

Why the Bible Is the Word of God



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“It has been my custom for many years to read the Bible in its entirety once a year”

—John Quincy Adams (U.S. president 1825-1829)

Today a vital ingredient is sorely missing in our modern lives. We simply are not coping with all the stresses of the age. Our human mechanism—brain and body—is breaking down under the strain. In an overcrowded world, a deep sense of loneliness often engulfs the individual.

Perhaps the most damaging casualty has occurred in our relationships with each other, not to mention our wholesale estrangement from God. Trust is becoming a thing of the past. Long-held community values are evaporating before our eyes.

Men and women encounter tremendous difficulty keeping standards of truth intact in a climate where morality is fading fast and movie marquees advise us to “succumb to our darker side.” As one newspaper columnist wrote, “we live in an age which has tried excessively hard to eliminate absolute rules.”

We are also losing our sense of security. Describing one prominent Western nation, a newspaper article said that, “if the country had a therapist, the complaint could be defined as a virulent strain of unease, per-

haps of national insecurity.”

Our children are truly worried about tomorrow—and rightfully so. Jobs don’t appear to last all that long, and many marriages end in the divorce courts.

At best the future looks uncertain.

In the words of European parliamentarian Sir

Frederick Catherwood, “the all-pervasive rationalism of our own century, infiltrating our whole culture and philosophy, has reduced man to an animal, condemned to a meaningless existence terminated by death.” The spread of this type of godless secularism has taken a heavy toll on society.

CRISIS ON THE WORLD SCENE

We live in an age of constant crisis! The Middle East threatens to explode at almost any time. Although the Cold War may be history, many of the former

U.S.S.R.’s nuclear weapons still exist. Diplomats and other government officials remind us that Russia still possesses some 20,000 nuclear weapons.

The deadly spread of weapons of mass destruction is an all-pervasive problem. Terrorist groups—generally armed to the teeth with modern weapons and living as a law unto themselves—threaten the stability of many nations.

Population growth still soars out of control in many areas of the world, stretching resources to the limit and leading to further global instability. As *The Times* (of London) warns, “A ballooning world population is taking such a heavy toll of the planet’s resources that it is putting the survival of humankind in jeopardy . . .”

Pollution and other problems threaten to strangle earth’s life-sustaining ecosystems. One writer warns that “the West is destroying the ecological systems upon which its economic life depends.” A frightening example is the earth’s loss of two thirds of its original forest cover. Environmentalist Francis Sullivan warned that “in one generation we are facing the almost complete loss of natural forest.” The forests are the lungs of the earth—and without lungs, we cannot breathe.

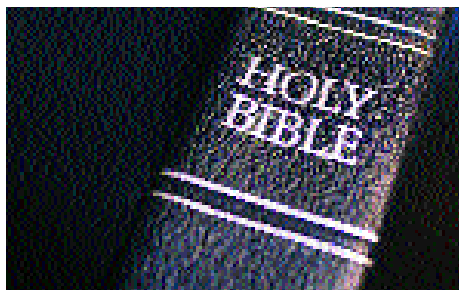
It is in just such a threatened, confused and crisis-charged age that a centuries-old organism—the Church—is called upon to do its work. Deeply sensitive to its duties and responsibilities in spreading and teaching the true gospel message (Matthew 24:14; 28:18-20), the United Church of God, an International Association, offers this Bible-study course—filling a most important need in today’s troubled world.

For many millions, God’s Word is unexplored and uncharted territory. Yet the Bible is not only designed to help human beings cope in a world caught up in all kinds of crises. It contains the *good news* of the coming Kingdom of God—showing how God *will* solve the many problems of a world edging ever closer to catastrophe.

LEARNING TO APPRECIATE THE BIBLE

Today’s alarming conditions cause many men and women to feel a deep sense of unease. At the same time many experience a real spiritual hunger. Clearly “they feel there is something outside the box of time and space in which they find themselves” (Catherwood).

They wonder about the reality of God and the Bible.



The Bible reveals great truths that, when comprehended, can transform your life in ways you’ve never imagined.

Could it just be that there are some workable answers after all?

This unique course is designed to address some of the most fundamental questions about our almost never-ending quest for God. It also seeks to explore the inevitable implications for our personal behavior.

This first lesson consists of an overview of several basic biblical themes that later lessons will cover in much greater detail. First it addresses questions we all contemplate: Does God exist? What makes the Bible different from other books? Why did God create men and women? Is there something much greater than this life in store for us?

Together in this study course we will walk through some of the most intriguing and inspiring portions of the Bible, seeking to discover the real purpose for our being—and how we may live fulfilling lives while accomplishing that great purpose.

Jesus Christ said: “I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly” (John 10:10). The Bible reveals great truths that, when comprehended, can transform your life in ways you’ve never imagined.

HOW TO BEGIN YOUR STUDY

Here are a few helpful points that will help you get the most out of this course. The most important one is one of the simplest: searching out every scripture refer-

ence in your own Bible. Although some of the principal scriptures are quoted, we strongly encourage you to personally *look up every passage* in order to see each scripture in its proper context.

Our main textbook is the Bible itself. In addition to each basic biblical quote, our *comments* usually include additional pertinent scriptural references. Most of these will appear after the term “*compare*.” You will find much deeper understanding if you look up and ponder the meaning and significance of every biblical reference.

This study course is designed to help you become more skilled in your personal study, as well as doing nothing less than assisting you in changing your whole life for the better. We also encourage you to request your free copy of the booklet *How to Understand the Bible*. It offers additional information to help you grow in understanding from your study of the Bible.

The question-and-answer format is an enormously effective way of presenting the biblical material covered in this course. Also, unless otherwise noted, all biblical quotes are taken from the New King James Version.

Finally, to help you gain the most benefit from these lessons, each will conclude with a set of review questions that you may use to test yourself.

Together we now embark on a journey of discovery through the Bible.

HOW DOES GOD REVEAL KNOWLEDGE?

In ages past, how did God choose to reveal His knowledge to humankind?

“God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets . . .” (Hebrews 1:1).

God Almighty, Creator of all we see, does not leave humankind without guidance and direction. He has put His thoughts into words for our benefit. God has revealed Himself through the vehicle of words.

The Bible itself calls Jesus Christ “the Word” (John 1:1, 14). And, according to this introductory New Testament passage, the message of the Hebrew Bible (the Old Testament) is the true Word of God (compare Matthew 4:4; Luke 4:4; Acts 24:14; 28:23).

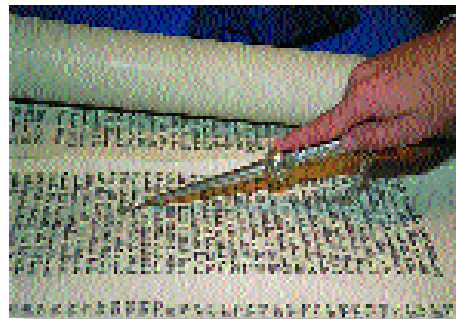
But how did God choose to reveal even more precious knowledge?

“[God] has in these last days spoken to us by His Son . . .” (Hebrews 1:2).

Moses prophesied of a coming, future Prophet similar to himself *whose words* the Bible encourages us to heed (Deuteronomy 18:15, 18). The apostle Peter identified this great Prophet as Jesus Christ Himself (Acts 3:20, 22-23). No doubt about it—Jesus Christ was *that* Prophet! (compare John 1:45; Luke 24:27).

Jesus Christ, as God’s own Son, is the ultimate Prophet, and His words are the very essence of prophecy (Revelation 19:10). We should listen carefully to what He tells us (Matthew 17:5).

Christ’s words are chiefly found in the four semibiographical accounts of His life and teaching: the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. However, in a much larger sense they are found in the whole Bible. Jesus Himself endorsed the truth and the authority of the Hebrew Writings, commonly called the Old Testament, by calling them Scripture (Luke 24:44-45). He also provided for the inspiration and writing of the books that would later become the New Testament (John 14:26; 16:13).



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How did God guide the thoughts of His servants?

"For prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit" (2 Peter 1:21).

The apostle Paul also tells us in 2 Timothy 3:16 that all Scripture is "inspired" (literally "God-breathed"). Consider his choice of words. Paul described Scripture using the Greek term *theopneustos*. The first part of the word, *Theo*, means "God." The second part is *pneustos*—meaning "breathed." So the apostle says, as some translations put it, "All Scripture is *God-breathed*," meaning it came directly from the mouth of God.

Clearly our Creator directly inspired the divine message revealed by both the apostles and the prophets (compare 2 Peter 3:2). As we will show by many scriptures, God made known His divine message to man through the patriarchs and prophets of old as well as through the New Testament apostles.

In fact, Peter ranks Paul's epistles with "the rest of the Scriptures"—the latter primarily referring to the Old Testament (2 Peter 3:15-16). In 1 Timothy

5:18, Paul refers to two quotations as Scripture. One is from the Old Testament (Deuteronomy 25:4), and one is from Luke's Gospel (Luke 10:7). So, when Paul wrote his first letter to Timothy around A.D. 64, some additional writings apparently were already being considered on a par with the Old Testament and were called Scripture.

Nearly 4,000 times, passages in the Hebrew Bible are introduced by such expressions as "The LORD spoke," "Thus says the LORD" and "the Word of the LORD came." Scripture is consistently portrayed as coming from the very "mouth of God" Himself (Matthew 4:4).

Yet in one sense the authorship of the Bible is dual because both God and man are clearly involved. Our Creator directly inspired these Hebrew prophets. "For prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit" (2 Peter 1:21). So God spoke "by the mouth of all His holy prophets" (Acts 3:21)—and by their writings as well (Luke 21:22). The natural conclusion is that all Scripture comes from God!

Says *The Lion Concise Bible Handbook*: "It is interesting that the New Testament makes no distinction between what 'Scripture' says and what God says. Old Testament quotations are given as what God said, even though God was not the speaker in the Old Testament context" (p. 10).

A Close Encounter

When the Roman general Pompey successfully entered Jerusalem in the first century B.C., he was determined to satisfy his curiosity about certain stories circulating around the Mediterranean world about the



Pompey the Great

worship of the Jewish people. After conquering this city he made it one of his personal priorities to ascend the Temple Mount to find out the truth behind the puzzling reports that the Jewish people had no physical statue or image of God in their most sacred place of worship, the Holy of Holies.

To Pompey it was inconceivable to worship God without portraying Him in a type of physical likeness, as a statue. So Pompey "bravely" entered forbidden territory, the most-holy sanctuary—and lived to tell about it. What Pompey saw left him greatly puzzled and bewildered. He found no physical statue, no religious image, no pictorial description of the Hebrew God—only an empty space. He left the temple without saying a word!

What this powerful emissary of Rome experienced

in Jerusalem, he had seen nowhere else on his travels in the empire. How unlike the worship of other nations! How different from other religions! Jerusalem represented a totally different God from those to whom the rest of the world paid homage.

Pompey did not understand that this was the invisible God (Hebrews 11:27) who was *not* to be portrayed by human imagery, but who inhabits eternity (Isaiah 57:15)—the One who revealed Himself to Moses as "I AM WHO I AM" (Exodus 3:14). This God had eternal life within Himself (1 Timothy 6:16).

This omnipotent, all-knowing, invisible God has to be worshiped in spirit and in truth because *He is Spirit* (John 4:24). But, to the ancient Romans, Babylonians, Assyrians and Egyptians, religious imagery constituted a normal part of their worship. Initially this is why Pompey refused to give credence to reports from Jerusalem of a people honoring their God without the aid of statues. He knew of no such worship elsewhere. It made no sense to the Roman mind to worship a god without knowing what he looked like.

But when Israel was called out of Egypt—out of abject slavery and religious deception—this generation of God's people was introduced to the One whose unique requirements would make His adherents different from the rest of the world (Deuteronomy 7:6). So it was to a nation of former slaves that the Ten Commandments were given (Exodus 20:1-17)—a moral code not of human origin, but divinely authored and delivered to ancient Israel by the eternal God.

What are some of the qualities that God ascribes to His Word?

“Receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls” (James 1:21, King James Version, emphasis added throughout).

Paul also calls it “the faithful word” (Titus 1:9), “the word of life” (Philippians 2:16) and “the word of truth” (2 Timothy 2:15). These potent expressions help us to comprehend the true nature of Scripture and the God behind it. The healing qualities and power of the Word can be *engrafted* (or implanted) into our very beings. As we seek our Creator, His Word will enable us to produce lasting good fruit in our lives (Isaiah 55:6-13).

What one quality of that Word would we all do well to heed?

“For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart” (Hebrews 4:12).

The Bible was *not* designed to be read casually as simply good literature, or as a contribution to our historical learning, or even as an interesting exercise in academic theology. The purpose for reading and studying God’s Word is *to gain understanding of His will, to learn to live by His Word.* As a result of diligently studying the Bible, God desires and expects *action* on our part (compare Hebrews 4:11, 13).

CONSIDERING THE EXISTENCE OF GOD

“It is astonishing that any man can forebear enquiring whether there is a God; whether God is just; whether this life is the only state of existence”

—Samuel Johnson

More than 200 years after the period of literary giant Samuel Johnson (1709-1784), journalist and historian Paul Johnson wrote: “The existence or non-existence of God is the most important question we humans are ever called to answer. If God does exist, and in consequence we are called to another life when this one ends . . . *our life then becomes a preparation for eternity*” (*The Quest for God*, p. 1, emphasis added).

All that said, even in our secular Western world the majority at least acknowledge the existence of God. So perhaps the more relevant question for our modern age remains: *Is God real to us?* Even the best of us occasionally behaves as if God is powerless to deal with our misdeeds: unable to forgive, free us from guilt and set us back on the right path.

However, the Bible tells us that “he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him” (Hebrews 11:6). The patriarchs, prophets and apostles all experienced

the reality of God in a personal way. Consider the patriarch Abraham. He learned over time that whatever God had promised He was able to perform (Romans 4:20-21).

Of course, the Bible itself never questions the existence of God. The Holy Scriptures are built upon the solid reality and presence of God. They are reliable witnesses to many personal encounters between God and His chosen servants—first the historic Hebrew prophets and later the first-century apostles. The Bible



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includes the Hebrew writers in the “great cloud of witnesses” (Hebrews 12:1) listed in Hebrews 11, which recounts the stories of many of God’s faithful servants.

Did God establish personal contact with certain people?

“God called to him from the midst of the bush and said, ‘Moses, Moses!’ And he said, ‘Here I am’” (Exodus 3:4).

This is the account of the burning bush—the first of many personal, direct conversations between God and Moses (compare Numbers 12:6-8; Exodus 33:11).

As professor Keith Ward wrote in his book *Religion & Revelation*, “When one reads the biblical accounts of revelation, one finds records of long, almost everyday, conversations between God and Moses. It is as though God is Moses’ companion, telling him in particular situations what he needs to do” (p. 115).

Truly God did appear to Moses, revealing His divine words, which the prophet carefully recorded for future generations. In the Bible we are told that “Moses wrote all the words of the LORD” (Exodus 24:4).

Did God clearly identify Himself?

“Moreover He said, ‘I am the God of your father—the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.’ And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look upon God” (Exodus 3:6).

The One Moses encountered was the God of the Hebrew patriarchs such as Abraham, who also had personal conversations with this same God (Genesis 18).

Moses' initial fearful reaction to the awesome presence of God is entirely understandable. Later he overcame that fear and requested to see God personally (compare Exodus 33:18-23; 32:11-14; Deuteronomy 3:24).

Many today don't know who and what God is! This fundamental knowledge has escaped the majority of mankind. The prophet Hosea lamented that the house of Israel had willingly lost and abandoned the knowledge of God, with tragic consequences (Hosea 4:1-6).



There is ample scientific evidence from many fields of learning confirming the existence of God.

to the people on it, and spirit to those who walk on it" (Isaiah 42:5).

God clearly tells us that He is the Creator of both the heavens and the earth (Genesis 1:1)—and human beings (Genesis 1:26-27; compare Acts 17:24-26).

From time to time throughout history God has chosen to remind certain men that He is the Creator of all things. The patriarch Job was one such man. Four chapters in the book of Job are devoted to God extolling the intricate wonders of His creation (Job 38-41). Genesis 1 is not the only chapter about creation in the Bible.

Can we understand more about God through His creation?

"For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead . . ." (Romans 1:20).

A millennium earlier, King David similarly expressed the understanding that God also reveals Himself through His wondrous creation (compare Psalm 19:1-6). It makes a lot of sense to most human beings that the creation requires a Creator. Just as a finely tuned watch doesn't come into existence by itself, so our magnificent, awe-inspiring universe did not somehow create itself. God carefully planned, crafted and created it. He is *not* a blind watchmaker. God fully understood what He was doing (compare Genesis 1:31; Revelation 4:11).

Does God say that there is a direct relationship between belief and behavior?

How much more in this present age!

Do the biblical prophets tell us who the Creator is?

"Thus says God the LORD, who created the heavens and stretched them out, who spread forth the earth and that which comes from it, who gives breath

"The LORD looks down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there are any who understand, who seek God. They have all turned aside, they have together become corrupt" (Psalm 14:2-3).

The context of Psalm 14 is clear. Unbelief and corrupt behavior go hand in hand. But, the better we know and understand God, the better our Christian conduct is likely to be.

Although God is Spirit (John 4:24) and far above us in nature and stature, what is His approach and attitude toward His people?

"For thus says the High and Lofty One who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy: I dwell in the high and holy place, with him who has a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones" (Isaiah 57:15).

God "inhabits eternity" and therefore is not inhibited by the physical laws of time and space. Yet He is

Believers in God

"This beautiful system of the sun, planets and comets could only proceed from the counsel and dominion of an intelligent and powerful Being . . ."

Sir Isaac Newton (17th-century British mathematician and physicist)



"It is impossible to rightly govern the world without God and the Bible"

George Washington (first president of the United States)

George Washington

"Personally I have always taken the view . . . that Almighty God, far from setting the universe in motion and then letting the drama enact itself—as many think—is an ever-present, ubiquitous arbiter in all affairs"

Paul Johnson (20th-century British journalist and historian)

"I want to know [God's] thoughts; the rest are details"

Albert Einstein (20th-century German-American scientist)

"The intellectual beauty of the order discovered by science is consistent with the physical world's having behind it the mind of the divine Creator"

John Polkinghorne (20th-century British scientist and author)

quick to forgive and encourage those who are really repentant and desire in their hearts to do His will (Isaiah 55:6-7).

And, although there is ample scientific evidence from many fields of learning confirming the existence of God, the most meaningful proof remains personal. When we really achieve a private spiritual relationship with God as our Father and Jesus Christ as our elder Brother, we *know* that They exist.

We should not underestimate the power of God's Word. Lydia of Thyatira heard the preaching of the apostle Paul. As a result, "the Lord opened her heart to heed the things spoken by Paul" (Acts 16:14; compare Romans 10:14-15).

WHY THE BIBLE IS DIFFERENT

Throughout its long and difficult journey, the Bible has successfully withstood the many assaults leveled against it. Forbidden in the Middle Ages, bombarded with higher criticism during the 19th century and grossly neglected in the 20th, the Bible nonetheless continues to offer humankind sure hope and guidance.

As author David Ewert put it, "the Bible has resisted not only the ravages of time but also repeated attempts of the enemies of God to obliterate it" (*From Ancient Tablets to Modern Translations*, p. 16).

Although many writers authored the Bible, the perceptive reader gradually becomes aware of *one great mind* at work permeating its pages from Genesis to Revelation. No wonder the apostle Paul reminded early Christians that the Holy Scriptures are the "oracles of God" (Romans 3:2). They are divine utterances.

When God revealed His will at Mount Sinai, He commanded Moses to codify and pass on this Word to the people (Deuteronomy 5:31; 6:1; 17:18; 31:24-26). Eventually the Scriptures were habitually read aloud in the temple at Jerusalem and elsewhere. Citizens could hear, understand and act accordingly. For instance, we find Jesus Christ had ready access to the Scriptures and read them aloud in the synagogue at Nazareth (Luke 4:16-22). The audience there marveled at Christ's gracious words as He applied Isaiah's prophecy to Himself.

Later the apostles were inspired to write letters to the Church, often explaining the Holy Scriptures. With other writers and followers of Christ, they also penned the accounts of Christ's life and work that came to be commonly known as the Gospels. God saw to it that these unique writings were preserved for later generations (2 Peter 1:15).

Centuries later, after the invention of printing and translation of the Scriptures into popular languages, the common people increasingly gained access to the Holy Bible. Today this Book of books is accessible in almost all nations. Yet the secular thought patterns of our modern age often act as a powerful restraint on reading and understanding its pages.

The basic thinking of today's world often turns people *away* from the Bible. This is why magazines

and study courses properly explaining and expounding God's Word are absolutely necessary. We need to read the Bible with godly understanding!

How does God communicate with His creation?

"It is he who fashions the mountains, who creates the wind, and declares his thoughts to mankind . . . His name is the LORD, the God of Hosts" (Amos 4:13, Revised English Bible).

By creating man in His own image, God ensured that communication would be possible. Then with God's help, human beings are able to understand and respond to His spiritual purposes.

When God wanted His people to return to Jerusalem from their Babylonian captivity, was He able to accomplish His purpose by transmitting an important message to an ancient king who could carry out this task?

"Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled, the LORD stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, so that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and also put it in writing . . ." (Ezra 1:1).



Today this Book of books is accessible in almost all nations. Yet the secular thought patterns of our modern age act as a powerful restraint on reading and understanding its pages.

God can communicate with anyone He chooses, even worldly kings and rulers like Cyrus. Solomon once commented, "The king's heart is in the hand of the LORD, like the rivers of water; He turns it wherever He wishes" (Proverbs 21:1; compare Ezra 6:22; 2 Chronicles 36:22-23).

How did God reveal the truth about His Son's divine identity?

"Jesus answered and said to [Peter], 'Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven'" (Matthew 16:17; compare verses 13-16).

Far more important than messages to unbelieving kings, God has revealed His precious truth to His apostles and prophets—who in turn preserved it for future generations (compare Amos 3:7; 2 Peter 3:2; Ephesians 2:19-20). Today our understanding of God's Word is based on this same written revelation (2 Peter

1:19-20). Spiritual illumination of the Scriptures continues down to our present age (compare John 17:20; Matthew 28:20).

What was one of the main ways that God disclosed His truth to the early Church?

“And they continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers” (Acts 2:42).



Nothing characterizes our modern age more than fractured, dysfunctional personal relationships.

The term *doctrine* simply means “teaching.” It relates directly to God’s Word. The apostles’ teaching summarizes the Christian way of life. Those early first-century congregations did not at first possess the books we now call the New Testament.

However, they did have specially chosen apostles who taught them from the Hebrew Bible as well as continually repeating the things they had learned firsthand from Jesus Christ (compare Luke 6:12-13; Matthew 28:18-20). Their authority came directly from Christ. “He who receives you receives Me,” said Jesus (Matthew 10:40; John 13:20).

Christ’s chosen apostles were given a unique role as first-generation witnesses—a function not assigned to any succeeding generation. Jesus told them, “And you also will *bear witness*, because you have been with Me from the beginning” (John 15:27). And the apostle John wrote: “This is the message which we have *heard from Him* [Jesus Christ] *and declare to you . . .*” (1 John 1:5; compare Ephesians 3:4-5; Acts 1:22; 1 Corinthians 15:1-8).

Empowered by the Holy Spirit, the early apostles and their converts actually *lived* the New Testament before it was put into writing. Their lives composed the flesh, bone and sinew of what later would become the written New Testament.

Summing up the experiences of these apostolic witnesses, John wrote: “That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, concerning the Word of life—the life was manifested, and we have seen, and bear witness, and declare to you that eternal life which was with the Father and was manifested to us—that which we have seen and heard we declare to you, that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ” (1 John 1:1-3).

What are God’s intentions for man?

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

God uttered these encouraging words to a nation in Babylonian captivity centuries ago, but they apply equally as well today. His Word offers a message of hope and a bright future, both for individuals and entire nations.

God’s words apply today just as well as when they were first recorded long ago. Human nature is timeless. The men and women of old were of “like passions” (James 5:17; Acts 14:15, KJV). They weren’t some different breed of humanity. The things that happened to them were for our learning, encouragement, hope, comfort—and sometimes as a solemn warning (compare 1 Corinthians 10:11; Romans 15:4).

What does God guarantee about His Word?

“For as the rain comes down, and the snow from heaven, and do not return there, but water the earth, and make it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; it shall not return to Me void, but it shall accomplish what I please, and it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it” (Isaiah 55:10-11).

God does not speak His Word in vain. It will accomplish His great purpose on earth!

What does God require in order that He might share additional knowledge?

“Call to Me, and I will answer you, and show you great and mighty things, which you do not know” (Jeremiah 33:3).

We must first have a spiritual hunger for God’s Word (Matthew 5:6). Then, through reading and studying the Bible, we can discover basic truths about God and His revealed way of living. We can also see them amply demonstrated by real events in the lives of His chosen servants. These biblical teachings and examples illuminate His character and illustrate His will for us (compare Proverbs 3:1-6). We can trust God to direct our lives into right paths as we give Him our heartfelt obedience.

Wrote author John Stott: “The Bible is the prism by which the light of Jesus Christ is broken into its many beautiful colors.” Christ is the living Word of God!

During what time frame is the Word of God to be our guide?

“The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God stands forever” (Isaiah 40:8).

The certain destiny of God’s Word has been prophesied for thousands of years (compare Psalm 119:89, 111, 142, 152, 160). Jesus Christ said: “Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away” (Luke 21:33).

HOW THE BIBLE HELPS CEMENT BROKEN RELATIONSHIPS

From beginning to end the Bible is a book about relationships—how they can be revitalized and restored.

Nothing characterizes our modern age more than fractured, dysfunctional personal relationships. Indeed the initial breakdown started not long after the creation of human life itself. Adam and Eve became estranged from God; their elder son killed his brother, and such breakdowns continued from there right down to our modern age of disjointed human relations.

Britain's chief rabbi, Jonathan Sacks, describes the general state of our relationships. "Today many parts of Britain and America are marked by vandalism, violent crime and a loss of civility; by the breakdown of the family and the widespread neglect of children; by an erosion of trust and general loss of faith in the power of governments to cure some of our most deep-seated problems, and by a widespread sense that matters crucial to our future welfare are slipping beyond our control."

We don't trust each other anymore. Relationships have lost their permanence. Lifelong marriages have ceased to be the accepted norm. Lasting careers are disappearing. Not so long ago a person could expect to work for one corporation for 40 years and then retire

with a company pension and perhaps a gold watch. No more. Young people can now expect to have to learn several trades in a lifetime, with the accompanying disruption to relationships, just to survive economically.

The diagnosis is simple. Relationships that work are based on common rules. When standards become vague and people cannot agree to accept and adhere to the same values, society goes awry. There have to be agreed-upon principles for human beings to follow. Otherwise we will continue to experience chaos in our relationships.

The Bible is *the* book about relationships. It emphasizes the most important relationship any human being can have—with *God Himself!* It shows how reconciliation with God leads to a right restoration of our relationships with other human beings—marriage partners, friends, fellow church members or fellow employees.

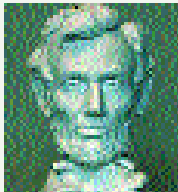


The Bible is the book about relationships. It emphasizes the most important relationship any human being can have, showing how reconciliation with God leads to a right restoration of our relations with other human beings.

Believers in the Bible

"So great is my veneration of the Bible that the earlier my children begin to read it the more confident will be my hope that they will prove useful citizens of their country"

John Quincy Adams
(U.S. president 1825-1829)



"I believe that the Bible is the best gift God has ever given to man"

Abraham Lincoln
(U.S. president 1861-1865)

Abraham Lincoln

"In all my perplexities and distresses, the Bible has never failed to give me light and strength"

Robert E. Lee (chief Confederate general during the American Civil War)

"There are more sure marks of authenticity in the Bible than any in profane history"

Sir Isaac Newton (17th-century British mathematician and physicist)

"The Bible is stamped with a Specialty of Origin, and an immeasurable distance separates it from all its competitors"

W. E. Gladstone
(19th-century British prime minister)

What is the nature of God's relationship with His Son Jesus Christ?

"The Father loves the Son, and has given all things into His hand . . . For the Father loves the Son, and shows Him all things that He Himself does . . ." (John 3:35; 5:20).

Many other scriptures show that Their relationship is one of love, harmony, cooperation and outgoing concern. Theirs is a perfect relationship!

Do the Father and Christ offer to extend Their own harmonious love to men and women made in the image of God?

"He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him" (John 14:21).

God the Father and Christ the Son extend Their love to men and women. But notice that Their love is based on adhering to eternal values and standards that originated with the Father. "He who does not love Me does not keep My words; and the word which you hear is not Mine but the Father's who sent Me" (verse 24; compare 1 John 4:16-19; John 17:22-26).

The Father and the Son are fully united in the laws by which They govern humankind. Those laws show

God's way of love and are given for the benefit of humankind (1 John 5:3; 2 John 6; Deuteronomy 5:33). Those who oppose those laws of love bring untold suffering and misery upon themselves and others. Often these agonies are manifested in the form of broken, dysfunctional human relationships.

What else is offered, both now and forever, to those willing to follow the spiritual standards and values of Jesus Christ and the Father?

"If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him

and make Our home with him" (John 14:23).

"... As many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God" (John 1:12).

"... But godliness is profitable for all things, having promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come" (1 Timothy 4:8).

Salvation is freely offered to those who are called now and willing to repent of past misdeeds, becoming obedient to the Father (compare Acts 2:37-39). Note that repentance, water baptism and the laying on of hands are the specified biblical requirements for the receiving of the Holy Spirit.

Having the Spirit of God is essential for salvation (compare Titus 3:4-7). Our free booklet *The Road to Eternal Life* explains these biblical doctrines in detail.

Should our relationships reflect the harmony between the Father and the Son?

"And this commandment we have from Him: that he who loves God must love his brother also" (1 John 4:21).

"By this we know that we love the children of

God, when we love God and keep His commandments" (1 John 5:2).

Love is governed and defined by eternal values coming forth from the very throne of God (1 John 2:3-7). The only real solution to our sad state of severed relationships is to repent and begin to keep God's Ten Commandments—which define true love toward God and neighbor—both in the letter and the spirit (compare James 2:8-12; Romans 13:8-10; 1 John 3:10-11).

Right relationships with God and man will lead us to a greater understanding of the purpose of life.

ANSWERING THE GREAT MYSTERY: WHY DID GOD CREATE MAN?

"Astronomers looked 8,000 light-years into the cosmos with the Hubble Space Telescope, and it seemed that the eye of God was staring back"

—National Geographic, April 1997

Scientific advancements like the Hubble Space Telescope have enabled us to peer beyond the threshold of the earth into the secrets of boundless space. Yet how do we puny humans fit into the limitless gulf of the universe? Where does the Bible come into all this? Does our purpose here on earth have anything to do with the infinite cosmos?

Do we have a rendezvous with infinity? Is our ultimate destiny so mind-expanding that the human intellect can hardly grasp its grandeur? What is our purpose on earth? What is our future?

The late American author Norman Cousins once asked: "How did the conditions that make life possible originate? How did they come together in vital confluence?" To many, educated in the Judeo-Christian ethic, the real answer resides in the early chapters of Genesis.

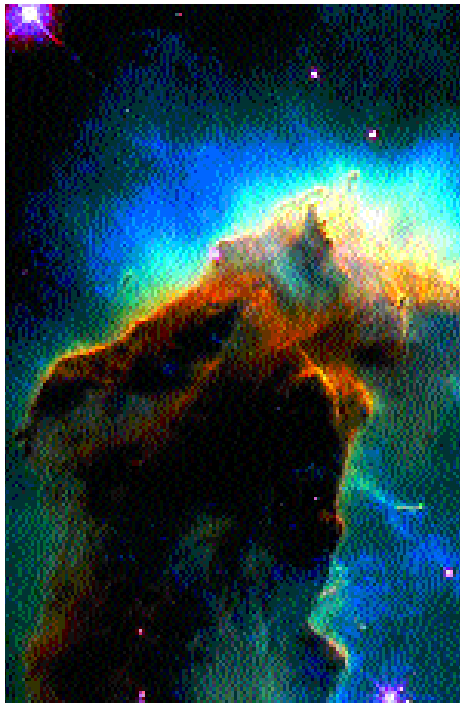
But as Mr. Cousins also observed: "The primary question is not, 'Where did life come from?' but 'What can human life become?' ... [Remember,] *we belong to an unfinished species*" (*Human Options*, emphasis added). When you really come to understand it, we were created *to need something we did not have within us* when we were born.

What is our ultimate purpose—our role in this vast cosmos?

"For the earnest expectation of the creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of God" (Romans 8:19).

"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new" (2 Corinthians 5:17).

Clearly the purpose of life is linked to *creation*. It did not end with the physical creation of Genesis chapter one. The present emphasis is on the *spiritual creation* God is bringing to pass in the lives of converted human beings (compare Galatians 6:15).



Scientific advancements like the Hubble Telescope have enabled us to peer beyond the threshold of the earth into the secrets of boundless space. Yet how do we puny humans fit into the limitless gulf of the universe? How does the Bible fit into all this?

Was the mystery of life always known?

“. . . According to the revelation of the mystery kept secret since the world began *but now has been made manifest, and by the prophetic Scriptures has been made known to all nations . . .*” (Romans 16:25-26).

The quest of the apostle Paul was “to make all [people] see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the ages has been hidden in God who created all things through Jesus Christ” (Ephesians 3:9).

Even today only those the Bible terms the “first-fruits”—those people God is calling to salvation now, in this age—truly understand that mystery (compare John 6:44, 65). It is the mission of the Church of God to proclaim, clarify and make known that mystery.

This is *not* the only day of salvation. Most people are unaware of God’s great plan and are not being given the opportunity for salvation at this time. Our free booklet *God’s Holy Day Plan: The Promise of*

Glossary

The Bible: The books (Greek, *biblia*) that are acknowledged as canonical (authoritative) by the early Christian Church. It includes both the books of the ancient Hebrew prophets and those of the apostolic witnesses to Jesus Christ.

The Hebrew Bible: The books of the Old Testament.

The languages of the Bible: Mostly ancient Hebrew for the Old Testament (Aramaic for a small portion of Daniel), ancient Greek for the New.

The New Testament: The 27 authoritative books of the apostolic writings: the four Gospels of Christ, Acts (a history), 21 apostolic letters and the book of Revelation.

The Old Testament: Those books that make up the Hebrew Bible generally accepted by Christians, Jews and to some extent Moslems. It contains a threefold division: the Law (the five books of Moses), the Prophets and the Writings.

Oracles: In the New Testament the term means divine utterances and generally refers to the entire Old Testament or specific parts of it.

The Scripture(s): The divinely inspired writings of both the Old and New Testaments. The term *Scripture* is used in the New Testament to refer to both the Hebrew Bible (Luke 24:44-45) and the new apostolic writings accepted as inspired (2 Peter 3:16; 1 Timothy 5:18).

Secularization or Secularism: The silencing of the supernatural; an implicit denial of the miraculous in explaining human existence.

Hope for All Humanity gives you the full background to understanding this essential biblical theme.

Does our future role involve a family relationship?

“I will be a Father to you, and you shall be My sons and daughters, says the LORD Almighty” (2 Corinthians 6:18).

Paul told the Christians in Galatia, “For you are all *sons of God* through faith in Christ Jesus” (Galatians 3:26). God is in the process of creating, molding and shaping *His future family*. This family will be wholly composed of spirit beings—destined to be in the Kingdom of God as *His children*, given eternal life by their Father.



Receiving God’s Spirit constitutes the promise or down payment that we will receive our full reward—being raised to eternal life as the children of God.

Is it possible for us, as physical human beings, to be full and complete family members of the Kingdom of God—now at this present time—in this age of man?

“Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does corruption inherit incorruption” (1 Corinthians 15:50).

To gain the immortality that God and Jesus Christ already possess, our very composition has to be changed. As Paul puts it, “As we have borne the image of the man of dust [Adam], we shall also bear the image of the heavenly Man [Jesus Christ]” (verse 49; compare Philippians 3:20-21; 1 Timothy 6:16).

Exactly when will this majestic and wonderful change take place?

“For since by man came death, by Man also came the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive. But each one in his own order: Christ’s first-fruits, afterward those who are Christ’s at His coming” (1 Corinthians 15:21-23).

This marvelous change takes place at the time of the

resurrection for those who have died in Christ, along with true Christians who will still be alive at His coming. The time frame for these astounding events is the second coming of Jesus Christ (compare 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17).

A word of explanation: This resurrection is called both “the first resurrection” (Revelation 20:4-6) and “a better resurrection” (Hebrews 11:35). God’s plan



Surely, we reason, people power will get the job done—but in the end we must face the grim and disappointing reality that our problems continue to multiply.

from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit [that] dwells in you” (Romans 8:11).

Receiving God’s Spirit constitutes the promise or

includes more than one resurrection. Our booklet *What Happens After Death?* explains the important distinctions.

But has God mercifully provided Christians a present guarantee of this astounding promise?

“But if the Spirit of Him [the Father] who raised Jesus

down payment that we will receive our full reward—being raised to eternal life as the children of God. Provided we continue to be faithful, this Spirit is our guarantee of eternal life in the Kingdom of God (2 Corinthians 1:22; 5:5). Those who receive the Holy Spirit now in this present age of man will join God’s everlasting family at the time of the first resurrection (compare Romans 8:18-19; Ephesians 1:13-14).

What is God planning with regard to His family?

“For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren” (Romans 8:29).

“In bringing many sons to glory, it was fitting that God, for whom and through whom everything exists, should make the author of their salvation perfect through suffering. Both the one who makes men holy and those who are made holy are of the same family. So Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers” (Hebrews 2:10-11, New International Version).

God is planning a large family with many children. The apostle Paul wrote of “the whole family” of God (Ephesians 3:15), but always with a view to its flesh-and-blood members eventually attaining immortality and everlasting life in that great family kingdom (compare 2 Peter 1:4).

To obtain a much greater knowledge of the grandeur of this marvelous biblical truth, please write

Reader Helps

In our offices we receive all types of letters and telephone calls—some simply to express appreciation for *The Good News* magazine or our booklets, but others containing questions about the Bible, its teachings and how they impact our personal lives.

If you have any questions or comments about the material presented in this study course, please feel free to contact our office in your country or in the country nearest you. One of our personal correspondents will be happy to help you (see sample letter below).

Also, if you would like to counsel with a United Church of God minister, we would be glad to arrange a private appointment—without any obligation.

Sample Letter

“How do we know the Bible is from God?”

P. H., Birmingham, England

What evidence would a confirmed skeptic or atheist accept as proof that the Holy Bible is the Word of God? At the end of the day, it is really a matter of faith as to whom you are willing to believe. A person must first have an open mind and be willing to accept the words of Jesus Christ and the other writers of Scripture.

Even those who were actually there during the min-

istry of Jesus Christ had difficulty believing He was the Messiah, the Son of God. It took real faith to accept that fact. Some did, but many did not (John 8:30, 42-46). Christ said: “He who is of God hears God’s words; therefore you do not hear, because you are not of God” (verse 47). But those who belong to God will believe the words of His Son and follow Him.

The Jews of Jesus’ day asked the question: “How long do You keep us in doubt? If You are the Christ, tell us plainly.” But Jesus replied: “I told you, and you do not believe. The works that I do in My Father’s name, they bear witness of Me. But you do not believe, because you are not of My sheep . . . My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me” (John 10:24-27).

Are we willing to listen to the voice of Jesus Christ? If you accept Christ who spoke as the Son of God with divine authority, we can then proceed to answer the question: “How do we know the Bible is from God?” Because it is Jesus Himself who gives the answer.

He spoke with authority and often appealed to the Old Testament Scriptures as a source of inspired truth. He quoted at least 36 passages from the Hebrew Bible and on many other occasions referred to the Old Testament without directly quoting it. He accepted its accuracy and authority without question, telling others to believe what Moses and the prophets said.

The apostle Peter wrote: “No prophecy ever came

for our free booklet *What Is Your Destiny?* It will help you understand the astounding future God has set before you.

DISCOVERING THE GREAT UNKNOWN: OUR INCREDIBLE HUMAN POTENTIAL

A prominent religious leader recently expressed the dilemma that confronts us: "It is not merely that we face problems. It is, rather, the feeling that we have run out of solutions, that we have reached an impasse in public life."

Read your daily newspaper. Regularly our politicians promise us a better life, greater security, more access to health and wealth, and a host of other good things. Groups of us will get together to demand this or that crash program to cut neighborhood crime, force the government to slash a galling tax rate or do something else that we think will improve our lives. Surely, we reason, people power will get the job done—but in the end we must face the grim and disappointing reality that our problems continue to multiply.

Because of inadequate cooperation and commitment at all levels, even the wholehearted efforts of famous media personalities have not been able to make a permanent dent in Africa's hunger and poverty. The poor and dying are also still very much with us in the prosperous Western world. Few human experiences are as disheartening as the stubborn lack of progress in solving many of our most imminent problems. "Hope deferred

makes the heart sick," says the Proverb (13:12).

But is it possible for modern technology to ultimately transcend our feeble human limitations? Will its cumulative effects eventually overcome the ingrained, biased thinking that has impeded our human progress from time immemorial? Can the leadership of a computer technocracy provide *the* answer? Let's put all our technological advancements into a clearer perspective.

Obviously technical advances in the communications field should never be underestimated. They are fast altering our civilization

as never before. As a newspaper editorial observed: "We are living through a period of social change at least as profound as the Industrial Revolution, perhaps more so. The new technologies of communication are transforming everything: our working lives, our private lives, and above all our culture—the way we deal with ideas."

Nonetheless, there is no reason for men and women to be intimidated by *anything* they have themselves thought out and finally shaped and made. As *National*



"What is man that you are mindful of him, or the son of man that you take care of him?"

by the impulse of man, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God" (2 Peter 1:21, Revised Standard Version). Peter showed that the prophetic word came from God Himself who guided human instruments through the power of the Holy Spirit. What the prophets wrote was considered by the apostle Paul to be "Holy Scriptures" (Romans 1:2). They are holy because God Himself was involved in their production.

On one occasion after His resurrection Christ appeared to His disciples and said: "These are the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you [as a human being], that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning Me" (Luke 24:44). How many times Jesus said or did something to fulfill the prophecies relating to His life and ministry!

Clearly He accepted the Old Testament as the inspired Word of God. In Matthew 19:4 Christ said to the Pharisees, "Have you not read that He who made them at the beginning 'made them male and female' . . ." Then what follows is a quotation from Genesis 2:24, written by Moses. Yet Jesus said the Creator God was the One who spoke these words.

After Jesus Christ fasted for 40 days Satan tempted Him to turn stones into bread. Christ defended Himself by appealing to the Hebrew Scriptures, which said, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word

that proceeds from the mouth of God" (Matthew 4:4, quoted from Deuteronomy 8:3).

Christ knew the Old Testament scriptures by heart and accepted all that was revealed to the patriarchs and prophets. He acknowledged the past reality of the events recorded in the Hebrew Bible, such as the creation of the heavens and the earth, the historicity of Adam and Eve, Noah's flood, and the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah.

Before ascending to heaven, Jesus Christ delegated His authority to the apostles to make disciples of all nations, teaching them to observe everything He had commanded them (Matthew 28:19-20). Wherever they went, they preached the Word of God. As a result many were converted and "continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship" (Acts 2:42).

Testimonies of Christ's life and teaching were written and circulated. These accounts eventually became the Gospels, a part of the New Testament scriptures.

Paul said that he received the gospel through the revelation of Jesus Christ (Galatians 1:12). Peter affirmed that some of the epistles of Paul were considered part of the Scriptures (2 Peter 3:15-16).

So the Bible is the inspired Word of God. The books it contains were written by human authors, but it was God's Holy Spirit that inspired their words. Their authority came from God!

The Books of the Bible

The Hebrew Bible (or Old Testament)

The Five Books of Moses (The Law, Torah or Pentateuch):

Genesis
Exodus
Leviticus
Numbers
Deuteronomy

Nahum
Habakkuk
Zephaniah
Haggai
Zechariah
Malachi

The Former Prophets:

Judges
Joshua
1 & 2 Samuel
1 & 2 Kings

The Writings:

Psalms
Proverbs
Job
Song of Songs
(or Song of Solomon)
Ruth
Lamentations
Ecclesiastes
Esther
Daniel
Ezra
Nehemiah
1 & 2 Chronicles

The Latter (or Major) Prophets:

Isaiah
Jeremiah
Ezekiel

The Twelve (Minor) Prophets:

Hosea
Joel
Amos
Obadiah
Jonah
Micah

Note: The Old Testament is not arranged in strict chronological order. Other factors, such as message content, also contributed to the order and arrangement of its books.

The Apostolic Writings (or New Testament)

The Gospels:

Matthew
Mark
Luke
John

Colossians
1 & 2 Thessalonians
1 & 2 Timothy
Titus
Philemon
Hebrews

The Acts of the Apostles:

Acts

The General Epistles:

James
1 & 2 Peter
1, 2 & 3 John
Jude

The Epistles of Paul:

Romans
1 & 2 Corinthians
Galatians
Ephesians
Philippians

The Book of Revelation

Revelation

Geographic wisely commented: “Information technologies, for all the attention they receive, lag far behind the power of the human brain. Researchers estimate that the normal brain has a quadrillion connections between its nerve cells, more than all the phone calls made in the U.S. in the past decade” (October 1995).

Has God long realized what human beings are inherently capable of achieving?

“. . . *And this is what they begin to do; now nothing that they propose [for ‘have imagined,’ KJV] to do will be withheld from them*” (*Genesis 11:6*).

Men and women, both individually and collectively, can achieve incredibly difficult tasks. So much so that, ages ago, God Himself took radical steps to limit human progress at the Tower of Babel (*Genesis 11:5-8*). He foresaw that our vast capabilities, when misused, would end up in doing us immeasurable and irreparable harm. Yet, paradoxically, God always envisioned humanity achieving the highest goals as a result of growth in proper leadership.

Does God’s plan for men and women involve right leadership?

“*What is man that You are mindful of him, or the son of man that You take care of him? You have made him a little lower than the angels; You have crowned him with glory and honor, and set him over the works of Your hands. You have put all things in subjection under his feet. For in that He put all in subjection under him, He left nothing that is not put under him*” (*Hebrews 2:6-8*, quoting *Psalms 8:4-6*).

The context is “the world to come” (*Hebrews 2:5*). God plans to make men and women rulers and leaders in the majestic age to come. However, in this present time “we do not yet see all things put under him” (verse 8, last part).

In the age to come, who will share the supervision of the world with Jesus Christ?

“*And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years*” (*Revelation 20:4*).

The Bible tells us that the converted servants or “saints” of God will participate in the management of His creation! Restoration and right rulership of this earth are an integral part of God’s master plan! He intends the whole world to be like the Garden of Eden of old (compare *Daniel 7:27*; *Acts 3:20-21*; *Revelation 5:10*; *22:1*).

Mankind has long dreamed of utopia—an earthly paradise of peace and plenty. Many have wanted to usher it in through vastly improved human knowledge and technology. But the mass media bear daily testimony to the fact that utopia will not happen without God’s supernatural intervention.

However, once all humanity has been brought to

true repentance, God’s millennial plan will exceed all the utopian dreams ever envisioned by the human mind. For a much fuller understanding, please request our free booklet *The Gospel of the Kingdom*.

RELYING ON GOD IN AN UNCERTAIN WORLD!

It is abundantly evident that we live in an uncertain world. Three thousand years ago Solomon confirmed that “man is greatly troubled by ignorance of the future; who can tell him what it will bring?” (*Ecclesiastes 8:6-7*, Revised English Bible). He said “the living know that they will die” and “time and chance happen to them all” (*Ecclesiastes 9:5, 11*). This ancient king’s



Mankind has long dreamed of utopia— an earthly paradise of peace and plenty.

words are as true today as when he wrote them. As mortal human beings, our one certainty is death.

The apostle James also reminds us that we “do not know what will happen tomorrow” (*James 4:14*). Though the context clearly shows that he refers to man’s mundane, day-to-day activities, his sobering declaration underlines the natural state of our material world.

How is God willing to relate to us in this uncertain world of suffering and death?

“*LORD, You have been our dwelling place for all generations . . . Even from everlasting to everlasting, You are God*” (*Psalms 90:1-2*).

God is always there! As Peter wrote, “do not forget this one thing, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day” (*2 Peter 3:8*). God “inhabits eternity”—and is not bound by physical laws of time and space (compare *Isaiah 57:15*; *Psalms 90:4*).

Yet is God fully aware of our life expectancy, our temporary existence in this world?

“*We finish our years like a sigh. The days of our lives are seventy years; and if by reason of strength they are eighty years, yet their boast is only labor and sorrow*” (*Psalms 90:9-10*).

On whom, then, should we rely?

“Have you not known? Have you not heard? The everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth, neither faints nor is weary . . . He gives power to the weak, and to those who have no might He increases strength” (Isaiah 40:28-29).

What does God promise to do when we are troubled by doubt and uncertainty?

“For I, the LORD your God, will hold your right hand, saying to you, ‘Fear not, I will help you’” (Isaiah 41:13).

Even death cannot defeat those who trust in God. It was Jesus who said that “whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die” (John 11:26). He obviously meant eternal death, because we will all face the end of this life (Hebrews 9:27).

Yet Christ promised there would be a resurrection to eternal life for those who truly trust in God and His Word. “Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life” (John 5:24).

Those who are truly converted—through repentance and the receiving of the Holy Spirit—and remain faithful to the end have the sure promise of a resurrection to eternal life in God’s kingdom.

TO EXPAND YOUR KNOWLEDGE

We offer additional free materials to help you better understand the points covered in each lesson. For this lesson, be sure to request the following free booklets:

- *How to Understand the Bible.*
- *Life’s Ultimate Question: Does God Exist?*
- *Creation or Evolution: Does It Really Matter What You Believe?*
- *The Road to Eternal Life.*

- *Transforming Your Life: The Process of Conversion.*
- *God’s Holy Day Plan: The Promise of Hope for All Mankind.*
- *What Happens After Death?*
- *What Is Your Destiny?*
- *The Gospel of the Kingdom.*

Points to Ponder

“Points to Ponder” is a regular feature of this course. We introduce it to help you reflect on the major points you have just studied and to think beyond the content of the lesson and apply it on a personal level. This feature is meant as a study aid and a spur to further thought on the important concepts in this lesson.

We suggest that you take the time to write your answers to these questions as well as to other questions that may come to mind. Please feel free to write directly to us any feedback about this lesson or the course itself.

The questions on lesson one:

- What scriptures help us understand that the Bible is God’s method for communicating with mankind?
- Look around you. What invisible attributes of God do you see in the creation that surrounds us? (Romans 1:20).
- In what ways do you see the love of God expressed in the eternal values and standards established in the Bible?
- What type of relationship is God seeking with humankind? What can you do to develop a meaningful relationship with God? What is the ultimate potential of this relationship?
- Given the uncertainty of our world today, how can an individual or family find direction and peace of mind in life?

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Editorial reviewers: Scott Ashley, Peter Eddington, Roger Foster, Jim Franks, Bruce Gore, Roy Holladay, Paul Kieffer, Graemme Marshall, Darris McNeely, Burk McNair, David Register, Richard Thompson, David Treybig, Leon Walker, Donald Ward, Robin Webber, Lyle Welty Design: Shaun Venish

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