or tell the coach things were not fair and you wanted to quit. No, you would understand that this was all part of the game. Football players expect to be chased and hit by the opposing team. Believers should expect opposition too. Believers are not promised comfort or ease but are promised victory (1 Corinthians 15:57).

- ➔ Expect God to move. James 1:6-7 notes that believers should pray expecting that God will move. Yes, Satan will attack, but God will prevail. God has, and will continue to move on behalf of, and through, His people. We may not always be able to see His working, but we can know He has a plan (Jeremiah 29:11) and He is at work (John 5:17b). Here is a link to a brief video teaching on Nehemiah and the importance of having faith and believing God for a miracle: <https://vimeo.com/272877904>
- ➔ Persevere. Believe that Galatians 6:9 is true: "Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up."

This writing, and the *I Am A Watchman* ministry materials, have been developed to encourage and support you in your spiritual walk.

Please visit the I Am A Watchman ministry website (www.IAmAWatchman.com) to view or download the library of free discipleship resources.

Prophecy notes that it will become increasingly difficult to be a Christian in the last days. There is a need for strong disciples and courageous Watchmen—individuals who know the Word, love the Lord, and share His truth. Will you accept that call?

The Lord is coming. Let every believer heed the challenge to prepare the world for the return of the King.

LINKS TO FOLLOW-UP VIDEO TEACHINGS

Teachings on Bible Prophecy

Bible Prophecy Part 1: This video teaching provides a general overview of the wonder and structure of Bible Prophecy. <https://vimeo.com/260646545>

Bible Prophecy Part 2: This video teaching profiles the precision of Bible Prophecy, and gives special consideration to an amazing set of prophecies in Ezekiel 4. <https://vimeo.com/260647409>

Bible Prophecy Part 3: This video teaching profiles the prophecies that have been fulfilled in the last 70 years, and notes what the recent concentration of fulfilled prophecies could indicate. <https://vimeo.com/260647409>

Bible Prophecy Part 4: This video teaching profiles the Rapture and provides Scriptural support for the view that a Rapture will take place prior to the rise of the Antichrist and Tribulation period. <https://vimeo.com/260649216>

Bible Prophecy Part 5: This video teaching profiles the Antichrist and notes his nature, his goals, and the characteristics that will define his reign. <https://vimeo.com/260667541>

Bible Prophecy Part 6: This video teaching profiles the Millennium and the Millennial Reign of Christ. This teaching presents an overview of the Who, What, Where, When and Why of this important upcoming event. <https://vimeo.com/260667687>

Bible Prophecy Part 7: This video teaching profiles the Psalm 83 War and what are likely to be the next prophecies to be fulfilled in the prophetic timeline. <https://vimeo.com/260668415>

LINKS TO FOLLOW-UP VIDEO TEACHINGS

What it means to be a watchman: This video teaching presents the biblical foundation for the term Watchman and the calling to be a Watchman. Drawing primarily from Ezekiel's 33, this teaching notes the particular heart, focus, and work of a watchman. The I Am A Watchman ministry team believes that at this a crucial time in history, God is calling both men and women to serve as spiritual watchmen. <https://vimeo.com/259965426>

How to be saved / The gift of salvation: This teaching video profiles the need to be saved, what God through Christ has done to make salvation possible, and what individuals must do to receive God's precious gift. God's greatest desire is that His people know Him and enter into relationship with Him. The link to this teaching is noted below: <https://vimeo.com/260646426>

Teachings on Apologetics (Reasons to believe):

- ➔ Reasons to believe (Part 1): <https://vimeo.com/260668664>
- ➔ Reasons to believe (Part 2): <https://vimeo.com/260668764>
- ➔ Reasons to believe (Part 3): <https://vimeo.com/260668947>

ABOUT THE I AM A WATCHMAN MINISTRY

The *I Am A Watchman* ministry has been established to help individuals know the love of Jesus, enter into relationship with Jesus, live for Jesus, tell others about Jesus, and to prepare for the imminent return of Jesus. In informal language, the Watchman ministry strives to help individuals finish well (which is to live a life of meaning and purpose, and at the coming judgment hear the Lord say, “Well done my good and faithful servant”).

In more theological terms, the I Am A Watchman ministry’s focus is to help prepare the bride of Christ to meet the coming Bridegroom. This language comes from Matt. 25:1-46, Rev. 19:7-9, Rev. 21:2, John 14:1-3, and Rev. 21:9-11. The phrase is a word picture that imagines believers in Christ as the bride, who stand in readiness and purity, waiting for the Groom, who has promised to return, reward, and take his bride away.

The wise will strive to live well so they can finish well. The astute will strive to be aware of what God has done and what prophecy notes He will do in the days to come. In support of these goals, the I Am A Watchman ministry is happy to make available at no cost a wealth of discipleship, prophecy, and spiritual growth resources for those who desire to learn. Please visit the www.IAmAWatchman.com website to access these resources.

NOTES



About this author: Gary Ray is a student of the Word. He has served in pastoral ministry for 30 years and currently serves as President of the *I Am A Watchman* ministry.

He is a lifelong learner, knows and appreciates the grace of God, and enjoys speaking and writing about what God has done, and what He is going to do

About this booklet: It is true that believers are to *walk by faith and not by sight* (2 Cor. 5:7), but God in His mercy has provided an abundance of evidence to lead those with questions toward truth. God has provided this evidence not only so individuals can be confident in His love, but also so that believers can be confident in their faith and well positioned to provide a defense for the Gospel.

Christians are called to impact the world for Christ and persuade individuals to believe (2 Cor. 5:11). It is not enough to be able to state **what** you believe—to be a powerful witness one must also be able to articulate **why** they believe *what they believe*. The information in this booklet is designed to equip and aid believers in that important quest.