

SEVEN WORLD



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RELIGIONS +

Seven World Religions+: March – May 2023

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Lesson 1 – Introduction to Seven World Religions +

Living in a sinful world. Titus 3:1-2; 1 Cor 5:10

But not carried away by error 2 Peter 3:17-18

1. What is religion?

A sociocultural system of designated patterns of behavior and customs, morality, beliefs, worldviews, texts, consecrated places, prophecies, ethics, or organizations that connects humanity with the supernatural, transcendental, and spiritual elements.

Different religions may or may not contain various elements, ranging from divine, sacred, faith, a supernatural being or supernatural beings, or "some kind of extreme and superiority that will provide norms and strength for the rest of your life."

Religious practices may include rituals, sermons, commemoration, or veneration (of deities and/or saints), sacrifices, festivals, celebrations, trance, initiations, funeral services, conjugal services, meditation, prayer, music, art, dance, community services, or other aspects of human culture.

Religions have sacred stories and narratives that can be preserved in scriptures, symbols, and holy places, which mainly aim to give meaning to life.

Religions can contain symbolic stories that followers sometimes call truth, trying to explain the origin of life, the universe, and other phenomena. Traditionally, faith, in addition to reason, has been considered the source of religious beliefs. About 84% of the world's population is of Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism or some form of Folk religion. The non-religious demographic includes those who do not identify with any particular religion, are atheists and agnostics. These religiously unaffiliated individuals as adults, still have some varied religious beliefs.

Today's diverse landscape: World population approaches 8 billion (2021 est.). There are almost 7000 known living languages/dialects in the world today and some estimate the number of religions today as exceeding 10,000.

Five factors determine a world religion:

1. Large numbers – single most important issue. Most major religions have millions.
 2. Widespread – significant numbers across several countries.
 3. Independent – distinct from others religion. Roman Catholicism etc. fit under the broader umbrella of Christianity and are not considered distinct as a world religion.
 4. Body of Doctrine – most possess a holy book(s) and an identifiable body of beliefs.
 5. Practiced today – current. The ancient Egyptian religion, for example, is not considered a major religion since it died out around A.D. 300. Others?
- Three religious groups were recognized until the 1800's - Christians, Jews and Pagans (i.e., everybody else). Pagans were further subdivided when Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism joined Jews and Christians to make the "List of 5". Today Folk religions and the unaffiliated are very present.

2. Makeup of the World by Major Religions +

Determining the exact number of religions across the world is a difficult task. Many religions can be difficult to categorize or to tell apart for those not intimately familiar with their doctrines. Pew Research Center organizes the world's religions into **seven major groups**, which have **five major religions** (Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, and Judaism) With **two** more that includes all Folk/Traditional religions, and a relatively large Unaffiliated group.

Region	Christian	Islam	Unaffiliated	Hindu	Buddhist	Folk	Judaism
North America	74.6%	1.3%	19.2%	0.8%	1.2%	0.4%	1.6%
Latin America-Caribbean	89.7%	0.1%	8.0%	0.1%	0.1%	1.8%	0.1%
Europe	72.2%	6.8%	20.0%	0.2%	0.2%	0.1%	0.2%
Middle East-North Africa	3.6%	93.1%	0.6%	0.6%	0.2%	0.3%	1.6%
Sub-Saharan Africa	62.0%	31.4%	3.0%	0.2%	0.1%	3.2%	0.1%
Asia-Pacific	7.2%	25.7%	20.0%	26.0%	11.3%	8.6%	0.1%
World	31.0%	25.0%	15.6%	15.2%	6.6%	5.6%	0.2%
8 Billion: >>	2.48B	2.00B	1.25B	1.22B	528M	448M	16M

A. Christianity

The world's largest religion, Christianity, is practiced by about 2.5 billion people. The country with the highest number of practicing Christians is the United States, with a Christian population of 250 million.

Christianity has historically spread around the globe and today it remains a geographically widespread religion. Over the past century, it has become less concentrated in Europe while becoming more evenly distributed throughout the Americas, sub-Saharan Africa, and the Asia-Pacific region.

B. Islam

Even though it's the predominant religion of countries in the Middle East and Northern Africa, by sheer number, countries in Asia have the highest percentage of practicing Muslims in the world. 14% of the adults in India are Muslim. As a result, the country is home to one of the world's largest Muslim populations, surpassed only by Indonesia. **Islam is the world's fastest-growing major religion.** The number of Muslims is expected to increase by 70%, to nearly 3 billion in 2060. The fact that they have the youngest median age, at 24, also helps this religious population growth.

C. Unaffiliated

The religiously unaffiliated population includes atheists, agnostics, and people who do not identify with any particular religion. Approximately half of the 1.4 billion Chinese population consider themselves religiously unaffiliated. However, it is worth noting that many of the religiously unaffiliated around the world hold some religious or spiritual beliefs. For example, surveys have found that faith in God or a higher power is shared by 7% of unaffiliated Chinese adults, 30% of unaffiliated French adults, and 29%, up from 19% in 2011, of unaffiliated U.S. adults and **still going up.**

D. Hinduism

Hinduism is the third-largest religion worldwide, with approximately 1.2 billion Hindus in many countries. Interestingly, however, Hinduism is the dominant religion in only three countries, India with 79%, Nepal with 80%, and Mauritius with 48%.

Although Hinduism is rarely a country's primary religion, it still enjoys a global presence. Many regions around the world support significant populations of Hindus, including the Caribbean, Southeast Asia, North America, and South America.

E. Buddhism

According to estimates, half the world's Buddhists live in China. Still, they make up only 18% of the country's population. Most of the rest of the world's Buddhists live in East Asia and South Asia, including 13% in Thailand (where 93% of the population is Buddhist).

Buddhism in Asia is a matter of both identity and practice. Scholars and journalists have documented that many Asian countries may engage in Buddhist practices without considering themselves part of any organized religion.

F. Folk Religion

Folk religion is any ethnic or cultural religious practice that falls outside the doctrine of organized religion. Grounded on popular beliefs and sometimes called popular or native religion, the term refers to how people experience and practice religion in their daily lives.

As of 2020, an estimated 450 million people, about 6% of the world's total population, were adherents of folk or traditional religions. Some notable folk religions include African traditional religions, Chinese folk religions (worship of ancestors, spirits and local deities/gods/Taoism), Native American religions, Amish, Australian aboriginal religions, and Caribbean (Santeria/Lucumi in Cuba, Vodun/Voodoo in Haiti).

G. Judaism

While Jews historically have been found all around the globe, Judaism is geographically concentrated today. More than four-fifths of all Jews live in just two countries: the United States and Israel. Israel is the only country with a Jewish majority, with 76% of the population being practicing Jews.

The largest remaining shares of the global Jewish population apart from the U.S. and Israel are in Canada (about 3% of the country's population), France (2%), the United Kingdom (2%), Germany (2%), Russia (2%) and Argentina (between 1% and 2%).

3. Views from Non-biblical Sociological Experts: What is Religion:

a. Views:

1. Religion consists in the feeling of absolute dependence.
2. That pure and reverential disposition or frame of mind that we call piety
3. System of beliefs and practices by means of which a group of people struggle with the ultimate problem of human life

b. Any belief in something as divine. “Divine” means having the status of not depending on anything else.

1. Six characteristics or dimensions **James 1:25,26; Acts 13:42,43; 26:4,5**
2. Ritual – Activities and formalized practices (worship, sacrifice)
3. Mythological – stories capturing fundamental beliefs
4. Doctrinal – systemization of beliefs
5. Ethical – moral code and behavior guide
6. Social – institutional forms
7. Experiential – personal

c. Do All Religions Lead To God?

1. Exclusive – only one religion is comprehensively and fundamentally true, providing the way of salvation
2. Inclusive – God reveals Himself and acts graciously in various ways and diverse places, but religious claims are objectively true or false
3. Pluralism – many different but valid religions and life transforming experiences. Varying responses to the same divine reality. Most religions can successfully provide/facilitate salvation, liberation or self-fulfillment.

d. Faith & Reason – “Different Approaches”

1. Strong Rationalism – in order for a religious belief to be properly and rationally accepted, conclusive evidence must be provided that proves the belief system(s) in question to be true. **John 10:25,30; 20:30-31**
2. Weak Rationalism/Fideism – religious belief systems cannot or ought not be subjected to rational evaluation because reason and faith are hostile to each other so violence results when pressed by reason. John 7:17; Examples of evaluation- Acts 2, 16, 22
3. Critical Rationalism – religious belief systems can and should be rationally criticized and evaluated, even though conclusive proof of such systems is impossible.

e. Research Suggests:

1. 70% believe many religions can lead to eternal life
2. 68% believe there is more than one way to interpret the religious teachings
3. Only 33% believe the word of God is literally true
4. 20% of “Christians” don’t believe in the second coming
5. Don’t assume your religious/denominational friends personally believe/understands everything their religion/denomination is said to believe.

f. Top 10 richest religions in the world 2022:

1. Roman Catholic Church. ...
2. Islam. ...
3. Judaism. ...
4. Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. ...
5. Church of England. ...
6. Episcopalian. ...
7. Hinduism. ...
8. Protestantism. ...
9. Non-denominational Christianity. ...(Lakewood, The Ark, Grace Church, etc.)
10. Church of Scientology. ...

Lesson 2 – Considerations: World Religions+

I. Why Test and Study?

➤ Test everything.

- a. **1 Thess 5:21, 22** Test everything. Hold on to what is good.

Acts 17:11,12 Now these were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily, to see whether these things were so. **12** therefore
1 John 4:1 do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world.

- b. How you should respond to each person.

Col 4:6 Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned, as it were, with salt, so that you may know how you should respond to each person.

1 Pet 3:15 But sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence.

- c. Increase our understanding of the truth. Build and strengthen our faith.

Acts 15:32 Judas and Silas, also being prophets, encouraged and strengthened the brethren. As did Paul and Barnabas with the word of the Lord in vs. 35.

Rom 10:17 So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ.

➤ **Why Study This Subject - World Religions+? Objectives & Study Approach**

- A. The fields are white unto harvest **John 4:35** – What is our attitude about the world? Do you consider your neighbor, schoolmate, work colleague or family member as a true prospect for the Gospel of Christ? Too far gone to save! Tried before? Do you ... desire all to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.
I Tim 2:3-4

- B. We sometimes pre-judge and possibly exclude others with the attitude of the Jews. **Rom 5:6-8; 2 Tim 2:24-26**
- C. Time won't allow an exhaustive study into every nuance of reasoning. **Acts 17:17**
- D. This study must be much more than satisfying our interest or curiosity in "something new". Avoid the attitudes as the Athenians – **Acts 17:19-21**
- E. Objective – To briefly examine each doctrine origin/history, fundamental beliefs, and practices.
- F. Observation - To be most effective in some religious discussions, knowing the recipient's religious background is helpful. **John 4:9,20,25. Acts 19:25-28,39.** This doesn't undermine the power of the Gospel. **Rom 1:14-17.**
- G. It's unlikely that a single discussion will convert your friend, family member, schoolmate, or work colleague. So, the critical goal of that first discussion is to prompt enough interest to encourage more study.
- H. Class members must reinforce the class assignments by doing their own pre-study.
- I. It is wise to understand the teachings of other religions. But we should realize that when we study world religions, we will be exposing ourselves to the errors of the world and not to the inerrant word of Jehovah God "which is good, acceptable and perfect". Rom 12:2

➤ **References.**

1. The Bible-OT(39)/NT(26). Due to the subject of this study, much of our time in this class will focus on non-Biblical resources from worldometers.info.com, visualcapitalist.com, gotquestions.com, pewresearch.org, Rod Hines class, Britannica.com, academia.edu.edu, catholic.com, ntslibrary.com. **Class participants are encouraged to research any resources available via the Internet.**

Lesson 3 - Confronting Error, Seeking the Lost

1. Departure from The Truth is warned and is to be expected!
 - b. Personal warning: **1Cor 10:12; Heb 3:12,13**
 - c. Self-made religion: self-abasement, worship of angels, visions, degrees **Col 2:18-23**
 - d. General apostasy: **2 Thess 2:2; Acts 20:29; 1Tim 4:1-3**
 - e. Deception/False Prophets/Teachers/Impostors: **2 Pet 2:1; 2 Tim 3:13**
 - f. Do you desire others to depart from the “the Way” of their world religions? **Acts 9:2**
2. What kind of religions/deities were the brethren exposed to? Were they zealous?

➤ **Acts 14:11-13; 19:13-17,18-19, 24-28**
3. What did Paul trust would protect them against the error of these religions and safeguard them against being deluded by false religions?? **Acts 19:9-10; 20:20-21, 27, 32; Eph 1:15-23; 3:14-19.**
4. What can be expected when opposing and exposing false religion? **Matt 5:10-12** What should our reaction be? **Matt 5:43-44.**
5. Should we acknowledge any truths in other religions? **Acts 17:28.**
6. What should we avoid doing when reasoning with others? **1 Peter 2:23; 3:10; Rom 13:10; 1 Peter 4:16**
7. Considerations:
 - a. Be patient w/everyone and merciful **1 Thess 5:14,21; Jude 22**
 - b. Be shrewd and be watchful **Matt 10:16; Gal 6:1**
 - c. Be useful and fruitful **2 Peter 1:8;5-7**
 - d. Be ready w/great patience and instruction **2Tim 4:2**

Lesson 4 – Trust in the Books of the Bible

Can I Trust the Books of the Bible above all other Religious Teachings in the World > It IS the first Question to be answered for the “unaffiliated” and for all other world religions! This approach is supremely important!

Please notice that the world is changing and the Bible that was once revered and overwhelmingly believed to be totality inspired from the mind of the one living Jehovah God: **Is Not Totally Viewed That Way Today!!** The ever increasing numbers of the unaffiliated people of the world and the named world religions of the world of unbelief >> Must now be convinced, **first**, that the Bible as it was written is available and in our hands today! We can quote scripture after scripture after scripture from the Bible BUT how is the Bible viewed>>”**Just Another Book with Some, so called, ancient world history, imaginary stories and good thoughts.**” The absolute fact is>> **The Bible IS what was originally written and IS abundantly available.** Therefore, anyone in any language can have absolute confidence in the Bible and then can investigate its content and its purpose **if they choose.**

When one has that reasoned confidence that the Bible was Preserved as what was truly written in the first century THEN one will have “the confidence to listen” to the actual “Eyewitnesses” in the Bible - For them the things written actually occurred >> For these “Eyewitnesses” were standing there! They saw and heard as you would of! So, the following lesson will give objective proof as to the preservation of the words originally written in the first century and before.

The listing of “eyewitnesses” is as follows concerning the resurrection of the man, Jesus, the Nazarene:

Mary Magdalene	John 28:11-17
The other Mary and Salome	Matt 28:9-10; Mark 16:1
Simon Peter	Luke 24:34
Two disciples walking to Emmaus, Cleopas	Luke 24:13-32
Ten Apostles	Luke 24:33-49
Eleven Apostles and Thomas	John 20:26-30
Seven Apostles (Sea of Galilee)	John 21:1-14

500 People at one time	1 Corinthians 15:6
James	1 Corinthians 15:7
Eleven Apostles	Acts 1:4-9 (Matthew 28:16-20)
Joseph (called Barsabbas or Justus)	Acts 1:21-23
Apostle Paul (Saul of Tarsus)	Acts 9:5; 1 Corinthians 15:8
Stephen	Acts 7:55-56
John	Revelation 1:17-20

ALSO, as one example, Luke was also present and an **eyewitness** to the actions of the Apostles as they obeyed and carried out the Great Commission.
Acts 16:9-17; 20:5-15; 21:1-18; 27:1-28:16.

{The Bible has more than forty authors who were also “Eyewitnesses” in their time!}

4A. Structure and Divisions of the Bible: Questions

1. Define the word bible?15
2. Define the word testament?15
3. How many books in the Hebrew Old Testament? Name the three sections/divisions?15
4. How many books in the Greek Old Testament? When was it translated and name the four sections/divisions?15
5. What was different or the same concerning the “Vulgate”?16
6. What was different or the same concerning the English language bible?16
7. The New Testament books are grouped in how many sections/divisions?16
8. Explain the who, what and when concerning chapters and verse divisions?16

4A. Structure and Divisions of the Bible

I. Definitions

A. *Bible* “Bible” is the name commonly used to designate the thirty-nine books of the Old Testament and the twenty-seven books of the New Testament. These sixty-six books make up one book—the Bible. The English word *Bible* came originally from the name of the papyrus or byblos reed paper used extensively in antiquity for making scrolls and books. The term, *biblion* thus meant “book” or “scroll.” By the second century A.D. Greek Christians called their sacred Scriptures *ta Biblia* (“the books”). The singular translation came into English via Latin and Old French as “Bible.” The term “Bible” is often used synonymously with “Scripture” and “Word of God.”

B. *Testament* The Bible is one book but it is divided into two parts called Testaments. The term, “Testament” (*berith* in Hebrew and *diatheke* in Greek) means “covenant. The Old Testament was written and preserved by the Jewish Community before the time of Christ and the New Testament was composed by the followers of Christ during the first century A.D.

II. Old Testament Classifications

A. *Hebrew form* The Hebrew Bible is composed of twenty-four books. The earliest division of the Hebrew Bible was twofold—the Law and the Prophets. In less ancient times, however, the Jewish Bible was arranged in **three sections: 1) the Law, 2) the Prophets, and 3) the Writings.**

B. *Greek form* The Hebrew Scriptures were translated into Greek at Alexandria, Egypt (c. 250—150 B.C.). This translation was known as the Septuagint (LXX). The Alexandrian tradition arranged the Old Testament according to *subject* matter and became the basis for our modern classification of the Old Testament: **1) five books of Law, 2) twelve books of History, 3) five books of Poetry and 4) seventeen books of Prophecy**

NOTE: The Hebrew classification of the **Old Testament totals twenty-four books.** The twelve minor prophets were considered one book. 1 and 2 Samuel were considered one book. The same holds true for 1 and 2 Kings, 1 and 2 Chronicles and Ezra-Nehemiah. Though the classifications are different between the Hebrew and Greek forms, they are **the same 39 books in both forms.**

C. *Latin form* “The grouping of books in the Latin Bible (the Vulgate) follows that of the Septuagint (LXX), or Greek version. Jerome, who translated the Latin Vulgate (c. 383-405), was familiar with the Hebrew division, but Christendom had come to favor the Greek form; **thus it was only natural for him to adopt its fourfold classification.**”_(Norman L. Geisler and William E. Nix, *A General Introduction to the Bible*. Chicago: Moody Press. 1986. p. 26)

D. *English form* Following the Latin Vulgate, which had been the standard Bible for a thousand years, Wycliffe’s first English Bible followed the fourfold division of its Latin precursor. All subsequent English versions follow this **fourfold division** (Law, History, Poetry and Prophecy).

III. **New Testament classification:** The books of the New Testament have been classified into four groups: 1) Gospels, 2) History, 3) Epistles and 4) Prophecy.

IV. **Chapter and verse divisions:** The earliest Bibles have no chapter and verse distinctions.

Stephen Langton, a professor at the University of Paris, divided the Bible into chapters in **1227**.

Later, Robert Stephanus, a Paris printer, added verses in **1551 and 1555**.

Hebrew Old Testament Categories **Hebrew Bible (24 books)**

The Law

Genesis
Exodus
Leviticus
Numbers
Deuteronom
m

The Writings

Psalms
Proverbs
Job
Song of Solomon
Ruth
Lamentations
Ecclesiastes
Esther
Daniel
Ezra-Nehemiah
Chronicles

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Protestant Bible (39 books)

<u>The Law</u>	<u>The Writings</u>	<u>Poetry/Wisdom</u>
Genesis	Psalms	Job
Exodus	Proverbs	Psalms
Leviticus	Job	Proverbs
Numbers	Song of Solomon	Ecclesiastes
Deuteronomy	Ruth	Song of Solomon
	Lamentations	
	Ecclesiastes	<u>Prophecy</u>
	Esther	Isaiah
	Daniel	Jeremiah
	Ezra-Nehemiah	Lamentations
	Chronicles	Ezekiel
		Daniel

Catholic Bible (46 books)

<u>The Law</u>	<u>History</u>	<u>Poetry/Wisdom</u>	<u>Prophecy</u>
Genesis	Joshua	Job	Isiah
Exodus	Judges	Psalms	Jeremiah
Leviticus	Ruth	Proverbs	Lamentatio ns
Numbers	1 and 2 Samuel	Ecclesiastes	*Baruch
Deuterono	1 and 2 Kings	Song of Solomon	Ezekiel
	3 and 4 Kings (Chron)	*Wisdom of Solomon	Daniel
	Ezra	*Ecclesiastieus (Sirach)	Hosea
	Nehemiah		Joel
	*Tobit		Amos
	*Judith		Obadiah
	Esther		Jonah
	*1 Maccabees		Micah
	*2 Maccabees		Nahum
			Habakkuk
			Zephaniah
			Haggai
			Zechariah
			Malachi

*Apocrypha books accepted as canonical by Roman Catholic Church

--The Roman Catholic Church also accepts as canonical additions to Daniel (*Song of the Three Young Men; Susanna; and Bel and the Dragon*) and additions to Esther.

New Testament Classification - 5 Groupings

<u>Gospels (4)</u>	<u>History (1)</u>	<u>Epistles (21)</u> <i>Pauline (13)</i>	<u>General (8)</u>
1. Matthew	1. Acts	1. Romans	14. Hebrews
2. Mark		2. 1 Corinthians	15. James
3. Luke		3. 2 Corinthians	16. 1 Peter
4. John		4. Galatians	17. 2 Peter
		5. Ephesians	18. 1 John
		6. Philippians	19. 2 John
		7. Colossians	20. 3 John
		8. 1 Thess	21. Jude
		9. 2 Thess	
		10. 1 Timothy	<u>Prophecy (1)</u>
		11. 2 Timothy	1. Revelation
		12. Titus	
		13. Philemon	

Time Period of Bible Books

The time span for the writing of the Bible covers approximately fifteen-hundred years.

Old Testament (1445~400 B.C.)

Genesis(1445)
Exodus (1445)
Leviticus (1445)
Numbers (1445)
Deuteronomy (1445)

Joshua (1445—1395)
Judges (1043)
Ruth (1000)
1 and 2 Samuel (1000—722)
1 and 2 Kings (561—538)
1 and 2 Chronicles (450—430)
Ezra (457—444)
Nehemiah(425)
Esther (475)

Job (patriarchal times)
Psalms (1450—400)
Proverbs (950)
Ecclesiastes (931)
Song of Solomon (960)

Isaiah (700)
Jeremiah (561)
Lamentations (586)
Ezekiel (570)
Daniel (536)
Hosea (750)
Joel (830)
Amos (760)
Obadiah (845)
Jonah (780)
Micah (700)
Nahum (661~612)
Habakkuk (609)
Zephaniah (635)
Haggai (520)
Zechariah (520~518)
Malachi (430)

New Testament (A.D. 50~100)

Matthew(50)
Mark (50)
Luke (60-63)
John (70-90)
Acts (63)

Romans (57-58)
1 Corinthians (57)
2 Corinthians (57)
Galatians (48)
Ephesians (61)
Philippians (62)
Colossians (61)
1 Thessalonians (51)
2 Thessalonians (51)
1 Timothy (63~65)
2 Timothy (68)
Titus (63)
Philemon (61)

Hebrews (65)
James (45)
1 Peter (65)
2 Peter (67)
1John
(70~90)
2John
(70~90)
3 John (70~90)
Jude (70)

Revelation (70~95)

4B. The Making of the Bible: Questions

1. The earliest known written languages were by whom and when?22
2. List the materials these languages were written on?22
3. Which material would you least prefer to write upon and why?22
4. The bible was originally written in what three languages?23,24
5. What would be the primary difference from English/Hebrew wording in your view?23
6. Hebrew and Aramaic languages vaguely similar or are they very similar?23 Why was this important?
7. Does your bible have Aramaic words in it?24 Why are they present in your bible?
8. What was the everyday spoken language of the Jews and Gentiles?24
9. In New Testament times what languages did Jesus speak?24
10. Where are Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek spoken today?24
11. Do you believe it possible that what Moses and the Prophets wrote and what Matthew, Mark, Luke and John wrote, can be read and understood today?

4B. The Making of the Bible

I. The Bible and early writings

A. *Bible not the oldest book* “Our Bible is a very old book, but it is by no means the oldest book in the world. Discoveries made within the last century show that writing was a well-established art in many countries long before the beginnings of the Hebrew nation in the land of Palestine” (Neil Lightfoot, *How We Got the Bible*, p. 14).

B. *The beginning of writing* “The earliest known examples of writing carry us into the ancient land of Egypt and into Mesopotamia. We do not know exactly when or where writing began. . . . What is known is that an early Sumerian limestone tablet exists with a written text which is dated about 3500 B.C. What is also known is that Egyptian hieroglyphs were in a developmental stage at least by 3000 B.C. In Palestine itself letters written by governors of cities date to about 1400 B.C” (Lightfoot, p. 14).

C. *Implication of other early writings on the Bible* It was formerly held by some liberal critics that Moses could not have written the first five books of the Bible since writing was unknown in the days of Moses. Now, however, we know that writing was generally practiced centuries before Moses. This argument, then, is no longer valid.

II. **Writing materials of Bible times** The ancient people of Palestine and adjoining countries used many kinds of materials for writing purposes. The Bible makes reference to some of these materials.

A. *Stone* In almost every area the earliest material on which writing has been found is stone.

1. The Ten Commandments The earliest writing material mentioned in the Old Testament is stone. The Ten Commandments were written on stone (Ex. 31:18; 34:1, 28).

2. Joshua and the memorial stones After Israel crossed the Jordan, stones with the Law written on them were set up as a memorial (Deut. 27:2-3 with Josh. 8:30-32).

B. *Clay* The predominant writing material of Assyria and Babylonia was clay. Huge libraries of clay tablets have been discovered from these areas. Clay material is referred to in Ezekiel 4:1 when Ezekiel was told to draw a plan of Jerusalem on a tile.

C. *Wood* The use of wooden tablets was common in Greece, Egypt and Palestine. The tablets mentioned in Isaiah 30:8 and Habakkuk 2:2 were probably wooden.

D. *Leather* “For hundreds of years leather or animal skins played an important role in the history of the Bible. Leather is not specified in the Old Testament, but it was unquestionably the principal material employed for literary purposes by the Hebrews.” (Lightfoot, p. 16) (See Jeremiah 36:23).

E. *Papyrus* Papyrus was the most important writing material during the inter-testamental and New Testament times. In fact, it is almost certain that the original New Testament letters were penned on papyrus sheets.

1. What was papyrus? Papyrus sheets came from papyrus reeds that grew in abundance along the Nile river in Egypt. Papyrus reeds “were manufactured into a writing material by cutting the leaves into long thin strips, laying these pieces criss/cross upon each other and saturating them with a calcium solution. The product was the equivalent of the best handmade paper” (G. S. Wegener, *6,000 Years of the Bible*, New York: Harper and Row, 1963, p. 58).

2. Papyrus rolls Papyrus rolls were the “books” of the ancient world until the second century. These “rolls” were thirty feet long and nine to ten inches high. Writing was usually done on one side of the scroll (one exception is Revelation 5:1).

3. Papyrus codex By the second century the papyrus roll gave way to the papyrus codex. A codex manuscript is simply a book. Papyrus sheets were put together in the form of a book instead of joining them side by side to make a roll.

F. *Vellum or parchment* Vellum and parchment (used interchangeably) refers to animal skins dressed for writing purposes. Because of the high price of papyrus, vellum became a less expensive substitute. By the fourth century vellum replaced papyrus. The use of vellum is significant because this was the material used to make copies of the New Testament for over a thousand years (fourth century—Middle Ages). The two most valuable New Testament manuscripts, the Vatican and Sinaitic manuscripts, are made of high-quality vellum.

G. *Paper* The production of paper stretches back to the second century B.C. with the Chinese. The secrets of paper making, though, were not widely made known until the middle of the eighth century when Arabs captured some Chinese men who were skilled in making paper. By the time of the thirteenth century paper was being used in much of Europe. A considerable number of Biblical manuscripts, especially from the East, were written on paper. (Lightfoot, p. 20)

III. Languages of the Bible The Bible was originally written in three languages—Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek.

A. *Hebrew*: Almost all of the Old Testament was written in Hebrew.

1. Semitic language: “Hebrew is part of a large family of languages known as Semitic, and is akin to such languages as Aramaic, Syriac, Akkadian (Assyrian-Babylonian) and Arabic” (Lightfoot, p. 29). Semitic is derived from Noah’s son, Shem, in Koine Greek in 1781.

2. Hebrew is much different from English: Unlike Greek in which many of the letters and words are recognizable to English speaking people, Hebrew is a “strange” language in that it is written backwards (from our standpoint) from right to left, it has many sounds that differ from English forms, and has a vocabulary unrelated to English words. Plus, the Hebrew alphabet is without vowels.

B. *Aramaic* Though most of the Old Testament was written in Hebrew, some portions were written in Aramaic. Aramaic sections of the Old Testament include: 1) two words as a place-name in Genesis 31:47, 2) one verse in Jeremiah 10:11, 3) six chapters in Daniel (2:4b—7:28) and several chapters in Ezra (4:8—6:18; 7:12-26).

1. Similarities to Hebrew Aramaic is a kindred language to Hebrew. In fact, anyone not trained in the languages of Hebrew and Aramaic would not be able to tell the difference between these two languages in the Old Testament because they look so similar.

2. Beginning of Aramaic among the Jews Aramaic became the language of the common people in Palestine after the time of the exile (ca. 500 B.C.). Nehemiah 8:8 suggests that the Jews

of Ezra's time did not know pure Hebrew well enough to understand the Law, thus needing a translation into the familiar Aramaic.

3. The primary language of Christ Aramaic was spoken by the Jews several centuries before Christ and was the primary vernacular of Palestine during the time of Christ. As Bruce says, "It [Aramaic] was thus the language commonly spoken in Palestine in New Testament times, the customary language of our Lord and His apostles and the early Palestinian church" (F.F. Bruce, *The Books and the Parchments*, Westwood: Revell, 1963, p. 56).

4. Aramaic expressions found in the New Testament:

a. *talitha cumi* (little girl, get up) in Mark 5:41

b. *ephphatha* (be opened) in Mark 7:34

c. *Eli, eli lama sabachthani* (My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?) in Matthew 27:46

d. Jesus addressed God as *Abba* (Aramaic for Father) (see also Rom. 8:15 and Gal. 4:6)

e. *Maranatha* ("Our Lord, come!") in 1 Corinthians 16:22

C. *Greek* Though Aramaic was the common language of Christ and the early Christians, Greek was the language of the New Testament.

1. Common Greek More precisely, the language of the New Testament is properly called Hellenistic or *Koine* (common) Greek. New Testament Greek was the language of the "common" man. Greek was the language chosen for the universal proclamation of the Gospel because that was the most widely known language throughout the nations. As Lightfoot states, "since the gospel was to be proclaimed to every creature. . . the New Testament writers made use of a language that was known everywhere. Greek in the first century, as English is today, was the 'universal' language" (Lightfoot, p. 31).

D. *Are these three languages dead?* Contrary to many people's opinions these languages **are not dead languages**. Hebrew is the spoken language of the state of Israel. Aramaic is spoken in Damascus and Syria. Greek is spoken by millions of people today, though, obviously, it is quite different from the Greek of the New Testament. F.F. Bruce says, "But there is much less difference between modern Hebrew and Biblical Hebrew, between modern Greek and Biblical Greek, than there is between modern English and English as spoken in 1066."

4C. Manuscripts of the Old Testament: Questions

1. Name the three time periods of Hebrew manuscripts?25
2. Which time period do you appreciate the most and why?
3. What value were the Dead Sea Scrolls with reference to our present Old Testament?26,28
4. Why would other sources of Old Testament texts be useful? Such as the Samaritan Pentateuch, etc.?26,27
5. Jewish scribes were valuable for the exact preservation of the writings for what six reasons?27
6. What are the implied meanings when Hebrew texts are referred to as the “Massoretic text”?27

4C. Manuscripts of the Old Testament

I. Hebrew manuscripts throughout world history

A. *The Old Testament Canon era (1450-400 B.C.)* Old Testament books were copied by hand for generations on highly perishable papyrus and animal skins. The survival of the Old Testament Scriptures in spite of persecutions and exiles shows the determination of the Jewish scribes to preserve the Old Testament books (Bruce K. Waltke, “The Textual Criticism of the Old Testament,” in *Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, vol. 1, p. 212). No copies of this era exist today.

B. *The Talmudic era (c. 400 B.C.—A.D. 500)* This era produced a flood of manuscripts that were used in the synagogues and for private use. The copies for synagogue use were made with extreme caution and were considered “sacred.” By the time of the Maccabean revolt (168 B.C.) the Syrians had destroyed most of the existing manuscripts of the Old Testament (Geisler and Nix, p. 354).

C. *The Masoretic period (c. A.D. 500-1000)* During this period, various Jewish scholars were dedicated to the preservation of the Old Testament text. This group became known as the Masoretes because of their acknowledged dependence on the authoritative traditions (Massorah) of the text. Centered in Tiberias, this school began around A.D. 500 and continued on for five centuries. Their contributions are many. In addition to adding vowel points to the

Hebrew text (all Hebrew letters are consonants), they also sought ways and methods to eliminate copying mistakes (Lightfoot, p. 91).

II. Surviving Hebrew manuscripts Until the Dead Sea Scrolls discoveries, the earliest existing Hebrew manuscripts were dated around A.D. 1000.

A. *The Cairo Codex (A.D. 895)*

B. *The Leningrad Codex of the Prophets (A.D. 916)*

C. *British Museum Codex of the Pentateuch (10th-11th century)*

D. *Leningrad Codex (A.D. 1008)* This is the oldest known manuscript of the entire Old Testament.

NOTE: Before 1948, Old Testament versions were based on these four manuscripts from around A.D. 1000.

E. *Aleppo Codex (c. A.D. 950)* Originally a complete Old Testament. Most of it has survived.

F. *Others* Many other manuscripts exist but the above mentioned were the main witnesses to the original Old Testament text.

G. *Dead Sea Scrolls* The Dead Sea Scrolls, discovered in 1948, are extremely important in that they include Hebrew manuscripts of the Old Testament written around 200-100 B.C.—more than a thousand years earlier than the previously earliest manuscripts! The Dead Sea Scrolls include one complete book (Isaiah) and thousands of fragments which, together, represent every Old Testament book except Esther. W.F. Albright has called these scrolls, **“The greatest manuscript discovery of modern times.”**

H. *Why don't earlier copies of the Hebrew Bible exist?* “One may wonder why copies of the Hebrew Bible are late in comparison with the New Testament materials and especially so when it is recalled that the Old Testament was completed several centuries before the first New Testament book was written. The answer is not difficult to find. The Jewish scribes looked upon their copies of the Scriptures with an almost superstitious respect, which led them to give a ceremonial burial to any copy which was old or became worn. Their motive was to prevent the improper use of the material on which the sacred name of God had been inscribed. But however noble their intentions, this ancient custom has deprived us of the early Hebrew manuscripts which we might otherwise have, and thus has lengthened the gap between the available copies of the text and the Old Testament autographs” (Lightfoot, p. 90).

III. Other Old Testament witnesses: The most important witnesses to the Old Testament are the Hebrew manuscripts. But other sources are helpful.

A. *Samaritan Pentateuch (c. 400 B.C.)* This manuscript of the Hebrew text covers the first five books of Moses.

B. *Septuagint (c. 250 B.C.)* This Greek translation of the Old Testament spans the entire Old Testament.

C. *Aramaic Targums* Aramaic translations came in existence after the exile.

D. *Syriac Peshitta* Begun in the middle of the first century A.D. the Peshitta is in close agreement with the Masoretic text.

E. *Latin Vulgate (A.D. 390-405)* The Old Latin version (A.D. 150) based its translation on the Greek Septuagint. The Vulgate, composed by Jerome, was translated directly from the Hebrew.

F. *Biblical quotations from the Talmud (A.D. 200-500)*

G. *Origen's Hexapla (3rd century A.D.)*

IV. Additional Reasons for trusting the Old Testament If the oldest Hebrew manuscripts (before consideration of the Dead Sea Scrolls) are dated around A.D. 1000, how can we be sure they accurately reflect what the original writers of Scripture wrote centuries earlier?

A. *Meticulous care of Jewish Scribes* The lack of manuscript evidence could be a cause for alarm if it were not for the extreme care of the Jewish scribes who made copies of the Old Testament. The Jewish scribes conscientiously sought perfection in the transcription of the text. According to the Talmud, rigid regulations were laid down for making copies of Old Testament texts:

1. The copyist was required to sit in full Jewish dress after a complete bathing.

2. Only a certain kind of ink could be used.

3. Rules governed the spacing of words.

4. No word or letter could be written from memory.

5. Lines and letters were methodically counted.

6. If a manuscript was found to have even one error it was destroyed.

NOTE: "This strict set of regulations which governed the early Jewish scribes is a chief factor which guarantees the accurate transmission of the Old Testament text" (Lightfoot, pp. 97-98).

B. *The work of the Massorettes (A.D. 500-1000)* The Massorettes took meticulous precautions to avoid copying mistakes and detect scribal errors. As Lightfoot says, "The Massorettes were textual critics of the first rank. They examined and appraised carefully all the textual materials available to them, and on the basis of their abundant evidence set down in writing the form of the text which had been received at least several centuries before their time. Indeed, their labors were so productive and their contributions so large that our Hebrew text today is often referred to as 'the Massoretic text'" (Lightfoot, p. 92).

C. *Confirmation of the Dead Sea Scrolls* “**With the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls, scholars have Hebrew manuscripts one thousand years earlier than the great Masoretic Text manuscripts, enabling them to check on the accuracy of the Hebrew text.** The result of comparative studies reveals that there is a word-for-word identity in more than 95 percent of the cases, and the 5 percent variation consists mostly of slips of the pen and spelling” (Geisler and Nix, p. 382). As F.F. Bruce says, “The new evidence confirms what we had already good reason to believe—that the Jewish scribes of the early Christian centuries copied and recopied the text of the Hebrew Bible with the utmost fidelity” (F.F. Bruce, *Second Thoughts on the Dead Sea Scrolls*, pp. 61-62).

4D. Texts and Manuscripts of the New Testament: Questions

1. What is an autograph with reference to the bible?29
2. What is a bible manuscript?29
3. If we had the autograph of the letter to the Romans-What kind of value would it have?
4. Speculate on why we do not have the autographs of Mathew through Revelation?
5. Why is the Old Testament reliable?
6. Why is the New Testament reliable?
7. How many manuscripts of the New Testament exist?30
8. Name the three types of manuscripts?30
9. What three periods are represented by the three major types of manuscripts?30,31,32
10. What is the “P52” manuscript known for?30
11. In each type which do you believe is the most useful in view of today’s Bible?
12. Of the three “Other New Testament Witnesses” which do you believe is the most useful in view of today’s Bible?32
13. Which translation became the standard for over a thousand years?32

4D. Texts and Manuscripts of the New Testament

I. Introduction to New Testament manuscripts:

A. *No original autographs* The New Testament books were written in the latter half of the first century A.D. Soon after the books were written, the original autographs perished. But God has preserved His Word through copies of the New Testament called manuscripts—all written in Greek.

B. *Comparison between Old Testament and New Testament manuscript evidence* The integrity and accuracy of the **Old Testament text is largely the result of the extreme care taken by the rabbinical scholars** in the transmission process. Though very few Old Testament

manuscripts are known, we know they are of very high quality. **The reliability of the New Testament text, however, rests on a different basis—the vast multitude of existing manuscripts.**

C. *Number of manuscripts* The number of New Testament manuscripts written in Greek between the second and fifteenth centuries that is currently possessed is **5,366**. Because of the vast number of manuscripts, the New Testament is undoubtedly the best researched and verified book from the ancient world.

D. *Grouping of manuscripts* Most manuscripts do not contain the entire New Testament because a hand-produced copy of the whole New Testament was too bulky for practical use. Four categories were generally followed when making copies of the New Testament 1) the four Gospels, 2) Acts and the General epistles, 3) Pauline epistles and 4) Revelation.

E. *Types of manuscripts* New Testament manuscripts are three major types.

1. Uncials on Papyrus Many of the earliest witnesses to the New Testament were written on papyrus material. This was the material that the New Testament was written on.

2. Uncials on Vellum and Parchment The manuscripts of this group are the earliest and most important. Uncial manuscripts were written with all capital letters and no spaces between letters.

3. Minuscule (cursives) “The minuscule script was a development of the cursive hand and differs from uncials by its use of smaller forms of letters. The small letters could be written more quickly and required less space. The minuscules did not make their debut until the ninth century and thus are of less value because of their dates” (Lightfoot, pp. 36, 49).

II. Important New Testament manuscripts

A. *Uncial manuscripts on Papyrus (2nd - 3rd centuries)* There are eighty-eight papyri manuscripts of portions of the New Testament. These very early and important witnesses of the New Testament include most of the New Testament. The following are the more significant papyri witnesses.

1. P52 (c. A.D. 110-125) “According to most scholars, the closest copy to an autograph is a papyrus manuscript designated P52, dated around 110-125, containing a few verses of John 18 (31-34, 37-38). This fragment, possibly 40 to 60 years removed from the autograph, was part of one of the earliest copies of John’s Gospel.” (Philip W. Comfort, “Texts and Manuscripts of the New Testament,” in *The Origin of the Bible*, p. 179) It should also be noted that P52 confirms the traditional belief that the Gospel of John was written before the end of the first century A.D.

2. P87 (c. 125) Contains a few verses of Philemon.

3. P77 (c. 150) Contains a few verses of Matthew 23.

4. P32 (c. 175) Has portions of Titus 1 and 2.

5.P45 (late second century) Contains portions of all four Gospels and Acts.

6.P46 (c. 200) Has almost all of Paul's epistles and Hebrews;

7.P47 (third century) Contains Revelation 9-17.

8.P66 (c. 175) One of the earliest witnesses to the New Testament is this almost complete copy of the Gospel of John.

9.P72 (c. third century) Earliest copy including Jude and 1 and 2 Peter.

10.P75 (c. 175-225) Contains large portions of Luke 3 through John 15.

B. Uncial manuscripts on vellum and parchment (4th— 9th centuries) The most important manuscripts of the New Testament are the great uncial codices that date from the fourth and following centuries.

1. Codex Vaticanus (B) (c. 325-350) This fourth century manuscript is widely acknowledged as being the most important witness on the New Testament text. This manuscript has been located in the Vatican Library in Rome since 1481 but its contents were not made available for all until 1889. It is rare in that it contains, in Greek, practically all of the Old and New Testaments. It does not include the Pastoral epistles and Hebrews 9:15—Revelation. In spite of its gaps it is considered to be the most exact copy of the New Testament known. Printed texts of the Greek New Testament today rely heavily on Codex Vaticanus.

2. Codex Sinaiticus (Aleph) (c. 340) Codex Sinaiticus is of near-equal value to Codex Vaticanus and is also an important witness to the New Testament text because of its age, accuracy and completeness. It is known as Codex Sinaiticus because it was discovered by the great textual critic, Constantine Tischendorf at St. Catharine's Monastery on Mt. Sinai in 1844. Tischendorf first discovered Sinaiticus while stumbling upon portions of it in a waste basket awaiting destruction by fire. Codex Sinaiticus contains over half of the Old Testament and all of the New Testament except for Mark 16:9-20 and John 7:53-8:11.

NOTE: Vaticanus and Sinaiticus rank as the two most important manuscript witnesses to the New Testament.

3. Codex Alexandrinus (A) (c. 450) This Alexandrian manuscript, composed by scribes in Alexandria, Egypt, ranks second only to Vaticanus and Sinaiticus as a superior New Testament witness. It is a near complete manuscript of the Bible with very little missing except for portions from Matthew, John and 2 Corinthians. Codex Alexandrinus was originally to be offered as a gift to King James of England. But since James died before he received it, it was presented to his successor Charles I in 1627. Alexandrinus was not known early enough to be of help to the translators of the 1611 King James Version.

4. Codex Ephraemi Rescriptus (C) (c. 345) This document is a palimpsest—a manuscript in which the original writing has been erased and written over. Through chemicals and hard work, the original writing underneath can be read. It has material from every book of the

New Testament except 2 Thessalonians and 2 John. Its age makes it a very valuable witness. It was not until 1845 that a full edition of this manuscript was published.

5. Codex Bezae (D) (c. 450 or 550) This is the earliest known biblical copy in two languages, Greek and Latin. It contains the Gospels and Acts with a small section of 3 John in Latin.

NOTE: Of these five very important manuscripts only one, Codex Bezae was available to the translators of the 1611 King James Version. Revised versions, today, are based on these earlier and better manuscripts.

C. Minuscule Manuscripts (9th to the 15th centuries) Because of their late dates, minuscule manuscripts do not possess the high quality of the earlier uncials. These minuscule manuscripts, though, make up the majority of New Testament manuscripts. There are 2,795 manuscripts and 1,964 lectionaries in minuscule script (Compare with 362 manuscripts and 245 lectionaries in uncial script.).

III. Other New Testament witnesses

A. Lectionaries A lectionary is a manuscript arranged in sections for the purpose of being read in a public worship service. Most lectionaries are of the Gospels but some include Acts and the Epistles. 2,191 lectionaries have been discovered.

B. Translations/Versions As the New Testament message spread, it was translated into other languages.

1. The Old Syriac This translation of the New Testament was in circulation in Syria around A.D. 400 (Geisler and Nix, p. 292). (Not pure Latin or Greek but related to Aramaic.)

2. The Old Latin The Old Latin version was translated around A.D. 150 and served as the Bible of the Western church. “Some of the Old Latin copies are as old as the celebrated Vatican and Sinaitic Manuscripts. The Old Latin is by far the most important of the Latin versions since it reaches back very close to the time when the last books of the New Testament were written” (Lightfoot, p. 54).

3. The Peshitta This Syriac translation has been in use since the fifth century.

4. The Latin Vulgate This work, begun by Jerome in A.D. 384, became the standard Bible for more than **a thousand years** and was made the official Bible of the Roman Catholic Church.

C. Early Christian writers Many volumes of literature exist from the era of the early “church fathers”. Many of their writings are filled with quotations from the New Testament. These men possessed copies of the New Testament which are older than our manuscripts today. As Bruce Metzger says, **“so extensive are these citations that if all other sources for our knowledge of the text of the New Testament were destroyed, they would be sufficient alone in reconstructing practically the entire New Testament”** (Lightfoot, p. 56).

4E. History of the English language Bible: Questions

1. How widespread in today's world are translations of the bible in whole or part?33,34
2. Why would a translation of the Bible into various languages be necessary or important?
3. What did Jerome accomplish in 384 and 405?34
4. In your view what was the one significant step in translation to English from 700 to 1382?34
5. In your view what was the one significant step in translation to English from 1382 to 1611?34-37
6. Explain the importance of Each:34-37

John Wycliffe _____
Gutenberg printing press _____
Protestant Reformation _____
William Tyndale _____
Miles Coverdale _____
Thomas Mathew _____
The Great Bible _____
The Geneva Bible _____
The Bishop's Bible _____
The Rheims-Donai Bible _____
The King James Bible _____

7. The American Standard Bible has been revised how many times?

4E. History of the English language bible

I. Introduction to translation

A. *Defined* “Translation is the process of beginning with something (written or oral) in one language (the source of language) and expressing it in another language (the receptor language)” (Raymond Elliott, “Bible Translation,” in *The Origin of the Bible*, p. 233). In regard to the Bible it involves taking the Bible message, written originally in Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek, and putting it into other languages.

B. *Variety of translations* The Bible—in whole or in part—has been translated into everything from Afrikaans to Zulu and more than 1,900 languages. According to the American Bible Society, there were complete Bible translations in 314 languages (including all of the world's major tongues), New Testament translations in 715, and translations of at least one book of the Bible in 890 languages. The most widely translated book is the Gospel of Mark, available in

800 different languages and dialects. Every year between 16 and 20 new languages or dialects receive their own Bible translations.

II. Introduction to the English language bible

A. *“English Bible” defined* “The Bible played a central part in English Christianity from its earliest days. But when we speak of the *English Bible*, we are not merely thinking of the Bible in England, but of the Bible in the English language” (F.F. Bruce, *History of the English Bible*, p. 1).

B. *Precursor to the Bible in English* “The Bible which was known and used in the earliest English Church, as in the British and Irish Churches even earlier, was the Latin Bible. From the fifth century onwards, the Latin Bible came to mean the version made by Jerome between A.D. 384 and 405, the version commonly known as the Latin Vulgate” (*Ibid.*).

III. The history of the English Bible 640 to 1611

A. *The beginning of the Bible in English (c. 700 to 1382)*

1. Aldhelm (640-709) Aldhelm made the first straightforward translation of portions of the Bible into English. He translated the Psalms into Old English shortly after A.D. 700 (Geisler and Nix, p. 544).

2. Egbert (c. 705) Egbert of Northumbria became the first to translate the first three gospels into English.

3. The Venerable Bede (674-735) Bede, one of the greatest scholars in Europe, translated the Gospel of John in to English.

4. Alfred the Great (849-901) Alfred translated part of Exodus and Acts into English.

5. Aldred (c. 950) “A priest named Aldred left his legacy by writing a word-for-word translation of the Latin between the lines of the Latin manuscript of the bishop of Lindisfarne—thus producing an interlinear translation” (Jonathan Underwood, *A History of the English Bible*, p. 68). **This manuscript of Aldred is the earliest evidence of an English translation of the New Testament.**

6. Aelfric (c. 950-1020) Aelfric translated from the Latin the first seven books of the Old Testament.

7. William of Shoreham and Richard Rolle (1300s) Both these men translated the Psalms into English. Rolle’s edition also contained a verse-by-verse commentary.

B. *The complete English Bible (Wycliff to King James) (1382-1611)*

1. John Wycliffe (c. 1320-84) John Wycliffe, the “Morning Star of the Reformation,” was responsible for **the first full translation of the Bible into English.** Clashing often with the Pope and Rome, Wycliffe believed that English speaking people needed their own version of the Scriptures. He said, “Englishmen learn Christ’s law best in English.” With the assistance of some of his students, Wycliffe translated the Bible using Jerome’s Latin Vulgate as the basis

for his translation. His work was completed in 1382. Wycliffe's efforts were so despised by the Roman Catholic Church that they issued five papal bulls (public decree) ordering his arrest, declared him a heretic, burned some of his copies of the Bible, and forty-three years after his death, dug up his remains, burning them and throwing them into a river.

NOTE: Wycliffe's version came years **before the invention of the printing press**. Though done by hand, enough copies were made to survive the attempts to have all of Wycliffe's copies burned. Today 170 copies of Wycliffe's version exist.

2. Changing times (1396 to the early 1500's) This time period brought many revolutionary changes to England and all of Europe that paved the way for printed versions of the Bible in English.

a. Johannes Gutenberg (1396-1468) of Germany invented the printing press. The Gutenberg Bible was published in 1455.

b. The first Hebrew Bible was published in 1488 followed by the first Hebrew grammar (1503) and lexicon (1506).

c. The Protestant Reformation brought attention back to the authority and sufficiency of the Bible.

d. Erasmus's Greek New Testament was published in 1516.

3. William Tyndale (c. 1492-1536) William Tyndale, a student of Erasmus, spoke seven languages and was proficient in Hebrew and Greek. Tyndale's aim in life was to give English language people a translation of the Bible based not on Latin but on the original Greek and Hebrew. Tyndale said, "I defy the Pope and all his laws; if God spares my life, I will cause a boy that driveth the plough to know more of the Scriptures than thou dost." In 1523, Tyndale sought official support for his English translation from the church hierarchy in England but was denied. Tyndale went to Germany where he completed the New Testament in February 1526. Six thousand copies of his New Testament were copied in Worms, Germany and by April 1526 they were selling in England. Bishop Tunstall of London, however, bought many of these copies and had them burned. Tyndale reprinted his New Testament many times and in 1530 he published his translation of the Pentateuch, with a revised edition of Genesis appearing in 1534. Tyndale also translated Jonah and all of the books from Joshua to 2 Chronicles. **Tyndale translated directly from the Hebrew and Greek and truly is the father of the English Bible.** Ninety percent of his words passed into the King James Version and seventy-five percent went into the Revised Standard Version. Eight major English translations of the Bible appeared in the 86 years before the King James Version in 1611 but Tyndale's was the most influential. Tyndale's translations were unpopular with Catholic church authorities since his work was unauthorized and he put the Bible into the hands of the common man. Tyndale lived with English merchants in Antwerp, Germany in relative safety until he was betrayed and arrested in 1535. **After a year and a half of being imprisoned, he was burned at the stake in Brussels on October 6, 1536. His last words were "Lord, Open the King of**

England's eyes" (Tony Lane, "The Crown of English Bibles, in *Christian History*, Issue 43, pp. 8-9).

4.Miles Coverdale (1488-1569) Miles Coverdale, a friend and associate of Tyndale, was responsible for the publication of the first complete English Bible in printed form in 1535. Coverdale used the translations of Tyndale (the New Testament and Genesis thru 2 Chronicles) and translated the rest himself. Coverdale, however, in his translations, used the Latin rather than the Hebrew. Within one year of Tyndale's death, complete English Bibles were available to the people.

5.Thomas Matthew (c. 1500-1555) John Rogers, under the name Thomas Matthew, published his own version in 1537 by combining the Old Testament works of Tyndale and Coverdale along with the 1535 revision of Tyndale's New Testament. This translation also included two-thousand marginal notes. Since he was an associate of the declared heretic, Tyndale, Rogers used the name Thomas Matthew in his version. **Rogers was burned at the stake in England under the reign of Mary Tudor in 1555.**

6.Richard Taverner (1505-1575) Taverner's Bible was a 1539 revision of the Matthew's Bible. He gave a number of improved renderings of the New Testament.

7.The Great Bible (1539) In 1539 another revision of Matthew's Bible was published—the Great Bible. "Edited by Coverdale, it was the first of the English Bibles authorized to be read in the churches. It was the wish of Henry VIII that it be among the people, and in keeping with the king's wish a copy of the Great Bible was placed in every church in the land. People flocked eagerly to the churches to see the Bibles which had been set up for reading, and at times the preachers complained because the people chose rather to read the Bible than listen to their sermons. Tyndale's dying prayer at last had been answered: the Lord had opened the king of England's eyes" (Lightfoot, pp. 129-30).

8.The Geneva Bible (1560) With the Roman Catholic, "Bloody Mary Tudor," on the throne in England(1553) some Protestants fled to Geneva where William Whittingham—a colleague of John Calvin Bible produced a new translation the Geneva bible. The Geneva Bible was an improvement to the previous English translations. Its translators were scholars who were able to make revisions from the original languages. **It was also the first translation to use chapter and verse arrangement, print each verse as a paragraph and put words not found in the original texts in italics.** The Geneva Bible was also small and moderately priced. Its commentary notes presented the views of John Calvin and the Reformation. It was very popular among lay people but was not acceptable to the Church of England because of its Calvinistic bias. A 1595 edition added notes that the beast coming out of the pit in Revelation 11:7 is "the pope which hath his power out of hell and cometh thence" (Lane, p. 9). **The Geneva Bible was the Bible of Shakespeare and the Pilgrims of America.**

9.The Bishop's Bible (1568) When Elizabeth came to England's throne in 1558, she required every parish church to have an English Bible. Since the Geneva Bible was not accepted by the English clergy because of its controversial notes, another more acceptable version came into

being—the Bishop’s Bible. Its name came from the fact that most of the translators were bishops. The Bishop’s Bible was basically a revision of the Great Bible. Its quality, though, was not as good as the already very popular Geneva Bible and failed in rivaling the Geneva version. No more copies of the Bishop’s Bible were made after 1602 though it continued to be the official version of the churches until the 1611 King James Version.

10. The Rheims-Douai Version (1609-10) “The zeal of Protestant revisions and editions eventually forced into being a Roman Catholic translation of the Bible. An edition of the New Testament was produced in 1582 in Rheims, France; and in 1609-10 the college at Douai, France issued a translation of the Old Testament. The Rheims-Douai translation was the first Roman Catholic English language version. It was translated **not from the original languages of Scripture**, but on the basis of the Latin Vulgate” (Lightfoot, pp. 130-31).

11. King James (“Authorized”) Version (1611) From the time of Tyndale until 1611, seven major English translations were made—the Coverdale Bible, the Matthew Bible, the Taverner Bible, the

Great Bible, the Geneva Bible, the Bishop’s Bible and the Rheims-Douai Bible. The 1611 King James Version, though, would surpass all these versions and become the standard English Bible for the next 350 years.

a. **History of the KJV** In 1604, King James I summoned a meeting of representatives from diverse religious groups to discuss the issue of religious toleration. At this meeting, known as the Hampton Court Conference, Dr. John Reynolds of Oxford discussed the desirability of having an authorized version of the English Bible that would be acceptable to all parties within the church. **King James agreed with Reynolds and called for a version that could be used for both public and private use.** According to James, the scholars involved with the new version were to use the Bishop’s Bible as the basic version as long as it adhered to the original Greek and Hebrew. They were also to consult the other translations—Tyndale, Matthew, Coverdale, Great Bible and the Geneva Bible. Unlike previous versions, there were to be no notes of comment except what was essential in translating the text. In 1607 the translation formally began. Fifty-four men skilled in Greek and Hebrew were selected and divided into six working companies—two at Westminster, two at Oxford and two at Cambridge. Each group was given detailed instructions and was assigned selected books to be translated. The work of each group was to be examined by the other companies. Thus, this translation was to be the work of the revisers as a whole, not the work of one person or group. The work continued for two years and nine months. In 1611, the first copies of the new version were printed. It was dedicated to the king and on its title page were the words, “Appointed to be read in the Churches.” in 1613 a new edition was issued with more than four hundred variations from the original printing. The King James immediately replaced the Bishop’s Bible in the churches. The KJV established itself as the standard for English-speaking people around the world.

b. Reasons for success of the KJV

(1) Greek and Hebrew scholarship made great strides from the time of Tyndale’s translation.

(2) The KJV was made at a time when literary scholarship was flourishing.

(3) The KJV translators were able to learn from the other translations before the KJV.

(4) The KJV was not the work of one man or party.

c. Revisions of the KJV The KJV has been through many editions and has been modernized considerably since 1611. In 1613 a new edition was issued which contained more than four hundred variations from the original printing. Other revisions took place in 1615, 1629, 1638 and 1762. The 1762 revision is what most people now know as the King James Version. Its influence in Christian hymns is unmistakable. (*The Bible Almanac*, p. 78).

C. Some English Translations With the discovery of earlier and better manuscript evidence the time had come for updated versions of the English Bible.

1. The English Revised Version (1885) In February of 1870 a motion to consider a revision of the King James was passed by the Convocation of the Province of Canterbury. As a result, sixty-five British scholars, along with American scholars who joined them in 1872, made significant changes from the KJV. The Old Testament scholars corrected mistranslations of Hebrew words. The New Testament scholars made thousands of changes based on better textual evidence. The New Testament was based on the excellent textual work of men like Westcott and Hort, Tischendorf and Tregelles. On May 17, 1881 their work on the New Testament was issued. Four years later on May 19, 1885, the entire Bible was completed with publication of the Old Testament.

2. The American Standard Version (1901) Headed by J.H. Thayer, the American Standard Version was published in 1901. The ASV is known for its very accurate and very literal reading of the Old and New Testaments. Concerning the ASV, Charles Spurgeon once said, "strong in Greek, weak in English." Nevertheless, English-speaking people were closer than ever to the original message of the Bible.

3. The Revised Standard Version (1952, Revised 1989) In 1929, the International Council of Religious Education began work on a revision of the ASV. Two reasons for the revision included 1) the desire to correct the stiffness and unnatural reading of the ASV, and 2) the desire to include the findings of the very important manuscript discoveries such as the Dead Sea Scrolls and the Chester Beatty Papyri and the complete bible was published on September 30, 1952. Many welcomed the RSV as a more readable and more reliable rendering of the Old and New Testament texts.

4. The Good News Bible (1966) This translation was heavily influenced by the theory of dynamic equivalence. Its readability made it very popular as evidenced by the 35 million copies sold within the first six years of publication.

5. The Living Bible (1971) Using the American Standard Version as his working text, Kenneth Taylor rephrased the Bible into modern speech with the intent that even a child could understand its message. The Living Bible is a paraphrase and not a translation.

6. The New American Standard Bible (1971, Revised 1995, 2020) “In the New American Standard Bible, evangelical scholars have attempted to update and clarify the ASV. The NASB’s New Testament translators mainly used Nestle’s improved text based on Westcott and Hort; but they also referred to some of the papyrus manuscripts and recent studies of the New Testament text. Generally, the Old Testament committee used Kittel’s Hebrew text” (*The Bible Almanac*, p. 79). The NASB capitalizes personal pronouns that refer to deity. The NASB has been praised for being accurate and literal and criticized for not being contemporary.

7. The New International Version (1978, Revised 1984, 2011) The New International Version is a completely new translation of the original languages done by an international group of more than one-hundred scholars. The NIV translators sought to make a version that was midway between a literal rendering (such as the NASB) and a free paraphrase (such as the Living Bible). Their goal was to convey in modern English the thought of the original writers. It is very easy to read but like other versions based on the principle of “dynamic equivalence,” it at times resembles a commentary more than a translation.

8. The New King James Version (1982) “In 1979, Thomas Nelson Publishers issued a new edition of the KJV New Testament. This edition was based on the 1894 edition of the *Textus Receptus*. While it preserved the integrity of the text, it eliminated many archaic expressions that made the old KJV difficult to read. The publisher assembled 119 scholars to work on this new publication. Dr. Arthur Farstad coordinated the work on the New Testament section. ‘We chose to follow the same theory of manuscript selection as was employed by the 1611 translators,’ Dr. Farstad said. In 1982 Thomas Nelson published the complete NKJV Bible, which quickly gained wide acceptance” (*The Bible Almanac*, p. 79).

English Standard Version (2001)

Modern English Version (2014)

Holman Christian Standard (2004)

Christian Standard Bible (2017)

New English Translation (2006)

4F. Textual Criticism: Questions

1. What is Textual Criticism's main objective concerning both the Old and New Testaments?41
2. What are the three root source materials used for textual criticism of the Old and New Testaments?41
3. How does the volume of manuscripts available help with the process of textual criticism?41-42
4. What would be your response concerning the questioned verses that follow:42

Luke 11:2-4

John 19:14

1 John 5:7

Mark 16:9-20

John 7:53-8:11

Contrast the ante-Nicene church fathers with the post-Nicene church fathers?42-43

4F. Textual Criticism

I. Introduction to Textual criticism (applies to both Old and New Testaments)

A. *Defined* “Textual criticism (which in the past was sometimes referred to as lower criticism) is the attempt to determine the original text of the biblical books” (Millard Erickson, *Christian Theology*, p. 83). **It is concerned with finding out what the original texts (autographs) of the Bible actually said.**

1. Criticism not used negatively “Because at times the word ‘criticism’ can mean ‘finding fault with,’ it is important to note that when it is used here it means ‘evaluation,’ the analysis of something with the intent of determining its value” (Bruce M. Metzger, *The Oxford Companion to the Bible*, p. 739).

2. Not to be confused with “Higher Criticism” Higher criticism involves judgments on the genuineness of the biblical texts (i.e. date, unity and authorship). The findings of higher criticism are often subjective and in most cases are not based on a high view of the Word of God.

B. *Necessity of textual criticism* Since the original books (autographs) of the Bible do not exist, how can we know that the books in the Bible accurately reflect what the original authors wrote? This process of determining what the original authors wrote is the task of textual criticism.

C. *Sources of textual criticism* There are three classes of sources scholars use in determining what the original writers of Scripture wrote:

1. Hebrew and Greek manuscripts

2. Ancient translations into other languages

3. Quotations made by rabbis and “church fathers”

II. **Textual variations:** There are two general mistakes made in the copying process:

A. *Unintentional errors* “Mistakes of the hand, eye, and ear are of frequent occurrence in the manuscripts, but usually pose no problem because they are easy to recognize. Often a scribe with a copy before him mistakes one word for another, and so by chance copies down the wrong word. . . . Errors of omission and addition are common in all the manuscripts. Words sometimes are omitted by a copyist for no apparent reason, simply an unintentional omission. More often, however, omissions are due to the similar appearance of words at a corresponding point several lines above or below the manuscript” (Lightfoot, p. 61).

1. Examples A scribe may write the word “Jesus” twice or accidentally skip a line when copying. A scribe may make a mistake because of dim lighting or because he tried to write from memory.

2. HOWEVER Because of the **numerous manuscripts available**, most textual variations are easily spotted and accounted for. The textual critic, by comparison of many manuscripts, can

detect and explain these errors without hesitation. It should also be noted that though unintentional alterations in the text are many, the vast majority of them are of little consequence.

B. Intentional errors A more serious problem happens when a well-meaning scribe tries to correct what he perceives to be an error.

1. Luke 11:2-4 the account of the Lord's prayer in Luke 11:2-4 was made to agree with the more popular version in Matthew 6:9-13.
2. John 19:14 The change from "sixth hour" to "third hour" in John 19:14 in some manuscripts was an attempt to correct what the scribe considered to be an inaccuracy.
3. 1 John 5:7 This clear statement on the Trinity in the Authorized Version (King James) was clearly added to bolster the biblical view of the Trinity.
4. Mark 16:9-20 Early manuscript evidence and internal evidence within the Book of Mark strongly indicate that Mark 16:9-20 was not a part of Mark's original Gospel and that the Gospel really ends at verse 8. Because this ending at verse 8 seems so abrupt, early scribes probably felt the necessity to add material about the resurrection to the end of Mark's Gospel.
5. John 7:53-8:11 As James White says, "The evidence against the originality of this pericope is extensive and wide-ranging, including both external and internal elements" (James R. White, *The King James Only Controversy*, p. 262). It is best to take this story as a true account that happened in the life of Jesus but one that was not originally a part of John's original Gospel.

C. How significant are the textual variations? When all the variants of all the manuscripts are accounted for, **the number of variants to the New Testament text is 200,000**. How sure can we be that our biblical text has not been corrupted? The answer is that the vast majority of variants are very minor and affect, in only a very few cases, the meaning of a text. **None of the variants have an impact on any major doctrine of Scripture.**

1. Westcott and Hort These excellent textual critics believed that only one-sixtieth of the variants in the New Testament rise above the level of "trivialities," or could be called "substantial variations." Even before the recent manuscript findings (Dead Sea Scrolls) this would amount to a text that is **98.33** percent pure.

2. Ezra Abbott According to his estimates the text is **99.75** percent pure.

3. A.T. Robertson He believed that only a "thousandth part of the entire text" was of any real concern. That would make the New Testament **99.9** percent free from real concern for the textual critic (Geisler and Nix, p. 474).

III. Who were the early church fathers?

The early "church fathers" fall into three basic categories: (A) apostolic fathers, (B) ante-Nicene church fathers, and (C) post-Nicene church fathers.

The apostolic church fathers were the ones like Clement of Rome who were contemporaries of the apostles and were probably taught by them?, carrying on the tradition and teaching of the apostles themselves. Linus, mentioned? in 2 Timothy 4:21, became the bishop of Rome, and Clement took over from Linus. Both Linus and Clement

of Rome, therefore, are considered apostolic fathers. However, there appear to be no writings of Linus that have survived, while many of the writings of Clement of Rome survived. The apostolic fathers would have largely passed from the scene by the beginning of the second century, except for those few who might have been disciples of John, such as Polycarp. The tradition is that the apostle John died in Ephesus around A.D. 98.

(B) The ante-Nicene fathers were those who came after the apostolic fathers and before the Council of Nicea in A.D. 325. Such individuals as Irenaeus, Ignatius, and Justin Martyr are ante-Nicene fathers.

(C) The post-Nicene church fathers are those who came after the Council of Nicea in A.D. 325. These are such noted men as Augustine, bishop of Hippo, who is often called the father of the [Roman Catholic] Church because of his work in Church doctrine; Chrysostom, called the “golden-mouthed” for his excellent oratorical skills; and Eusebius, who wrote a history of the church from the birth of Jesus to A.D. 324, one year before the Council of Nicea. He is included in the post-Nicene era since he did not write his history until after the Council of Nicea was held. Other post-Nicene fathers were Jerome, who translated the Greek New Testament into the Latin Vulgate, and Ambrose, who was largely responsible for Augustine’s conversion to Christianity.

The apostolic fathers (**A**) were very concerned about the proclamation of the gospel being just as the apostles themselves proclaimed it. They were not interested in formulating theological doctrine, for the gospel they had learned from the apostles was quite sufficient for them. The apostolic fathers were zealous themselves in rooting out and exposing any false doctrine that cropped up in the early church. The orthodoxy of the message was preserved by the apostolic fathers’ desire to stay true to the gospel taught to them by the apostles.

The ante-Nicene fathers (**B**) also tried to stay true to the gospel, but they had an additional worry. Now there were several spurious writings claiming to have the same weight as the established writings of Paul, Peter, and Luke, etc. The reason for these spurious documents was evident. If the body of Christ could be persuaded to receive a false document, then error would creep into the teaching. So the ante-Nicene fathers spent a lot of their time defending the Christian faith from false doctrine.

The post-Nicene fathers (C) carried out the mission of defending the gospel against all kinds of heresies, so more and more the post-Nicene fathers grew interested in methods of defending the gospel and **less interested** in transmitting the gospel in a true and pure form. Thus, they began to slowly fall away from the orthodoxy that was the hallmark of the apostolic fathers. This was the age of the theologian and endless discussions and eventually developed into Roman Catholic theology with its roots in the writings of the post-Nicene fathers. Only God’s Word is the infallible guide for faith and practice.

Lesson 5: Islam-Questions

In answering the following questions, you will become familiar with religious views, concepts and teachings that are somewhat or vastly different from your present understandings. Please research each on your own to gain a greater insight. You can then walk in wisdom to answer with seasoned speech when a door opens for You. Col. 4:3-6

1. How or who originated this religion and when?45
2. Describe the life of Muhammad?45,46
3. Which angel talked to Muhammad?45,46
4. Was Allah's Apostle, Muhammad, a man of peace?46
5. Define Islam and Muslim?46,47
6. Of the Six articles of faith – Which do you totally agree with and why?47
7. Of the Five Pillars of Islam – Which do you totally agree with and why?47
8. What does the word Quran or Koran mean?48
9. Is the Koran shorter or longer than the New Testament? How much?49
10. How many years was the Koran written after Jesus?48
11. Why were hafiz and quarra men important?49
12. Why were AbuBakr and Uthman important to Islam?49
13. Which Surat endorses less peace and more violence?49
14. Why is "Interpretation" necessary?50
15. What does Shia Islam believe?50,51
16. What does Sunni Islam believe?50,51

17. What does Wahhabi Islam believe?52
18. What is “Sharia Law”?
19. Are there written instructions or scripture? Do these evolve or change with time?
20. How are other religions viewed?
21. How are one’s actions/thoughts viewed? Right, Wrong, Sin, etc.
22. Is one’s actions/thoughts rewarded or punished, etc.?
23. What occurs after physical death?
24. What is the purpose of one’s life?
25. How is Jesus of Nazareth viewed?
26. How are the sixty-six books of the bible viewed?
27. What religious teachings do you share?
28. In there any teaching that you view as unique, peculiar, repulsive, or admired?

Who was Muhammad?

Muhammad, or Mohammed, is the founder of Islam and is considered a prophet by Muslims. He recited the Koran from AD 610-632.

Muhammad (AD 570—632) was from Mecca, a city near the Red Sea in what is now Saudi Arabia. An orphan from childhood, Muhammad was raised by an uncle, a man named Abu Talib, and became a merchant. Muhammad was a religious man, often going on retreats to the mountains where he would pray. He was a Hanif who accepted monotheism, a model of Abraham, **but** not Jewish or Christian. During one of these retreats, he reported being visited by the angel Gabriel, who supposedly gave Muhammad a revelation from **Allah, the Muslim name for God**. Islam teaches that Muhammad was

told by the **angel Gabriel** during a dream to memorize a certain message. For several years, **Muhammad kept this to himself, thinking he was being attacked by a demon.** Once his wife convinced him otherwise, he began to preach according to these received words. Over the next twenty-plus years, Muhammad gradually delivered more and more of the message. His followers memorized his words, maintaining an **entirely oral record** of the Qur'an. Only minor portions were inscribed on leaves, rocks, and bones. Muhammad reported having several other revelations from Allah as well, and so Muslims regard him as Allah's last and greatest prophet to mankind.

Muhammad proclaimed that "God is One," that is, there is no Trinity and Jesus (Isa) was simply another prophet, along with Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, David, and Muhammad himself. He also taught that complete surrender (**the word *islam* means "submission"**) is the only way to please Allah. Muslims credit Muhammad with restoring the "true" religion of Islam to a world that had corrupted it.

Early on in his endeavors, Muhammad did not win many followers; many of the Meccan tribes were hostile to him and opposed his message. Muhammad moved north to the city of Medina for protection. After eight years of conflict with the Meccan tribes, Muhammad gathered 10,000 converts, took up arms, and marched against Mecca. He and his followers took over Mecca and destroyed all the pagan idols there.

From Mecca, Muhammad and his followers set out to destroy all the other pagan temples in western Arabia, and they succeeded. The rest of Muhammad's life was given to the promotion and growth of Islam throughout the Arabic world. Sometimes Muhammad used his great plundered wealth to bribe people into Islam. Other times, he used terrorism and conquest. Muslims swept through the Arabian Peninsula, conquering tribe after tribe. When approaching a city, Muhammad would offer terms of peace: accept Islam, the only true religion, and submit to **Allah's Apostle**, and all would be well. If a city rejected these terms, Muhammad's forces would proceed to attack the city. According to Abdullah ibn Umar, a companion of Muhammad, **Allah's Apostle [Muhammad]** said: 'I have been ordered (by Allah) to fight against the people until they testify that none has the right to be worshiped but Allah and that **Muhammad is Allah's Apostle**, and offer the prayers perfectly and give the obligatory charity, so if they perform all that, then they save their lives and property from me'" (Bukhari: vol. 1, bk. 2, no. 24).

Muhammad claimed to have continued to receive revelations from Allah until his death, and Muhammad's revelations were compiled after his death and canonized into what is now called the Qur'an, the Muslim holy book. Other respected writings in Islam include the **Hadith**, which is a collection of teachings, deeds, and sayings of Muhammad; and the **Tafsir**, which is a commentary of sorts on the Qur'an. Because of the content of Muhammad's revelations, in particular the denial of God's triune nature, the teaching that salvation must be earned by works, and the denial of the deity of Jesus Christ, Christians regard Muhammad's revelations as false, coming from a source other than the One True God. Indeed, the differences between the God of the Bible and the Allah of Islam are too great to consider them the same deity, despite Muhammad's

proclamations that his revelations came from the God of Adam, Abraham, Jesus. **Allah's "mercy" is dependent only upon the right actions of his followers.**

What is Islam, and what do Muslims believe?

Islam is a religious system begun in the seventh century by Muhammad. Muslims follow the teachings of the Qur'an and strive to keep the Five Pillars.

The History of Islam

In the seventh century, Muhammad claimed to have angel visitations, which continued for about 23 years until Muhammad's death, the angel purportedly revealed to Muhammad the words of Allah (the Arabic word for "God" used by Muslims). These dictated revelations compose the Qur'an, Islam's holy book. **Islam means "submission,"** deriving from a root word that means "peace." The word **Muslim means "one who submits to Allah."**

The Doctrine of Islam

Muslims summarize their doctrine in Six articles of faith:

1. Belief in one Allah: Muslims believe Allah is one, eternal, creator, no trinity and sovereign.
2. Belief in the angels
3. Belief in the prophets: The prophets include the biblical prophets but end with Muhammad as Allah's final prophet.
4. Belief in the revelations of Allah: Muslims accept certain portions of the Bible, such as the Torah and the Gospels. They believe the Qur'an is the preexistent, perfect word of Allah.
5. Belief in the last day of judgment and the hereafter: Everyone will be resurrected for judgment into either paradise or hell.
6. Belief in predestination: Muslims believe Allah has decreed everything that will happen. Muslims testify to Allah's sovereignty with their frequent phrase, *inshallah*, meaning, "if God wills."

The Five Pillars of Islam

These five tenets compose the framework of obedience for Muslims:

1. The testimony of faith (*shahada*): "*la ilaha illa allah. Muhammad rasul Allah.*" This means, "There is no deity but Allah. **Muhammad is the messenger of Allah.**" **A person can convert to Islam by stating this creed.** The shahada shows that a Muslim believes in Allah alone as deity and believes that Muhammad reveals Allah.
2. Prayer (*salat*): Five ritual prayers must be performed every day.
3. Giving (*zakat*): This almsgiving is a certain percentage given once a year.
4. Fasting (*sawm*): Muslims fast during Ramadan in the ninth month of the Islamic calendar. They must not eat or drink from dawn until sunset.
5. Pilgrimage (*hajj*): If physically and financially possible, a Muslim must make the pilgrimage to Mecca in Saudi Arabia at least once. The *hajj* is performed in the twelfth month of the Islamic calendar.

A Muslim's entrance into paradise hinges on obedience to these Five Pillars. Still, Allah may reject them. Even Muhammad was not sure whether Allah would admit him to

paradise (Surah 46:9; Hadith 5.266).

An Evaluation of Islam:

Compared to Christianity, Islam has some similarities but significant differences. Like Christianity, Islam is monotheistic. However, Muslims reject the Trinity—that God has revealed Himself as one in three Persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Muslims claim that Jesus was one of the most important prophets—not God’s Son.

Islam asserts that Jesus, though born of a virgin, was created like Adam. Muslims do not believe Jesus died on the cross. They do not understand why Allah would allow His prophet Isa (the Islamic word for "Jesus") to die a torturous death. Yet the Bible shows how the death of the perfect Son of God was essential to pay for the sins of the world (Isaiah 53:5-6; John 3:16; 14:6; 1 Peter 2:24).

Muslims believe that **paradise** can be earned through keeping the Five Pillars. The Bible, in contrast, reveals that sinful man can never measure up to the holy God (Romans 3:23; 6:23). Only by God’s grace may sinners be saved through obedient repentant faith in Jesus (Acts 20:21; Ephesians 2:8-9; James 2:24).

Because of these essential differences and contradictions, Islam and Christianity cannot both be true. The Bible and Qur’an cannot both be God’s Word. The truth has eternal consequences.

What is the Quran?

The Qur’an—often spelled as *Quran* or *Koran*—is the primary holy text of the Islamic faith. According to Muslim beliefs, the words of the Qur’an were dictated to Muhammad, who relayed them orally to his followers. **The term *Qur’an* literally means “the recitation.”** This message was delivered by Muhammad approximately **600 years after the earthly ministry of Jesus.**

Islam considers the Qur’an to be the perfect, eternal, beautiful message of Allah and the only necessary proof of Muhammad’s status as a prophet. The words of the Qur’an were kept in purely oral form until after Muhammad’s death. At that time, the text was assembled into writing through the efforts of several early Islamic leaders. The Qur’an is shorter than the New Testament of the Bible, but, according to Islamic theology, it can only be truly understood when read in its original Arabic dialect. Islamic theology is based on both the Qur’an and various oral traditions collected over the centuries.

The central message of the Qur’an is that mankind has drifted from the truths that Allah presented to men like Noah, Abraham, Moses, and Jesus. Per Muhammad, man has corrupted the words and message of Allah. This particular “recitation” is meant to be the final, authoritative statement from Allah to mankind. Man is called on to submit to Allah: **the word *Islam* literally means “submission.”** Muslims are also commanded by the Qur’an to follow Allah’s instructions and to employ various methods of **“struggle” (*jihad*) to spread this submission worldwide.**

“Recording” the Qur’an: Abu Bakr and Uthman

After Muhammad died, survival of his message was entirely reliant on the *hafiz*—men who had memorized the entire Qur’an—and *qurra*—men who had memorized large portions of the text and were adept at reciting it. These sources rapidly dwindled. The Islamic Empire’s rapid military expansion resulted in many *hafiz* and *qurra* being killed in battle. In response, Islamic leaders began the process of recording the Qur’an in written form. This involved the memory of the remaining *hafiz*, as well as collecting various written fragments. The result was a single manuscript, kept by the leader of Islam, Caliph Abu Bakr.

However, as Islam continued to spread, variations within the Qur’an began to arise. This was due to continued oral memorization, alternate writings on leaves and bones, and differences of opinion between Muslims on what Muhammad had actually said. These disagreements were serious enough to spark violence. A succeeding caliph, Uthman, ordered all written copies of the Qur’an, including scraps, to be collected. These were given to a panel of scholars who were tasked with determining the “correct” words and pronunciations. Afterwards, Uthman sent a single copy of the written Qur’an to each of the major regions of the Empire and ordered all prior copies—in all forms—to be destroyed. This entire process was completed within thirty years of Muhammad’s death.

“Structure” of the Qur’an: Ayat and Surat(Surah)

The Qur’an is composed of 114 chapters, or *surat*. Each individual chapter, or *surah*, is typically given a name for easier identification, based on the content. Rather than being arranged chronologically, these chapters are ordered more or less from longest to shortest. Those with more verses, or more *ayat*, are generally the earlier chapters, while the shorter ones are placed at the end. Not only are the Qur’an’s chapters presented in non-chronological order, the topic under discussion from one verse to the next often varies wildly.

The text of the **Qur’an is much shorter than that of the Bible**. Depending on whether one is counting words or letters, the relative size may vary. By most estimates, **the Qur’an is slightly more than half as long as the New Testament and less than one-fourth the size of the Old Testament.**

The Qur’an can be divided into two major categories of content: Medinan and Meccan. These correspond to the two major phases of Muhammad’s ministry, the first in the city of Mecca and the second in the city of Medina. The character of Islam, of Muhammad’s message, and the words of the Qur’an demonstrate a noticeable change when Muhammad left Mecca for Medina.

In Mecca, Muhammad was a relatively powerless, persecuted figure. **Meccan surat** tends to emphasize coexistence, non-coercion, peace, and so forth. These are the *ayat* most often cited by those claiming Islam to be a religion of peace. However, after moving to **Medina**, Muhammad became a powerful warlord. The later **Medinan surat**, from the end of Muhammad’s life and the early days of the Islamic Empire, are notably more aggressive. These form the bulk of verses cited by those who believe Islam endorses

aggression and violence.

“Interpretation” and Use of the Qur’an: *Hadith* and *Tafsir*

Interpretation of the Qur’an is more complex than for other religious texts. Most Muslims cannot engage in deep study of the Arabic Qur’an, just as most Christians cannot engage in professional-level studies of the original Hebrew and Greek manuscripts of the Bible. The vast majority of Muslims worldwide do not speak the Arabic dialect in which the Qur’an is written. Christians have access to translations of the Bible. However, according to Islamic theology, **the words of the Qur’an can be fully understood only in their original Arabic dialect.** According to Muslims, the miracle of the Qur’an is in its supposedly perfect language and structure. “Translating” the Qur’an, then, is impossible according to Islam. Any change of the text, such as into another language, makes the end result an **interpretation.**

The short length and primarily oral nature of the early Qur’an encouraged the development of ***hadith, or oral traditions.*** Islamic scholars collected various comments made by those who knew Muhammad personally and that purport to be memories of Muhammad’s own remarks on the Qur’an and the correct application of Islam. These comments are generally from Muhammad’s wives, lieutenants, or close associates. Not all of these traditional tidbits are accepted by every Muslim. In fact, the differences between major schools of Islamic theology can be coarsely summarized by which *hadith* they accept or reject.

Because of the language barrier, the chaotic nature of the text, and the existence of the *hadith*, the Qur’an is significantly more obscure than the Christian Bible. The average Muslim does not have access to all of the thousands and thousands of variant collections of oral traditions that form the *hadith*. However, it is reasonable to say that the Qur’an’s role in Islam cannot be properly understood without the *hadith*. In this respect, the Qur’an is only part of a Muslim’s religious texts, albeit the most important.

As a result, most Muslims rely heavily on some form of interpretation-commentary in order to understand and apply the Qur’an. These commentaries are called *tafsir*, which generally combine explanation of context with the opinion of various Islamic scholars.

Competing Claims: The Qur’an and the Bible

Islam has a complex relationship with the Bible, because of statements made in the Qur’an. In theory, Muslims believe that Allah (God) gave written revelations to men like Moses and David. This, for them, also includes Jesus, whom they refer to as *Isa*. **In some places,** the Qur’an seems to suggest that the books given to these earlier men ought to be studied. **In other places,** it seems to suggest that those words have been corrupted. It also claims Allah will not allow his words to be changed. **In some places,** the Qur’an suggests that Christians worship a trinity of God, Jesus, and Mary.

Shia and Sunni Islam - What are the differences?

The main difference between Sunnis and Shias lies in their interpretation of the **rightful succession** of leadership after the death of the prophet Muhammad. The declaration of faith to which all Muslims assent is this: “There is no God but Allah, whose prophet is

Muhammad.” However, the Shiites added an extra phrase at the end: and Ali is the friend of God. Because the Shiites passionately attest to Ali being the successor to Muhammad, much feuding and division have been caused in the world of Islam, not unlike the feuding between Protestants and Roman Catholics in Europe during the Reformation. However, the schism that sets up the major sects of Islam is not due to doctrinal issues, as between Protestants and Catholics, but is grounded in the identity of the “true successor” to Muhammad.

Among the close disciples of Muhammad was Ali, his son-in-law, who was most familiar with his teachings. However, when Muhammad died in A.D. 632, the followers bypassed Ali, whom the Shiites claim as the rightful successor to Muhammad. Instead, a cousin of Muhammad’s third successor, Uthman (A.D. 644-656), called Mu’awiya Umayyad, declared himself caliph. When he died in A.D. 680, his son Yazid usurped the caliphate instead of Ali’s youngest son, Hussein. The feud between rightful successors or caliphs was fought at the battle of Karbala. Hussein was slain, but his sole son, Ali, survived and continued the line of succession. Yazid, however, gave rise to the Umayyad line of succession, from which modern-day Sunnism arose.

As for their beliefs, both Sunni and Shia Muslims agree on the five pillars of Islam. While the Sunnites honor Ali, they do not venerate their imams as having the gift of divine intercession. **Shiites do venerate their imams,** believing they are endowed with **infallibility** in their interpretation of the Qur’an. In many ways, **this mirrors the way the Pope** is venerated in Rome. Sunnites conduct community prayers and believe they can have a direct relationship with God. Both Shiite Muslims and Sunni Muslims are involved in terrorism. **Shiite groups include Hizbollah** in Lebanon and the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps/Quds Force. **Sunni groups include al-Qaeda,** ISIS/ISIL, the Taliban in Afghanistan, and Boko-Haram.

In terms of actual practice, the **Sunni Muslims pray five times a day:** the *fajr*, the *zohr*, the *asar*, the *maghrib* and finally the *isha* (“darkness”). **Shia Muslims only pray three times**—morning, lunchtime and sunset. Another important difference between the two sects is that Shia Muslims permit fixed-term temporary marriage, known as *muttah*. *Muttah* was originally permitted at the time of the Prophet and is now being promoted in Iran by an unlikely alliance of conservative clerics and feminists, the latter group seeking to downplay the obsession with female virginity which is prevalent in both forms of Islam, pointing out that **only one of the Prophet’s thirteen wives was a virgin when he married her.**

Iran is overwhelmingly Shia - 89 percent. Shia Muslims also form a majority of the population of Yemen, Azerbaijan, Bahrain and 60 percent of the population of Iraq. There are also sizeable Shia communities along the east coast of Saudi Arabia and in Lebanon. The well-known guerrilla organization Hezbollah, which forced the Israelis out of southern Lebanon in 2000, is Shia. Worldwide, Shias constitute 10 to 15 percent of the overall Muslim population, but they make up the majority of the radical, violent element of Islam.

What is Wahhabism? What is Wahhabi Islam?

Wahhabism is an intolerant and aggressive form of Sunni Islam practiced primarily in Saudi Arabia, but also to a lesser extent in Qatar with some influence in the surround nations. It seeks to purify Islam from any practices or innovations that do not come from the teachings of Muhammad. The term *Wahhabi* is from the name of the Muslim scholar Muhammad bin Abd al Wahhab, who lived from 1703 to 1791 and who advocated this radical approach. Zealous followers of Wahhab are sometimes referred to as Unitarians or *Salafiyyun* (from the word for “follow”). *Salafiyyun* may refer to any movement that attempts to purify Islam, while *Wahhabi* refers to a more specific movement to be described here. For instance, the Taliban may be *Salafiyyun* but not Wahhabi. Muslims who follow Wahhabi beliefs do not necessarily call themselves Wahhabi; they simply call themselves Muslims. **Muslims who do not follow Wahhabi beliefs are referred to as heathens or enemies.**

Abd al **Wahhab** lived in the Arabian Peninsula and sought to purify Islam from many of the popular beliefs and practices that he felt were idolatrous, such as the veneration of saints and many Shiite traditions and practices. **He called Muslims to go back to the fundamentals of Islam as found in a strict interpretation of the Koran.** Muhammad bin Saud partnered with Abd al Wahhab to try to unify the various tribes of the Arabian Peninsula (thus the name “Unitarians”), which ultimately led to the founding of the kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the close ties between that country and Wahhabism. Many Wahhabi ideas were guiding principles for the formation of Saudi Arabian laws and societal norms. **Saudi Arabia is one of the most repressive countries in the Muslim world.**

What is Islamism?

Islamism is different from Islam. Islam is a religion with several branches, while Islamism is a religious and political movement within Islam, based on certain literal interpretations of the Quran. In particular, **Islamism seeks to conform society to Sharia, the moral and religious system of law that comes from the Quran.** Sharia defines a strict moral code for almost every aspect of societal and personal life—everything from trade regulations to personal hygiene—and it interprets the word *islam* (which means “submission”) quite literally, requiring that every person either submit to Sharia or die.

Islamism is largely political in nature—Islamists are interested in conquering. Some Islamists believe that the best way to do this is by revolution or invasion, conforming the world to Islamism through terror and state power. Others believe it is better to achieve their goals through reformation of society from the ground up.

Because of the terrorism that Islamism has spawned, there is a great deal of fear directed toward Muslims. Some of this fear is deserved. **Conversion or death is a very real and terrifying aspect of Islamism.** But Christians should try to remember that, while every Islamist is a Muslim, not every Muslim is an Islamist. In fact, many Muslim people are persecuted by Islamists because they do not want to conform to Sharia law or because they come from the wrong sect of Islam or live in the wrong community.

The Islamists, following the Quran literally, are filled with hatred and ruthlessness toward those who do not submit to Sharia.

Lesson 6: Hinduism: Questions

In answering the following questions, you will become familiar with religious views, concepts and teachings that are somewhat or vastly different from your present understandings. Please research each on your own to gain a greater insight. You can then walk in wisdom to answer with seasoned speech when a door opens for You. Col. 4:3-6

1. The word Hindu, an exonym, is derived from what term and valley?54
2. Define Brahma and Brahman?54
3. Speculate on why Hinduism has millions of gods?54
4. Believing in what makes one a Hindu?55
5. Why is everyone divine in Hinduism?55
6. When one is liberated or moksha-what occurs?55
7. The word Veda is Sanskrit for what?56
8. What are the four Vedas?55,56
9. What is Karma?56,57
10. What is reincarnation?57,58
11. How is Karma and reincarnation linked?
12. Relate the words avatar and docetism to Jesus?58
13. List the four Hindu caste systems?59
14. What is a Dalit? How can they escape this designation?59
15. How or who originated this religion and when?
16. How are other world religions viewed?

17. How are one's actions/thoughts viewed? Right, Wrong, Sin, etc.
18. Is one's actions/thoughts rewarded or punished, etc.?
19. What occurs after physical death?
20. What is the purpose of one's life?
21. How are the sixty-six books of the bible viewed?
22. What religious teachings do you share?
23. In there any teaching that you view as unique, peculiar, repulsive, or admired?

What is Hinduism and what do Hindus believe?

Hinduism is one of the oldest known organized religions. The terms *Hindu* and *Hinduism* come from the Sanskrit term for the Indus Valley. Its sacred writings date as far back as 1400 to 1500 B.C. **It is also one of the most diverse and complex religions**, having millions of gods. Hindus have a wide variety of core beliefs and exist in many different sects. Although it is the third largest religion in the world, Hinduism exists primarily in India and Nepal.

Though Hinduism is often understood as being polytheistic, supposedly recognizing many millions of gods, it also has one "god" that is the supreme spirit "Brahman". **Brahman is an entity believed to inhabit every portion of reality and existence throughout the entire universe. Brahman is both impersonal and unknowable and is often believed to exist in three separate forms: Brahma "Creator"; Vishnu "Preserver"; and Shiva "Destroyer"**. These "facets" of Brahma are also known through the many other incarnations of each. It is difficult to summarize Hindu theology since the various Hindu schools contain elements of almost every theological system. Hinduism can be:

- 1) Monistic Only one thing exists; Sankara's school
- 2) Pantheistic Only one divine thing exists so that God is identical to the world; Brahmanism

3) Panentheistic Only the world is part of God; Ramanuja's School

4) Theistic Only one God, distinct from Creation; Bhakti Hinduism.

Observing other schools, Hinduism can also be atheistic, deistic, or even nihilistic. With such diversity included under the title "Hindu," one may wonder what makes them "Hindu" in the first place? **About the only real issue is whether or not a belief system recognizes the Vedas as sacred. If it does, then it is Hindu. If not, then it is not Hindu.** Hinduism views mankind as divine. **Because Brahma is everything, Hinduism asserts that everyone is divine. Atman, or self, is one with Brahman.** All of reality outside of Brahman is considered mere illusion. The spiritual goal of a Hindu is to become one with Brahma, thus ceasing to exist in its illusory form of "individual self." This freedom is referred to as "moksha." Until **moksha** is achieved, **a Hindu believes that he/she will be repeatedly reincarnated** in order that he/she may work towards self-realization of the truth (the truth being that only Brahman exists, nothing else). **How a person is reincarnated is determined by karma**, which is a principle of cause and effect governed by nature's balance. What one did in the past affects and corresponds with what happens in the future, past and future lives included.

[It is readily seen that Hinduism is in opposition to biblical Christianity on almost every count of its belief system. Christianity has one God who is both personal and knowable (Deuteronomy 6:5; 1 Corinthians 8:6); has one set of Scriptures; teaches that God created the earth and all who live upon it (Genesis 1:1; Hebrews 11:3); believes that man is created in God's image and lives only once (Genesis 1:27; Hebrews 9:27-28); and teaches that salvation is through Jesus Christ alone (John 3:16; 6:44; 14:6; Acts 4:12). Hinduism as a religious system fails because it fails to recognize Jesus as the uniquely incarnated God/Man/Savior, the one solely sufficient source of salvation for all humanity.]

What are the Vedas?

The Vedas are more than theology books. They contain a rich and colorful "theo-mythology," that is, a religious mythology which deliberately interweaves myth, theology, and history to achieve a story-form religious root. This "theo-mythology" is so deeply rooted in India's history and culture that to reject the Vedas is viewed as opposing India. Therefore, a belief system is rejected by Hinduism if it does not embrace Indian culture to some extent. If the system accepts Indian culture and its theo-mythical history, then it can be embraced as "Hindu" even if its theology is theistic, nihilistic, or atheistic. This openness to contradiction can be a headache for Westerners who seek logical consistency and rational defensibility in their religious views.

The Vedas are then a set of four Hindu holy texts, written about 2,500 years ago. The first Veda and most important of the Vedas is the Rig-Veda, a set of ten books comprising hymns and mantras to and about various deities. The second Veda is the Sama-Veda, a collection of melodies meant to be sung during Hindu sacrifices and offerings, called *yajna*. The third Veda is the Atharva-Veda, which consists of more hymns, mantras, and incantations, and most of these are to be sung outside the context of the *yajna*. The fourth Veda is the Yajur-Veda, which is a guidebook for priests performing *yajnas*. It has

two sections: black and white.

The word Veda is Sanskrit for “knowledge,” and Hindus believe the knowledge in the Vedas to be divine in origin. This knowledge within the Vedas falls into four categories: Samhitas, which are mantras and benedictions; Aranyakas, which are writings delineating the symbols and ceremonies concerning sacrifices; the Brahmanas, which are writings about the rituals and sacrifices; and Upanishads, which are discussions about spiritual knowledge and Hindu philosophy. Sometimes a fifth category is employed—Upasanas, which are writings of worship. There are orthodox and heterodox approaches to the Vedas within Hinduism, much the same as the orthodox and heterodox (contrary/different) approaches to Christian scripture. Some Hindus see the Vedas as divine, authoritative truth, while others see them as non-authoritative.

It is not clear how old the Vedas actually are, because they were transmitted via oral tradition, perhaps **many centuries**, for before being written down. Once they were written down, it was often upon birch bark or palm leaves, materials that do not stand the test of time. So, it is likely that most of the earliest manuscripts have been lost. Even the texts today are somewhat fluid, **varying from school to school** in the Vedic tradition, and divided into *shruti* (“the heard”) and *smriti* (“the remembered”). That is not to say that there is no consistency within the Vedas—in fact, the Vedic schools have elaborate methods for passing on what is heard and remembered intact; inherent within the mnemonic technique are many forms of recitation done to eliminate mistakes as the information is passed down orally.

The Vedas are not like the Bible in that they do not proclaim truth and salvation. They are mainly thoughts, ideas, speculation, and poetry about man and the universe, plus prescriptions for sacrifice and ritual. They are undoubtedly fascinating and beautiful writings, **but** they cannot be relied upon to reveal the knowledge of God. Only the Bible, which is God’s own communication to mankind, can be relied upon as true. Only the Bible is trustworthy to lead men from sin to a saving knowledge of God in Christ (2 Timothy 3:16; 2 Peter 1:19–21)

What does the Bible say about karma?

Karma is a theological concept found in the Buddhist and Hindu religions. **It is the idea that how you live your life will determine the quality of life you will have after reincarnation.** If you are unselfish, kind, and holy during this lifetime, you will be rewarded by being reincarnated (reborn into a new earthly body) into a pleasant life. However, if you live a life of selfishness and evil, you will be reincarnated into a less-than-pleasant lifestyle. In other words, you reap in the next life what you sow in this one.

Karma is based on the false theological belief in reincarnation. The Bible rejects the idea of reincarnation; therefore, it does not support the idea of karma. Hebrews 9:27 states, "Just as man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment" This Bible verse makes clear two important points which, for Christians, negate the possibility of reincarnation and karma. First, it states that we are "destined to die once," meaning that humans are only born once and only die once. There is no endless cycle of life and death and rebirth, an idea inherent in the reincarnation theory. Second, it states that after death

we face judgment, meaning that there is no second chance, like there is in reincarnation and karma, to live a better life. You get one opportunity at life and living it according to God's plan, and that is it.

What does the Bible say about reincarnation?

To reincarnate is, literally, to “incarnate again”; that is, reincarnation is a “rebirth” into some new body of flesh and blood. In most contexts, *reincarnation* refers to the process, after death, of a soul returning in a new body of some type.

The afterlife is not a rebirth or a reincarnation into another body here on earth. It is either eternal punishment (Matthew 25:46) or eternal life in Heaven with Jesus, who died so that we might live eternally with Him.

So we must always remember that it was Jesus whose death on the cross, not His *reincarnation*, that resulted in eternal life with Jehovah God.. We see that the concept of reincarnation and karma is incompatible with what the Bible teaches about life and death.

According to some religious and philosophical systems, reincarnation involves more than human souls and bodies: a dog's spirit can reincarnate as another dog, for example, or a human soul can reincarnate as a cow and thus sacred in India. Reincarnation, also referred to as the transmigration of the soul, rests on concepts such as the eternal, uncreated nature of the soul and the need for the soul to “mature,” grow, transform, and evolve.

Of course, there is no “proof” for reincarnation. Any evidence put forward is entirely subjective: feelings of déjà vu, recurring dreams, feeling one has an “old soul,” irrational phobias, justifying the “trans” community, an affinity for other cultures and periods of time are all interpreted, by some, as confirmation that they are living another life in a different body.

Passages in Scripture refute the idea of reincarnation. Jesus told the criminal on the cross, “Today you will be with me in paradise” (Luke 23:43)—not “You will have another chance to live a life on earth.” Matthew 25:46 tells us that, upon death, believers go on to eternal life while unbelievers go on to eternal punishment. We are created as individuals, and our identity does not change after death (see Luke 9:30).

Some who believe in reincarnation point to Matthew 17:10–12 as biblical support for reincarnation. The disciples ask Jesus about the commonly taught prophecy that Elijah must come before the Messiah (verse 10; cf. Malachi 4:5), and Jesus responds by identifying the “Elijah” of the prophecy as John the Baptist (Matthew 17:11–13). However, Jesus was not teaching that John the Baptist was Elijah reincarnated. For one thing, Elijah did not die; he was taken to heaven in a chariot of fire (2 Kings 2:11), so the literal “coming” of Elijah would have been a descent from heaven, not a reincarnation. Jesus calls John the Baptist “Elijah” because he came in the “spirit and power of Elijah” (Luke 1:17), not because he was Elijah in a literal sense. Also, Elijah himself had just appeared, talking with Jesus (Matthew 17:3), which shows that Elijah had not changed his identity—he had not become John. Finally, the people had earlier asked John the Baptist if he was

Elijah, and he said, “No, I am not” (John 1:21).

Belief in reincarnation is a central tenet in the majority of Indian religious traditions such as Hinduism, Sikhism, and Jainism. Many modern pagans also believe in reincarnation, as do some New Age movements, along with followers of Spiritism. For the Christian, however, there can be no doubt: reincarnation is unbiblical and must be rejected as false.

What is an avatar in Hinduism? Was Jesus an avatar?

In Hinduism, an avatar is the bodily incarnation of a deity on earth. The god can become incarnate in one place at a time as a full avatar or in many places simultaneously through partial avatars called *amshas*, such that the main form of the god can still communicate with the partial materializations. **One could view avatars as embodying the concepts of pantheism (god is all) and polytheism (many gods).**

The belief in Hindu avatars is similar to the Christian heresy of Docetism, which is the belief that Jesus Christ only *appeared* to be human. Docetism teaches that Jesus’ body was spiritual, rather than physical; thus, He was unable to suffer physical pain. **In Hinduism, the avatar appears to the devotee in whatever form the worshiper envisions, which, according to Hindu belief could be Mohammed, Krishna, Jesus, Buddha, or any other personal god.** An “unqualified” person would take the avatar to be an ordinary human.

The purpose of the avatar’s manifestation is to restore *dharma*, or righteousness, to the cosmic and social order. *Dharma* encompasses behaviors such as duty, ritual, law, morality, ethics, good deeds, etc.—anything considered critical to maintaining natural order. That which is unnatural or immoral is called *adharma*.

Avatars are most often associated with the god Vishnu, one of the members of the Hindu “Great Trinity” or *Trimurti* (although any Hindu god may manifest as an avatar). Vishnu is considered the maintainer or preserver, as opposed to the other members, Brahma the creator and Shiva the destroyer. According to the *Bhagavata Purana*, a book of Vedic Sanskrit traditions, Vishnu has incarnated as innumerable avatars in unlimited universes, though there are ten major incarnations, known collectively as *Dashavatara*.

Some Hindus consider Jesus as an avatar and, more specifically, as the reincarnation of Krishna. However, Jesus was not reincarnated; He was resurrected. Jesus was not an avatar; He is fully human and fully God. After His crucifixion, Jesus was resurrected bodily.

What is the Hindu caste system?

No nation or people have been liberated from poverty, want, or injustice through Hinduism. While the caste system was officially outlawed in India in 1950, in truth, the Hindu caste system continues to enslave people. **The Hindu caste system divides people into four rigid hierarchical groups, based solely on heredity.** Members of each caste are restricted in their occupation and their association with other castes. In the *Manusmriti*, considered the most important book on Hindu law dating back 3,000 or more years, the caste system is favorably regarded as the bedrock of societal order. **Here are the four castes of Hinduism:**

- Brahmins: teachers and intellectuals
- Kshatriyas: warriors and rulers
- Vaishyas: traders and merchants
- Shudras: laborers and menial workers

Outside the caste system is another group, known as Dalits, the “caste of the impure.” The Dalits, or “untouchables,” or “Scheduled Caste” are expected to accept poverty and degradation as a fact of life. A majority of Dalit children are chronically malnourished, and only 2–3 percent of Dalit women can read or write. Dalit children who attend school are segregated from their classmates and are often assigned disagreeable jobs such as cleaning toilets. In a nation already steeped in poverty, the ancient customs of Hinduism prevent the Dalits from rising above their extreme suffering and want.

There is no denying barbarous acts have been committed in the name of Christianity, but those guilty of senseless bloodshed **do so outside of the authority of Scripture.** No amount of Scripture-twisting can turn the words of Jesus into a battle cry for bigotry, hatred, and violence, yet one of Hinduism’s holiest books, the *Manusmriti*, sanctions a cruelly unjust caste system that has enslaved legions of people for more than three millennia.

Ethics: Three worldviews are compared in regard to Ethics

Polytheism and pantheism both have a questionable basis for their ethics.

First, with polytheism, if there are many gods, then which god has the more ultimate standard of ethics for humans to keep? When there are multiple gods, then their ethical systems do not conflict, do conflict, or do not exist. If they do not exist, then ethics are invented and baseless. The weakness of that position is self-evident. If the ethical systems do not conflict, then on what principle do they align? Whatever that aligning principle is, would be more superior/ultimate than the gods. **The gods are not ultimate since they answer to some other authority.** Therefore, there is a higher reality to which one should adhere. This fact makes polytheism seem shallow if not empty. Next, if the gods conflict in their standards of right and wrong, **then to obey one god is to risk disobeying another, incurring punishment.** Ethics would be relative. Good for one god would not necessarily be "good" in an objective and universal sense. For example, sacrificing one’s child to Kali would be commendable to one stream of Hinduism but reprehensible to many others. But surely, child sacrifice, as such, is objectionable regardless. Some things by all reason and appearance are right or wrong, regardless.

Second, Pantheism does not fare much better than polytheism since it asserts that ultimately there is only one thing—one divine reality—thus disallowing any ultimate distinctions of "good" and "evil." If "good" and "evil" were really distinct, then there would not be one single, indivisible reality. Pantheism ultimately does not allow for moral distinctions of "good" and "evil." Good and evil dissolve into the same indivisible reality. And even if such distinctions as "good" and "evil" could be made, the context of karma voids the moral context of that distinction. **Karma is an impersonal principle much like a natural law such as gravity or inertia.** When karma comes calling on some sinful soul, it is not a divine policing that brings judgment. Rather, it is an impersonal reaction of nature. But morality requires personality, personality which karma cannot lend. **For example, we do not blame a stick for being used in a beating. The stick is an object with no moral capacity or duty. Rather, we blame the person who used the stick abusively.** That person has a moral capacity and a moral duty. Likewise, if karma is merely impersonal nature, then it is amoral ("without morality") and is not

an adequate basis for ethics.

Third, Christian monotheism, however, roots its ethics in the person of God. God's character is good, and, therefore, what conforms to Him and His will is good. What departs from God and His will is evil. Therefore, the one God serves as the absolute basis for ethics, allowing a personal basis for morality and justifying objective knowledge about good and evil.

The question remains "What do you do with your sin?" Christianity has the strongest and only answer to this problem. Hinduism, like Buddhism, has a view of sin. Sin is sometimes understood as ignorance. It is sinful if one does not see or understand reality as Hinduism defines it. But there remains an idea of moral error termed "sin." To do something deliberately evil, to break a spiritual or earthly law, or to desire wrong things, these would be sins. But that moral definition of sin points to a "kind of moral error" that requires real atonement. From where can atonement rise? Can atonement come by adherence to karmic principles? Karma is impersonal and amoral. **One could do good works to "even the balance," but one cannot ever dispose of sin.** Karma does not even provide a context whereby moral error is even moral. Whom have we offended if we sin in private, for example? Karma does not care one way or the other because karma is not a person. For example, suppose one man murders another man's son. He may offer money, property, or his own son to the offended party. But he cannot un-murder the young man. No amount of compensation can make up for that sin. Can atonement come by prayer or devotion to Shiva or Vishnu? Sin, the Murder, would still be an unpaid debt. They would forgive sin, as if it were excusable, no big deal, and then wave people on through the gates of bliss.

Christianity, however, treats sin as moral error against a single, ultimate, and personal God. Sin is real, and it sets an infinite gap between man and bliss. Sin demands justice. Yet it cannot be "balanced out" with an equal or greater number of good works as with Karma. If someone has ten times more good works than bad works, then that person still has the evil works. What happens to these remaining bad works? Are they just forgiven as if they were not a big deal in the first place? Are they permitted into bliss? Are they mere illusions, thus leaving no problem whatsoever? None of these options are suitable. Concerning illusion, sin is too real to us to be explained away as illusion. Concerning sinfulness, when we are honest with ourselves we all know we have sinned. Concerning forgiveness, to simply forgive sin at no cost treats sin like it is not of much consequence. We know that to be false. Concerning bliss, bliss is not much good if sin keeps getting smuggled in. It seems that the scales of karma leave us with sin on our hearts and a sneaking suspicion that we have violated some ultimately personal standard of right and wrong. And bliss either cannot tolerate us, or it must cease being perfect so that we can come in.

With Christianity, however, all sin is punished though that punishment **has already been satisfied** in Christ's personal sacrifice on the cross. God become man, lived a perfect life, and died the death that we deserved. He was crucified on our behalf, a substitute for us or atonement, for our sins. And He was resurrected proving that not even death could conquer Him. Furthermore, He promises the same resurrection to eternal life for all who have faith in Him as their only Lord and Savior (Romans 3:9-23, 6:23; 8:12; 10:9-10; Ephesians 2:8-9; James 2:26; Philippians 3:21).

Finally, in Christianity we can know that we are saved. We do not have to rely on some fleeting experience, nor do we rely on our own good works or fervent meditation, nor do we put our faith in a false god whom we are trying to "believe into existence." We have a living and true God, a historically anchored faith, an abiding and testable revelation of God, a theologically satisfying basis for ethical living, and a true hope of home in heaven.

What is Brahmanism? What is Brahman Hinduism?

The cornerstone belief of Brahmanism and its spiritual successors is the concept of

Brahman. **The term *Brahman* describes the ultimate reality.** Brahman is perceived as the single, original, eternal, transcendental, all-encompassing truth. It's common to see Brahman oversimplified as the ultimate "god" of Hinduism. However, in Brahmanism, Brahman is neither personal nor confined to any description. Rather, Brahman is "existence" or "the universe" or "all that is or could be." Brahman is not the same thing as the deity Brahma, who is one of the three major gods of Hinduism, along with Shiva and Vishnu.

Brahmanism, from this belief in Brahman, is so fundamental that it is difficult to describe. Those not raised in a culture based on that worldview are not used to thinking of reality in that way. It is the ultimate "oneness" that makes up all that exists.

Offshoots and interpretations of belief in Brahman are described using terms such as *Atman*, *pantheism*, *reincarnation*, *karma*, *nirvana*, and so forth. Few, if any, of those concepts were a distinct part of ancient Brahmanism itself. Rather, those beliefs developed from Brahmanism over time. Depending on how one defines terms, religions such as Hinduism, Jainism, and Buddhism could be considered parallel offshoots proceeding from Brahmanism. These religions share core ideas but have markedly different applications. It is readily seen that Hinduism is in opposition to biblical Christianity on almost every count of its belief system. Christianity has one God who is both personal and knowable (Deuteronomy 6:5; 1 Corinthians 8:6); has one set of Scriptures; teaches that God created the earth and all who live upon it (Genesis 1:1; Hebrews 11:3); believes that man is created in God's image and lives only once (Genesis 1:27; Hebrews 9:27-28); and teaches that salvation is through Jesus Christ alone (John 3:16; 6:44; 14:6; Acts 4:12). Hinduism as a religious system fails because it fails to recognize Jesus as the uniquely incarnated God/Man/Savior, the one solely sufficient source of salvation for all humanity.

Lesson 7: Buddhism: Questions

In answering the following questions, you will become familiar with religious views, concepts and teachings that are somewhat or vastly different from your present understandings. Please research each on your own to gain a greater insight. You can then walk in wisdom to answer with seasoned speech when a door opens for You. Col. 4:3-6

- 1.What does the word Buddha mean?64
2. How or who originated this religion and when?63
- 3.Name Guatama's four visions?64
- 4.Enlightenment is through what action?64
- 5.Name the four Noble Truths?67
- 6.Name the Eight Fold Paths and summarize each?66
- 7.Define Reincarnation?66
- 8.Define Karma?68
- 9.Define Maya?63
- 10.Define pantheistic?64
- 11.Theravada's enlightenment is for whom?64
- 12.Mahayana's enlightenment is for whom?64
- 13.Define Zen?69
- 14.Define Nirvana?69

15.What is the Dalia Lama?70,71

16.Are there written instructions or scripture? Do these instructions evolve or change with time?

17.How are other religions viewed?

18.How are one's actions/thoughts viewed? Right, Wrong, Sin, etc.65

19.Is one's actions/thoughts rewarded or punished, etc.?

20.What occurs after physical death?

21.What is the purpose of one's life?

22.How is Jesus of Nazareth viewed?71

23.How are the sixty-six books of the bible viewed?

24.What religious teachings do you share?

25.In there any teaching that you view as unique, peculiar, repulsive, or admired?

What is Buddhism and what do Buddhists believe?

Buddhism is one of the leading world religions in terms of adherents, geographical distribution, and socio-cultural influence. While largely an "Eastern" religion, it is becoming increasingly popular and influential in the Western world. It is a unique world religion in its own right, though **it has much in common with Hinduism** in that both teach Karma (cause-and-effect ethics), **Maya (the illusory nature of the world), and Samsara (the cycle of reincarnation)**. Buddhists believe that the ultimate goal in life is to achieve "enlightenment" as they perceive it.

Buddhism's founder, Siddhartha Guatama, was born into royalty in Nepal around 600 B.C. As the story goes, he lived luxuriously, with little exposure to the outside world. His

parents intended for him to be spared from the influence of religion and protected from pain and suffering. However, it was not long before his life was penetrated, and **he had four visions: an aged man, a sick man, a corpse, and a peaceful ascetic monk (one who denies luxury and comfort)**. Seeing this monk's peacefulness, he decided to become an ascetic himself. He abandoned his life of wealth and affluence to pursue enlightenment through "austerity". He became skilled at this sort of self-mortification and intense meditation. He was a leader among his peers. Eventually, his efforts culminated in one final gesture. He "indulged" himself with one bowl of rice and then sat beneath a Bodhi tree to meditate till he either reached "enlightenment" or died trying. Despite his travails and temptations, by the next morning, he had achieved enlightenment. **Thus, he became known as the 'enlightened one' or the 'Buddha.'** He took his new realization and began to teach his fellow monks, with whom he had already gained great influence. Five of his peers became the first of his disciples.

What had Gautama discovered? Enlightenment lay in the "middle way," not in luxurious indulgence or self-mortification. Moreover, he discovered what would become known as the "Four Noble Truths" and the "Eightfold Path".

Behind these truths and paths are teachings common to Hinduism, namely **reincarnation, karma, Maya,** and a tendency to understand **reality as being pantheistic in its orientation.** **Buddhism also offers an elaborate theology of deities and exalted beings.** **However, like Hinduism, Buddhism can be hard to pin down as to its view of God.** Some streams of Buddhism could legitimately be called atheistic, while others could be called pantheistic, and still others theistic, such as Pure Land Buddhism. Classical **Buddhism,** however, tends to be silent on the reality of an ultimate being and is therefore **considered atheistic.**

Buddhism today is quite diverse. It is roughly divisible into the **two broad categories of Theravada (small vessel) and Mahayana (large vessel).** Theravada is the monastic form which reserves ultimate enlightenment and nirvana for monks, while Mahayana Buddhism extends this goal of enlightenment to the laity as well, that is, to non-monks. Within these categories can be found numerous branches including Tendai, Vajrayana, Nichiren, Shingon, Pure Land, Zen, and Ryobu, among others. Therefore, it is important for outsiders seeking to understand Buddhism not to presume to know all the details of a particular school of Buddhism when all they have studied is classical, historic Buddhism.

The Buddha never considered himself to be a god or any type of divine being. Rather, he considered himself to be a "way-shower" for others. Only after his death was he exalted to god status by some of his followers, though not all of his followers viewed him that way. With Christianity however, it is stated quite clearly in the Bible that Jesus was the Son of God (Matthew 3:17: "And a voice from heaven said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased") and that He and God are one (John 10:30). One cannot rightfully consider himself or herself a Christian without professing faith in Jesus as Deity. Jesus taught that He is the way and not simply one who showed the way as John 14:6 confirms: "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except by me." By the time Guatama died, Buddhism had become a major influence; three hundred years

later, Buddhism had encompassed most of Asia. **The scriptures and sayings attributed to the Buddha were written about four hundred years after his death.**

In Buddhism, sin is largely understood to be ignorance. And, while sin is understood as "moral error," the context in which "evil" and "good" are understood is amoral. Karma is understood as nature's balance and is not personally enforced. Nature is not moral; therefore, karma is not a moral code, and sin is not ultimately immoral. Thus, we can say, **by Buddhist thought, that our error is not a moral issue since it is ultimately an impersonal "mistake", not an interpersonal violation.** The consequence of this understanding is devastating. **For the Buddhist, sin is more akin to a misstep than a transgression against the nature of holy God.** This understanding of sin does not accord with the innate moral consciousness that men stand condemned because of their sin before a holy God (Romans 1-2).

Since it holds that sin is an impersonal and fixable error, Buddhism does not agree with the doctrine of sin, a basic doctrine of Christianity. The Bible tells us man's sin is a problem of eternal consequence. **In Buddhism, there is no need for a Savior to rescue people from Satan's fiery realm.** For the Christian, Jesus is the only means of rescue from eternal punishment. **For the Buddhist there is only ethical living and meditative appeals** to exalted beings for the hope of perhaps achieving enlightenment and ultimate Nirvana. More than likely, one will have to go through a number of reincarnations to pay off his or her vast accumulation of karmic debt. For the true followers of Buddhism, the religion is a philosophy of morality and ethics, encapsulated within a life of renunciation of the ego-self. **In Buddhism, reality is impersonal and non-relational; therefore, it is not loving.** Not only is God seen as illusory, but, in dissolving sin into non-moral error and by rejecting all material reality as maya ("illusion"), even we ourselves lose our "selves." **Personality itself becomes an illusion.**

When asked how the world started, who/what created the universe, the Buddha is said to have kept silent because **in Buddhism there is no beginning and no end. Instead, there is an endless circle of birth and death.** One would have to ask what kind of Being created us to live, endure so much pain and suffering, and then die over and over again? It may cause one to contemplate, what is the point, why bother? Christians know that God sent His Son to die for us, one time, so that we do not have to suffer for an eternity. He sent His Son to give us the knowledge that we are not alone and that we are loved. Christians know there is more to life than suffering, and dying, "" but it has now been revealed through the appearing of our Savior, Christ Jesus, who has destroyed death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel" (2 Timothy 1:10).

Buddhism teaches that Nirvana is the highest state of being, a state of pure being, and it is achieved by means relative to the individual. Nirvana defies rational explanation and logical ordering and therefore cannot be taught, **only realized.** The Buddha taught that people do not have individual souls, for the individual self or ego is an illusion.

What is the Noble Eightfold Path?

The Noble Eightfold Path is the foundation of Buddhist practice. The eight concepts contained in the Noble Eightfold Path are the attitudes and behaviors that Buddhists strive to emulate as a means of living out the Four Noble Truths. These eight concepts fall into three major categories: Wisdom, Conduct, and Concentration. According to the Four Noble Truths, all life is suffering caused by desires for impermanent things, and since all things are impermanent—even the self—**the only way to be free of suffering is to shed all desires.** This is done, according to Buddhism, by following the Eightfold Path.

Although called a “path,” these eight components are not intended to be followed in any particular order. Instead, they are meant to be followed simultaneously, in order to shed desires and **attain Nirvana.** The Eightfold Path, and Buddhism itself, is often represented by an eight-spoked wheel, similar to the steering wheel of a sailing ship. **The components of the “Noble Eightfold Path” are right view, right intent, right speech, right behavior, right livelihood, right effort, right awareness, and right meditation.** **To reincarnate is, literally, to “incarnate again”; that is, reincarnation is a “rebirth” into a new body of flesh and blood.** In most contexts, *reincarnation* refers to the process, after death, of a soul returning in a new body. Claims of remembering a “past life” imply reincarnation.

The components of Right View and Right Intent are sometimes referred to as the Wisdom aspects of the Noble Eightfold Path.

“Right view” essentially means believing in the Four Noble Truths: that life is suffering; suffering is caused by desiring temporary things; everything is temporary; and only by following the eightfold path can one shed all desires. **It also includes an awareness of concepts such as rebirth (reincarnation) and the law of *karma*.**

“Right intent” refers to a willingness to change for the better, according to the Noble Truths and Eightfold Path. A person with right intent is committed to the precepts of Buddhism and seeks to compare his thoughts and behaviors to it.

The components of Right Speech, Right Behavior, and Right Livelihood are sometimes referred to as the Ethical aspects of the Noble Eightfold Path.

“Right speech” refers to using words honestly, politely, and purposefully. This means avoiding gossip, lying, or verbally abusive speech. Right speech is applied to written words as much as those spoken. One interesting side effect of the Buddhist approach to right speech is avoidance of discussion of certain spiritual or metaphysical topics. According to Buddhism, some questions of ultimate reality are irrelevant to one’s pursuit of the Eightfold Path, so discussing them is not “right speech.”

“Right behavior” includes avoiding acts such as murder, theft, adultery, and so forth. The general principle guiding what is right vs. what is wrong is whether or not the act would bring harm to another person. Of course, the Bible gives a challenging approach to behavioral ethics (Matthew 7:12; 1 Corinthians 9:27), combining behavior with attitude under a single approach to morality and ethics (Matthew 5:21–22, 27–28). And the Bible’s standard for right vs. wrong is ultimately **not** whether it brings harm to another person **but** whether it contradicts God’s holy will.

“Right livelihood” is similar to right behavior, but it is specifically focused on one’s occupation. According to this principle, one ought not cheat, lie, or participate in businesses that harm or abuse people. Because of Buddhist approaches to animal life and violence, this rule precludes any work involving slaughter of animals, selling of meats, or the manufacture or selling of weapons.

The components of Right Effort, Right Awareness, and Right Meditation are sometimes known as the Concentration aspects of the Noble Eightfold Path.

“Right effort” requires a sense of persistence and caution in applying the other aspects of the Eightfold Path. It implies a drive to avoid pessimistic thinking and negative emotions such as anger. Once again, this presents a problem in that human nature is inclined to be selfish and lazy. Buddhism presents no particular means to change those aspects in a person who isn’t inclined to change them.

“Right awareness” is similar to right effort but focused more on internal mental and philosophical aspects. Buddhism encourages a high level of self-awareness, with special attention given to how a person responds to his experiences and environment. This type of mindfulness is centered on the present, with less emphasis on the past or future. Biblically, we are likewise called on to guard our thoughts and to be careful of how our surroundings affect our spiritual lives (1 Corinthians 15:33; 6:12).

“Right meditation” is a core practice of Buddhism, involving breathing, chanting, and other focusing techniques. The goal of this style of meditation is to empty the mind completely of everything but the object of concentration. The ultimate expression of this form of meditation is *samadhi*, when a person progresses through various reflective levels until he attains a state of complete non-perception and non-feeling. This represents another conflict with biblical teaching. The Bible applauds the concepts of meditation and reflection (Psalm 1:2; 119:15) but not with the goal of “emptying” the mind and concentrating on self. Rather, the goal of Christian meditation is to focus on the truth of the Word of God.

What are the Four Noble Truths?

The Four Noble Truths are the fundamental beliefs of Buddhism. According to tradition, Gautama Buddha’s first sermon after his enlightenment was a description of these concepts. According to Buddhist thought, believing these ideas is not as important as experiencing them. Along with belief in reincarnation (*samsara*) and *Nirvana*, the Four Noble Truths shape the thinking of almost all forms of Buddhism. These four concepts, in short, are 1) the reality of suffering, 2) the impermanence of the world, 3) the liberation that comes by eliminating desire, and 4) the necessity of following the Eightfold Path.

The **First Noble Truth**, also known as the principle of *dukkha*, claims that to live is to suffer. In English, this terminology can be confusing, as Buddhism does not claim all experiences are unpleasant. The concept of *dukkha* is more subtle, suggesting ideas such as anxiety, frustration, or dissatisfaction. This is the core belief of Buddhism, and all other beliefs and practices are based on this First Noble Truth. Buddhists believe that *dukkha* explains what is wrong with mankind: suffering caused by having the wrong

desires, specifically, the desire for things that are only temporary. This problem is expounded in the Second Noble Truth.

The **Second Noble Truth** of Buddhism, also known as *anicca* (“impermanence”) or *tanha* (“craving”), states that nothing in the universe is permanent or unchanging. In fact, not even the Self is permanent or unchanging. This is Buddhism’s explanation for why mankind is as we are. Since suffering is caused by desiring what is not permanent, all desires ultimately lead to suffering. Even positive desires perpetuate the cycle of reincarnation and *dukkha*. In order to overcome this, one must understand the Third Noble Truth.

The **Third Noble Truth** says the only way to be freed from the cycle of suffering, death, and rebirth is by completely eliminating desires for temporal things. Buddhism sees this as the answer to the question “how do we correct what is wrong with mankind?” In practice, the Third Noble Truth calls for eliminating absolutely *all* desires, good, bad, and otherwise. The means to accomplish this is found in the Fourth Noble Truth.

The **Fourth Noble Truth** is that following the Noble Eightfold Path can eliminate desire. Buddhism’s plan for “how” to correct mankind’s flaws is found in the The Eightfold Path. According to Buddhism, one can end the cycle of reincarnation, suffering, and *dukkha* by applying the Four Noble Truths and living out the Noble Eightfold Path. This leads a person to a state completely void of all desire, craving, clinging, or frustration. **This state of “nothingness” is known as *Nirvana* and is the Buddhist alternative to heaven. One who attains *Nirvana* ceases to exist as an individual, and stops the *samsara* process of rebirth and re-death.**

Buddhism teaches that our eternity is either one of endless reincarnation or the oblivion of nonexistence. The Bible says, “People are destined to die once, and after that to face judgment” (Hebrews 9:27).

Christianity and Buddhism both teach that people need to transform their desires and their behavior, but only Christianity provides a realistic means for how to do this. In Buddhism, one is told to change his desires through self-directed efforts. Unfortunately, this means one has to have the desire to shed desires. The Buddhist who desires to rid himself of desire is still desiring something. Buddhism also does nothing to answer how a person can change a heart that is unwilling to change and self-deceived (Jeremiah 17:9; Mark 9:24). Christianity provides an answer to both of these problems: a Savior who not only changes what we do (1 Corinthians 6:11) but what we want to do (Romans 12:2).

There are many other differences between Buddhist and Christian beliefs. While Buddhism teaches that life is suffering, the Bible says that life is meant to be enjoyed (John 10:10). Buddhism says the Self needs to be eliminated, while the Bible says that each person is valuable and meaningful (Genesis 1:26-27; Matthew 5:22) and that the Self persists after death (John 14:3).

What does the Bible say about karma?

Karma is a theological concept found in the Buddhist and Hindu religions. It is the idea that how you live your life will determine the quality of life you will have after reincarnation. If you are unselfish, kind, and holy during this lifetime, you will be rewarded by being reincarnated (reborn into a new earthly body) into a pleasant life. However, if you live a life of selfishness and evil, you will be reincarnated into a less-than-pleasant lifestyle. In other words, you reap in the next life what you sow in this one. **Karma is based on the theological belief in reincarnation.**

Is the Buddhist concept of Zen compatible with the Christian faith?

The Buddhist concept of Zen refers to a meditative state sought as a means of spiritual awakening. While practitioners of Zen claim that zazen (“sitting meditation”) is compatible with the Christian faith, there are some key distinctions that make this practice incompatible with Christian beliefs.

First, Zen seeks **self-enlightenment**. Christian prayer or meditation, in contrast, seeks God’s enlightenment of the believer. Zen Buddhism teaches one to empty the mind of all thoughts. Christian meditation is laden with thoughts of God’s greatness and worship of Him. Psalm 63:6 exemplifies godly meditation, which has God as the focal point: “On my bed I remember you; I think of you through the watches of the night.”

Second, Zen’s **meditative focus** is upon looking inward for inspiration and direction. In contrast, the Bible teaches that our search for direction should be founded upon God’s Word. God instructed Joshua, “Keep this Book of the Law always on your lips; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful” (Joshua 1:8). Psalm 1:2 says the “blessed man” is the one “whose delight is in the law of the LORD, and who meditates on his law day and night.”

Third, Zen’s focus is upon **living in the moment**, being fully aware of all that is taking place in daily life. While there is nothing wrong with being aware of one’s surroundings, it is incomplete as a means of fulfillment. Psalm 77:12 notes a focus on remembering God’s work in the past: “I will consider all your works and meditate on all your mighty deeds.” Many passages also teach us to live with an eternal perspective, looking ahead to our future home with Christ. Paul noted, “I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far” (Philippians 1:23).

Fourth, Zen practice entails the **acceptance of other Buddhist beliefs** incompatible with Christian teachings. This includes belief in reincarnation, which is at odds with Hebrews 9:27. Buddhism also holds to a view of God very different from Christianity. Buddhism teaches the oneness of all things; Christianity teaches that God is transcendent and exists as a Trinity of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Further, human sin and the need for salvation are viewed far differently in Buddhism, which sees no need to be saved from sin and does not believe in a future heaven or hell.

The practice of zazen sitting is far different from the pattern of meditation expressed in Scripture. We are called to say, “I meditate on your precepts and consider your ways” (Psalm 119:15) and “I will meditate on your wonderful works” (Psalm 145:5).

What is the concept of Nirvana in Buddhism?

Nirvana, according to Buddhism, is a complex conceptual state of being in which a person escapes the suffering of the world and realizes his or her oneness with the universe. The person whose consciousness enters Nirvana can eventually leave behind the cycle of reincarnation to exist spiritually. **The word *Nirvana* literally means “blowing out” or “quenching,”** but the meaning, when applied to a person’s spiritual life, is more complicated. *Nirvana* can refer to the act of quenching—either gradually being extinguished or rapidly (like blowing out a candle). **The final goal of Buddhism is Nirvana, when the “quenching” of all desire is complete, and the person is transformed into another state.** Imagine a candle burning and then being extinguished. Its energy is not destroyed, but it turns into potential energy. This is a basic illustration of what happens when a soul reaches Nirvana.

There are **three “fires”** that the Buddhist seeks to extinguish in order to find Nirvana. **These are passion, aversion (hatred), and ignorance (delusion).**

However, Buddhism’s quenching of “passion” is far different from the Bible’s directive to “flee youthful passions” (2 Timothy 2:22, ESV). **Buddhism does not see sin as the violation of a divine moral code;** rather, it recommends the elimination of *all* desires. In order to get rid of all desire, one must *desire* to have it gone.

The concept of Nirvana is opposed to the Bible’s teaching of heaven. Scripture says there is no way to work our own path to heaven (Romans 3:20). No amount of meditation, self-denial, or enlightenment can make one righteous before a holy God. Also, Buddhism teaches that a person who arrives at the state of Nirvana loses all personal identity, all desire, and even his or her body. The Bible teaches that heaven is an actual place, **not a state of mind**, in which we retain our personal identities and will inhabit resurrected bodies. We will not exist in a nebulous state of perpetual apathy; rather, we will enjoy the consummation of our most basic desire—the fellowship with God.

Who is the Dalai Lama?

Buddhism is the fourth largest of the world’s religions, with about 530 million followers. The religion of Buddhism is made up of several sects, philosophies, or schools. One of these is Tibetan Buddhism, which is a religion-in-exile, forced from its homeland when Tibet was conquered by the Chinese. The leader of Tibetan Buddhism is the Dalai Lama, a title, who has lived in exile in India since fleeing the Chinese occupation of Tibet in 1959. Partly because of the worldwide prominence of the Dalai Lama, most people have heard about Tibetan Buddhism. The Tibetan form of Buddhism is one of the most complicated because it is tied to the ancient spirit-oriented religion of the Tibetan plateau. **The essential goal** of Tibetan Buddhism, however, is the same as that of other types of Buddhism: **to realize enlightenment and enter Nirvana, or the freedom of one’s spiritual self from the attachment to or affection for worldly things.**

Tibetan Buddhism focuses on its monks, called “lamas.” Correspondingly, it also recognizes a multitude of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas (deities or beings who have attained enlightenment worthy of Nirvana but remain in the world to help others), as well as their consorts. Lamas use different meditation techniques, which include what are called

“mandalas” (spiritual diagrams) and prayer wheels. **The Dalai Lama is the highest lama.** What is interesting is that, whenever the Dalai Lama dies, Tibetan Buddhists believe he is **reborn as an infant**, and officials of the religion search for the child—who is supposed to bear certain distinguishing marks—and when he is discovered, he then becomes the new Dalai Lama.

The current Dalai Lama is named Tenzin Gyatso and is the 14th Dalai Lama. His real name is Lhamo Thondup. Born in 1935 and “discovered” in 1937, he was given the name he now bears, Tenzin Gyatso, the 14th Dalai Lama. He became the political head of Tibet in 1940. However, he left Tibet to establish a government-in-exile in 1959 when the Chinese took over that country. In 1989, the Dalai Lama won the Nobel Peace Prize.

Most Buddhists consider Jesus to be an “enlightened master” but not the Son of God. During an interview with *Christianity Today*, **the Dalai Lama said that Jesus** had lived previous lives and His purpose was to teach a message of tolerance and compassion, to help people to become better human beings. And this is the primary problem with the Dalai Lama and all of Buddhism.

The Scriptures reveal that Jesus was God in human form, slain for the sins of the world (John 3:16). Yes, Jesus taught compassion, but that was not the primary reason for His coming. Jesus came to provide salvation for all those who receive Him as Savior. Jesus died to pay the penalty for our sins. Jesus provides salvation for us because we are absolutely incapable of saving ourselves.

Lesson 8: Folk Questions

In answering the following questions, you will become familiar with religious views, concepts and teachings that are somewhat or vastly different from your present understandings. Please research each on your own to gain a greater insight. You can then walk in wisdom to answer with seasoned speech when a door opens for You. Col. 4:3-6

1. Define Folk religion?⁷¹
2. Folk religion is influenced by what?⁷²
3. Give examples of Folk religion?^{72,73}
4. Why would Chinese folk religion have such popularity?⁷³
5. What is meant by “folk religion is all-encompassing”?⁷³
6. Prayers in Chinese folk religion mainly seek what?⁷⁵
7. Summarize each of the five definitions of Folk religion?^{75,76}
8. Was there value in Lutherans being taught about Folk religion?⁷⁶
9. What do you have when you blend Buddhist-Karma with Taoist-deities?⁷⁶
10. What has occurred in mainland China since the Cultural Revolution?⁷⁶
11. Folk religion in the Philippines is what belief system?⁷⁷

12. Is Folk Islam for the “elite”?77
13. Folk Judaism is aimed at protecting the individual from what?77
14. Folk Hinduism adds what to worship that is not found in the Hindu religion?78
15. How or who originated this religion and when?
16. Are there written instructions or scripture? Do these evolve or change with time?
17. How are other religions viewed?
18. How are one’s actions/thoughts viewed? Right, Wrong, Sin, etc.
19. Is one’s actions/thoughts rewarded or punished, etc.?
20. What occurs after physical death?
21. What is the purpose of one’s life?
22. How is Jesus of Nazareth viewed?
23. How are the sixty-six books of the bible viewed?
24. What religious teachings do you share?
25. Is there any teaching that you view as unique, peculiar, repulsive, or admired?

What is folk religion?

Folk religion is basically made up of certain ethnic or regional religious traditions that practice under the guise of an established religion but is outside the boundaries of official

doctrine and practices. Folk religion's indigenous or native beliefs are held all over the world, particularly in parts of South America, Caribbean, Africa, China, and Southeast Asia.

The largest folk religion in the world is the Chinese folk religion with the world having an estimated 450 million followers or about 6 percent of the world's population.

Despite being separated by many thousands of miles, several aspects of folk religion have certain features in common. **Folk religion is heavily infused with magic and superstition, in particular what is called "sympathetic" magic—the belief that like forces influence like or similar forces.** This holds true even if they are not causally linked in any way. An example of sympathetic magic is the idea that the movements of the stars and planets somehow influence events or tendencies (horoscopes). The popularity of astrology and psychics demonstrates that folk religion still exists, even in the Western world.

Interestingly, many components of folk religion have found their way into modern mega-religions including Christianity and Islam. For example, Native Americans hunting tribes dressed as the intended prey and then were symbolically killed by the hunters. Further, the symbolic consumption of Jesus' body and blood during the Catholic mass is considered by some as an example of sympathetic magic, whereby he who consumes the elements comes in contact with the divine.

Folk religion is employed also by combining some of its practices with those of mega religions. And in so doing, these practices are labeled as "folk Christianity" among Christian countries and "folk Islam" in those of Islamic nations. Without question, folk religion is considered by the major religions as a distorted, if not meaningless, **practice of religion by lay people outside of the control of clergy or the supervision of theologians.**

Folk religion attempts in its own way to answer human needs for reassurance in times of trouble, and many of its rituals are aimed at mundane goals like seeking healing or averting misfortune. Several aspects or practices of folk religion are born from certain animistic or fetishistic rituals or ceremonies. This is inevitable simply because of folk religion's ritualistic nature. Actually, the line is often blurry between the practice of folk religion and the practice of magic.

Remarkably, those who hold to the practices of folk religion are not even aware that their beliefs are distinctive from those of major official religions. Here are some examples that can be considered aspects of folk religion doctrine:

- belief in the Evil Eye
- rituals to ward off evil, curses, demons, witchcraft
- blessing of animals, crops, beer, wine, cheese
- fertility rites
- belief in traditional magic systems
- veneration of ancestors and deceased family members, esp. in Christian, Jewish, or Islamic households

- some aspects of the veneration of various saints and the Blessed Virgin Mary in Roman Catholicism and Eastern Orthodoxy; Marian apparitions
- hoodoo, voodoo, pow-wow and Santería
- snake handling
- hex signs
- religious jewelry
- religious art in the home
- use of Bible, crucifix, other objects as talismans
- systems of interpretation of prophecy as it relates to the end times

Like many other cultures around the world, the Chinese believe in different gods, more specifically, where the gods are believed to have come from and what they did.

What you need to know about the Chinese folk religion is the fact that this religion has everything to do with the underlying belief systems. When you go into any of the Chinese homes, restaurants, and even offices, you will almost certainly notice statues, alters, and even some paper good luck figurines and images. Even the Chinese communities around you and in different parts of the world will have temples or the earth God shrines that have been dedicated to different gods that they believe in. All these bring forth many questions, but the most common one has got to be, what exactly do the Chinese pray to or believe in? For a long time, the Chinese folk religions were mistaken for the other belief systems like Taoism, Confucianism, and even Buddhism. But it is now clear that the folk religion is an entirely separate belief system and practice than the other three. And it's interesting to note that a huge portion of the Chinese people claim, directly or indirectly, that they are adherent to the Chinese Folk religion. This religion is the new and the most popular religion for the Chinese.

The main reason for its popularity has to do with the fact that an increasing number of Chinese people believe in and follow this big collection of beliefs that is largely ingrained in the rich Chinese culture, hence the name – traditional Chinese folk religion. This means that the Chinese religion is pretty much this diverse mix of beliefs, including Buddhism, Daoism, as well as the religious aspects of Confucianism. **Combined, all these beliefs form the crucial backbone for the Chinese.**

Note, however, that unlike the western religions that are primarily henotheistic, which means devotion to a single primary god while accepting the existence of other deities. The Chinese folk religion and the rest of the eastern religions aren't exclusionary, and they often incorporate more than a single belief system. Then there's also the fact that the Chinese folk religion is syncretic, which means that it allows for much easier incorporation of specific practices and belief systems. With all these taken into consideration, you will also notice that if you are not sure about the religion, you wouldn't have to drop the Chinese religion in support of the beliefs and practices of the indigenous people – **the folk religion is “all-encompassing” (see next paragraph).**

What this means is that the Chinese folk religion involves the worship of the local deities like the Taoist and Buddhist figures, astrology, ancestor worship, as well as the worship of different animal totems.

In the course of the development of this religion, the Chinese folk religion has been largely and deeply influenced by several schools of thought, especially Confucianism and Taoism. It's quite interesting to note that Taoism actually has its roots in the earliest form of Chinese folk religion, and it still holds onto some of the mysticism aspects of folk religion. So, for some people, Chinese folk religion is pretty much folk Taoism.

The Chinese folk religion has been around for a really long time, but it's worth noting that it is not a stand-alone religion, and it's encompassing a number of other religions that are important to the Chinese; Taoism, Confucianism, and Buddhism. The Chinese folk religion focuses on the worship that is devoted to the immortals and the gods that can include deities, natural phenomena, or even human behavior. These stories of the gods are largely connected to Chinese mythology, and they all date back to the Sung dynasty between 960-1279. **The Chinese folk religious practices and beliefs have all been "blended" with the Taoist teachings and the Buddhist doctrines, resulting in one of the most popular religious belief systems that have lasted for centuries.**

The Chinese folk religion doesn't believe in a specific god but more in a doctrine or a dogma that is influenced significantly by different Chinese mythologies, along with the other religions.

As mentioned above, the Chinese folk religion is more or less grounded in the traditional worship of the local deities, including the same gods or figures that the Taoists and the Buddhists believe in. They also believe in and worship different animal totems, astrology, and ancient beliefs, not to mention spirit mediumship, ancestor worship, and they also set up different temples to worship different gods and for festivals or ceremonies.

Note that the practice and religious exchanges between the Chinese folk religion and Taoism have led to the assimilation of the different religious elements, including cults and the local deities. From the time of the Sung Dynasty when this belief system started, the Chinese folk religion features elements that can be traced from prehistoric times, including shamanism, ancestor worship, belief in ghosts, divination, as well as sacrificial rituals performed to appease the spirits.

At the center of all beliefs, the Chinese folk religion is focused on family above all else, and they believe that the family is where the ethical and moral status of the society as a whole starts. So, throughout ancient history, believers of the Chinese folk religion held in high regard the ancestors, who were both respected and worshipped. To this end, this religious form features specific methods of communication with the deities as well as the ancestors. In other words, the folk religion is constantly concerned with the need to satisfy the needs of the departed and the ancestors because it would mean that the living could receive guidance and even power from the ancestors. There is also a belief that leading a good life and even an afterlife will be attained through different rituals

and the honor of the ancestors. In other words, Chinese folk religion is seen as a big celebration of the ongoing life, where the ancestors worshipped the descendants, and the descendants pray to the ancestors in turn. Like ancient Hinduism, for example, **the Chinese folk religion is also centered on the different forces of nature, as well as the dualistic nature of things, yin-yang, and also on the folk deities.**

There is also a difference in terms of “prayers”. And for Chinese folk religion, prayer is all about seeking health and wealth and more as a petition. This religion also supports and encourages symbolic giving, and it collectively promotes the spiritual meaning of unity and loyalty to the group of believers. Note that a religion, in China, like **Confucianism** is all about the philosophical view of things in which everyone needed to fulfill their obligations and roles while showing respect and undying kindness to each other to be able to build a stronger and more stable community/ state. This belief has nothing to do with spiritual elements like the gods/ goddesses, mysticism, or the afterlife. **So, Confucianism is more of a philosophical way of life rather than a religious one.**

Taoism, in China, came in after Confucianism, and it has to do with everything related to the spiritual elements of life and the nature of the universe. It focuses on The Way, which has to do with the harmony in the natural order, arising between the world and humans.

Buddhism focuses on the attainment of deep knowledge and personal development, with Buddhists seeking enlightenment through spiritual learning, meditation, reincarnation and religious practice.

Hinduism comes in close, and it is guided by core elements like the universal laws of cause and effect or karma, as well as the doctrines of the samsara that are all about the continuity of life and death, as well as reincarnation. Their philosophy holds that all living things have souls, and they are all a part of the supreme soul.

All these differ from the folk religion, especially in what the religions believe. But they all focus on building a state of mind that believes in something beyond what is known or seen.

Folk Religions:

Definition:

) In *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of World Religions*, characterized "folk religion" as either "religion which occurs in small, local communities which does not adhere to the norms of large systems" or "the appropriation of religious beliefs and practices at a popular level."

) **Five separate ways of defining folk religion.** The **first** was a perspective rooted in a **cultural evolutionary** framework which understood folk religion as representing the survivals of older forms of religion. This definition would view folk religion in Catholic Europe as the survivals of pre-Christian religion and the folk religion in Protestant Europe as the survivals of Medieval Catholicism. The **second** definition identified by Yoder was the view that folk religion represented the mixture of an official religion with forms of **ethnic religion**; this was employed to explain the place of folk religion in the belief

systems of the Americas, where Christianity had blended with the religions of indigenous American and African communities.

J Yoder's **third** definition was that folk religion was "the interaction of belief, ritual, custom, and mythology in traditional societies", representing that which was often characterized as superstition. The **fourth** definition stated that folk religion represented the "folk interpretation and expression of religion". Noting that this definition would not encompass beliefs that were from organized religion, such as in witchcraft, His **fifth and final** definition represented a "practical working definition" that combined elements from these various other definitions. Thus, he summarized folk religion as "the totality of all those views and practices of religion that exist among the people apart from and alongside the strictly theological and liturgical forms of the official religion".

Historical development:

J In Europe the study of "folk religion" emerged from the study of *religiöse Volkskunde*, a German term which was used in reference to "the religious dimension of folk-culture, or the folk-cultural dimension of religion". This term was first employed by a German Lutheran preacher, Paul Drews, in a 1901 article that he published which was titled "*Religiöse Volkskunde, eine Aufgabe der praktischen Theologie*". This article was designed to be read by young Lutheran preachers leaving the seminary, to equip them for the popular variants of Lutheranism that they would encounter among their congregations and which would differ from the official, doctrinal Lutheranism that they had been accustomed to.

Chinese folk religion:

J Chinese folk religion is one of the labels used to describe the collection of ethnic religious traditions which have historically comprised the predominant belief system in China and among Han Chinese ethnic groups up to the present day. The devotion includes the veneration of forces of nature and ancestors, exorcism of demonic forces, and a belief in the rational order of nature, balance in the universe and reality that can be influenced by human beings and their rulers, as well as spirits and gods. Worship is devoted to a hierarchy of gods and immortals (Chinese: 神; pinyin: *shén*), who can be deities of phenomena, of human behaviour, or progenitors of lineages. Stories regarding some of these gods are collected into the body of Chinese mythology. **By the 11th century (Song period), these practices had been "blended" with Buddhist ideas of karma (one's own doing) and rebirth, and Taoist teachings about hierarchies of deities, to form the popular religious system which has lasted in many ways until the present day.**

J Chinese folk religion is sometimes categorized with Taoism, since over the centuries institutional Taoism has been attempting to assimilate or administrate local religions. More accurately, Taoism emerged from and overlaps with folk religion and Chinese philosophy. Chinese folk religion is sometimes seen as a constituent part of Chinese traditional religion, but more often, the two are regarded as synonymous.

) Despite being heavily suppressed during the last two centuries, from the Taiping Rebellion to the Cultural Revolution, it is currently experiencing a modern revival in both Mainland China and Taiwan. Various forms have received support by the Government of the People's Republic of China, such as Mazuism (coastal sea goddess) in Southern China, Huangdi (yellow emperor) worship, Black Dragon (dragon god of the North, the winter) worship, and Cai Shen (god of wealth) worship.

Indigenous Philippine folk religions:

) Indigenous Philippine folk religions are the distinct native religions of various ethnic groups in the Philippines, where most follow belief systems in line with animism. Generally, these indigenous folk religions are referred to as *Anitism* or *Bathalism* (Material objects: rivers, rocks, etc. possess a soul or spirit). Some of these beliefs stem from pre-Christian religions that were especially influenced by Hinduism and were regarded by the Spanish as "myths" and "superstitions" in an effort to de-legitimize legitimate precolonial beliefs by forcefully replacing those native beliefs with colonial Catholic Christian myths and superstitions. Today, some of these precolonial beliefs are still held by Filipinos, especially in the provinces.

Folk Islam:

) Folk Islam is an umbrella term used to collectively describe forms of Islam that incorporate native folk beliefs and practices. Folk Islam has been described as the Islam of the "urban poor, country people, and tribes", in contrast to orthodox or "High" Islam. Sufism and Sufi concepts are often integrated into Folk Islam.

) Various practices and beliefs have been identified with the concept of "folk Islam". They include the following:

-) belief in traditional magic systems and ecstatic rituals
-) the use of shrines and amulets
-) veneration of saints or jinn, as in the Gnawa cult
-) incorporation of animistic beliefs

Folk Judaism:

) A definition of Jewish folk religion as consisting of ideas and practices that while not meeting with the approval of religious leaders enjoyed wide popularity such that they must be included in what is termed the field of religion. This included unorthodox beliefs about demons and angels, and magical practices.

) Later studies have emphasized the significance of the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem to the many Jewish folk customs linked to mourning and in particular to the belief in *hibbut ha-qever* (torture of the grave) a belief that the dead are tortured in their grave for three days after burial by demons until they remember their names. This idea began with early eschatological aggadah and was then further developed by the kabbalists.

) Writer Stephen Sharot has stated that Jewish popular religion in common with other forms of folk religion, has a focus on the apotropaic, or thaumaturgical, i.e. it is used to assist in protecting the individual from sickness, and misfortune. He emphasizes that while Rabbinical Judaism dealt with orthodox Jewish ritual, and halakah, magicians claimed to use unorthodox magical rituals to help people in everyday life. He points to the example of a relatively professionalized type of magician being the ba'alei shem of Poland, who beginning in the 16th century thrived with the popularity of practical Kabbalah in the 18th century. These ba'alei shem promised to use their knowledge of the names of god, and the angels, **along with exorcism**, chiromancy, and herbal medicine to bring harm to enemies, and success in areas of social life such as marriage, and childbirth.

) The folk religion of American Jews is their social ties to one another, illustrated by the finding that religious practices that would prevent social integration – such as a strict interpretation of dietary laws and the Sabbath – **have been abandoned**, while the practices that are followed – such as the Passover Seder, social rites of passage, and the High Holy Days- are ones that strengthen Jewish family and community integration.

Folk Hinduism:

One of the major kinds is Folk Hinduism, based on local ethnic traditions and tribal cults of local deities and is the oldest, non-literate system of Indian religions. **Folk Hinduism involves worship of deities which are not found in Hindu scriptures.** It involves worship of Gramadevata (village deity), Kuladevata (household deity) and local deities. It is a folk religion, polytheist and animistic belief based on locality. These religions have their own priests, who worship regional deities.

) During the 19th century, scholars had divided Hinduism and Brahmanism. Brahmanism was referred to as an intellectual, classical tradition based on Sanskrit (ancient language of India) scriptures, while Hinduism was associated with superstitious folk tradition. The folk tradition refers to the folk aspects of the Hindu tradition that are in tension with the Sanskritic traditions. The folk religion is the religion of Prakrit speaking and Dravidian speaking **lower caste** while the Vedic Hinduism which comprises Vedas and Upanishads is the religion of Sanskrit speaking **upper caste**.

In sociology:

) In sociology, folk religion is often contrasted with the elite religion and is from sources other than the Hindu leadership. Folk religion in many instances is tolerated by the religion's leadership, although they may consider it an error. Examples are as follows:

-) Ceremonial magic
-) Civil religion
-) Cunning folk
-) Ethnoreligious group
-) Granny women
-) Folk medicine
-) Folk saint

- J Gavari
- J God
- J Magic and religion
- J Northeast China folk religion
- J Perceptions of religious imagery in natural phenomena
- J Popular piety
- J Pre-Christian Alpine traditions
- J Prehistoric religion
- J Religious syncretism
- J Romani folklore
- J Sanamahism
- J Shamanism
- J Tengrism
- J Thunderstone (folklore)
- J Veneration of the dead
- J Wicca
- J Witch doctor

Lesson 9: Judaism: Questions

In answering the following questions, you will become familiar with religious views, concepts and teachings that are somewhat or vastly different from your present understandings. Please research each on your own to gain a greater insight. You can then walk in wisdom to answer with seasoned speech when a door opens for You. Col. 4:3-6

1. Define the word Jew? Hebrew? Judaism?83,84
2. Define Rabbinical Judaism?83
3. Name the five main sects of Judaism today?85,86
4. What is the view concerning a Messiah today?86
5. What is Messianic Judaism?86
6. After AD70 Jews could not perform what religiously? 87
7. If you were a Jew in America today would you be Reform, Orthodox, Conservative or Messianic Jew and why?
8. How or who originated this religion and when?
9. Are there written instructions or scripture? Do these evolve or change with time?
10. How are other religions viewed?

11. How are one's actions/thoughts viewed? Right, Wrong, Sin, etc.
12. Is one's actions/thoughts rewarded or punished, etc.?
13. What occurs after physical death?
14. What is the purpose of one's life?
15. How is Jesus of Nazareth viewed?
16. How are the sixty-six books of the bible viewed?
17. What religious teachings do you share?
18. In there any teaching that you view as unique, peculiar, repulsive, or admired?

What is Judaism and what do Jews believe?

Dictionary definitions of a "Jew" include "a member of the tribe of Judah," "an Israelite," "a member of a nation existing in the land of Israel from the 6th century B.C. to the 1st century A.D.," "a person belonging to a continuation through descent or conversion of the ancient Jewish people," and "one whose religion is Judaism."

According to **rabbinical Judaism**, a Jew is one who has a Jewish mother or one who has formally converted to Judaism. Leviticus 24:10 is often cited to give this belief credibility, although the Torah makes no specific claim in support of this tradition. Some rabbis say that it has nothing to do with what the individual actually believes. These rabbis tell us that a Jew does not need to be a follower of Jewish laws and customs to be considered Jewish. In fact, a Jew can have no belief in God at all and still be Jewish based on the above rabbinical interpretation.

Other rabbis make it clear that unless the person follows the precepts of the Torah and accepts the "Thirteen Principles of Faith" of Maimonides, he cannot be a Jew. Although this person may be a "biological" Jew, he has no real connection to Judaism.

In the Torah, the first five books of the Bible, Genesis 14:13 teaches that Abram, commonly recognized as the first Jew, was described as a “Hebrew.” The name “Jew” comes from the name of Judah, one of the twelve sons of Jacob and one of the twelve tribes of Israel. Apparently, the name “Jew” originally referred only to those who were members of the tribe of Judah, but when the kingdom was divided after the reign of Solomon (1 Kings 12), the term referred to anyone in the kingdom of Judah, which included the tribes of Judah, Benjamin, and Levi. Today, many believe that a Jew is anyone who is a physical descendant of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, regardless of which of the original twelve tribes he descends from.

Although Christians base much of their faith on the same Hebrew Scriptures as Jews do, there are major differences in belief: Jews generally consider actions and behavior to be of primary importance; beliefs come out of actions. This conflicts with conservative Christians for whom belief is of primary importance and actions are a result of that belief.

Judaism affirms the inherent goodness of the world and its people as creations of God. Jewish believers seek to sanctify their lives and draw closer to God by fulfilling mitzvot (divine commandments). **Judaism says that no Savior is needed or is available as an intermediary. The 613 commandments found in Leviticus and other books regulate all aspects of Jewish life. The Ten Commandments, as delineated in Exodus 20:1-17 and Deuteronomy 5:6-21, form a brief synopsis of the Law.**

According to Judaism, the Messiah “anointed one of God” will arrive in the future and gather Jews once more into the land of Israel. There will be a general resurrection of the dead at that time. The Jerusalem temple, destroyed in AD 70 by the Romans, will be rebuilt.

Beliefs about Jesus vary considerably. Some view Him as a great moral teacher. Others see Him as a false prophet or as an idol of Christianity. Some sects of Judaism will not even say His name due to the prohibition against saying an idol’s name.

What are the different sects of Judaism?

Sects of Judaism in Transition:

The destruction of the temple by Rome in AD 70 began an era of division between the sects of Judaism. Ever since that event, there is no temple, no priests, and no sacrifices on behalf of the nation of Israel. In a very real sense, modern Judaism is not—and cannot be—the same as biblical Judaism. Political and religious changes over the first few centuries AD resulted in one particular interpretation becoming dominant, today known as Rabbinic Judaism.

The Rabbinic school was the result of a consolidation of power within the sects of Judaism following the destruction of the temple and the Bar Kokhba revolt about 60 years later. This school grew out of the Pharisees, and it retained their heavy emphasis on scholars and rabbis. It taught that there was a written Torah as well as an “Oral Torah,” which required a tradition-based teaching authority in order to be properly interpreted. In this way, Rabbinic Judaism proposes something similar to the magisterium, office to give

authentic interpretation, of the Roman Catholic Church. The Rabbinic sect produced enormous quantities of literature defining the *halakha*, or interpretations of the Law. As Rabbinic Judaism grew, Christianity became viewed less as a sect and more as a heresy by mainline Judaism. Christianity and Judaism were already growing apart in their spiritual approach prior to the Bar Kokhba revolt (134AD). But when Christ-following Jews refused to proclaim Simon bar Kokhba as Messiah, they were branded as complete heretics by mainline Rabbinic Judaism. From that point on, Christianity and Judaism were seen as completely separate theologies. Another small sect arising during this time was Karaite Judaism, which accepted only the canonical written books of the Old Testament and rejected the Rabbinic writings and oral traditions. The Rabbinic period lasted until the end of the 17th century.

Sects of Judaism in Modern Times:

In the early part of the 18th century, Judaism began to fracture as modern approaches to Scripture and society emerged. The resulting sects of Judaism essentially divide modern Jews into: **Orthodox, Conservative, Reform and Messianic Judaism**. As always, there are numerous smaller, less influential sects of Judaism, such as Torah Judaism and Reconstructionist Judaism. The overwhelming majority of Jews in the world are Orthodox, though Conservative and Reform are more common in the United States and certain parts of Europe.

The beliefs and requirements in each group differ dramatically; however, a short list of the traditional beliefs of Judaism would include the following:

- * God is the creator of all that exists; He is one, incorporeal (without a body), and He alone is to be worshiped as absolute ruler of the universe.
- * The first five books of the Hebrew Bible were revealed to Moses by God. They will not be changed or augmented in the future.
- * God has communicated to the Jewish people through prophets.
- * God monitors the activities of humans; He rewards individuals for good deeds and punishes evil.

Orthodox Judaism for most of history was simply called Judaism. The term *Orthodox*, which literally means “right opinion,” began to be used in the late 18th and early 19th centuries to distinguish it from other approaches to Judaism that had begun to develop. *Orthodox* was first used as a negative term by more progressive Jews but came to be embraced by the traditional adherents of Judaism.

Orthodox Judaism emphasizes living according to the Law of Moses (the Torah), as it has been interpreted by the authoritative rabbinic tradition. According to Orthodox Judaism, in addition to the written Law, Moses also received the correct interpretation of the Law, which has been handed down by oral tradition through the rabbis until it was finally written down in the Mishnah, dating from the 2nd century AD.

Reform Judaism, which emerged in Germany the early 1800s, is by far the most theologically liberal sect. Reform Judaism is primarily an “ethical monotheism,” based on **interpretation** of traditional practices rather than strict adherence to them. Concepts such as prayers in Hebrew, kosher dietary laws, and the separation of genders during worship are rejected as irrelevant, or even backwards. **The Scriptures, according to Reform**

Judaism, are human developments, subject to our interpretations and fallibilities.

In response to the rise of Reform Judaism, some Jews doubled down on the approach of Rabbinic Judaism, emphasizing traditional rituals, interpretations, and practices. Their core contention is that the Torah, handed down directly to Moses by God, is applicable in all ways and at all times. This group is today referred to as “Orthodox,” a term originally used as a criticism by more liberally minded Jews. Most practicing Jews in the world today, except in the U.S. and parts of Europe, would be considered Orthodox.

Conservative Judaism keeps to the laws of the Torah and Talmud, but with certain concessions made to modern cultural preferences. The key interest in Conservative Judaism is the centrality of religion and Jewish religious identity. Conservative Judaism maintains kosher dietary laws and the regular Sabbath but uses both local and Hebrew language for liturgy and does not separate genders during worship.

Messianic Judaism is the term given to the belief system of Jewish people who believe and have accepted Yeshua (the Hebrew name for Jesus) of Nazareth as the promised Messiah of the Hebrew Scriptures. These Jewish people do not stop being Jewish, but they continue to remain strong in their Jewish identity, lifestyle and culture, while following Yeshua as He is revealed in the Brit Chadashah, the New Covenant. Many Messianic Jews refer to themselves as “completed Jews,” since they believe that their faith in the God of Israel has been “completed” or fulfilled in Yeshua. In reality, Messianic Judaism began 2,000 years ago. Yeshua Himself was an observant Jew, most of the apostles and writers of the New Covenant were Jewish, and the vast majority of the early believers in Yeshua were also Jewish.

Traditional rabbinical Judaism today does not believe that Yeshua is the Jewish Messiah. Observant Jews are still waiting faithfully in accordance with the Rambam’s (Rabbi Moses Maimonides, 1134-1204) “Thirteen Principles of Jewish Faith,” which states in Principle 12, “I believe with perfect faith in the coming of the Messiah. However long it takes, I will await His coming every day.” **Most secular Jews do not believe in the physical coming of a personal Messiah, but some still look forward to a general Messianic concept or Messianic Age.**

Today, it is estimated that there are over 350,000 Messianic Jews in the world, and the numbers are growing all the time. Messianic synagogues have also become very popular, and recent estimates number more than 200 congregations in the U.S. There are also many Messianic congregations in Israel and around the world.

Messianic Jews continue to celebrate the Jewish festivals and feast days as prescribed in the Hebrew Scriptures (i.e., Feast of Weeks, Feast of Tabernacles, etc.), but their observances are meant to demonstrate how Yeshua has already fulfilled these Holy Days. Most Messianic Jews, if they celebrate Easter, remove the pagan influences and celebrate only what is given in the Bible, the Passover. Jews who now follow Yeshua the Messiah understand that everything given in the Old Covenant was a “mere shadow” of the better things to come.

If the Jewish people do not offer animal sacrifices, how do they believe they can receive forgiveness from God?

For all intents and purposes, the Jewish practice of animal sacrifice ended in AD 70, the year that the Romans destroyed the temple in Jerusalem. With the temple gone, there is no longer a place for the sacrifices to be offered according to the Mosaic Law (see Deuteronomy 12:13–14). Repeatedly in the Old Testament, the point is made that sacrifices were required to make atonement for sin (e.g., Exodus 29:36; Leviticus 4:31; 9:7; 14:19; 15:15; Numbers 15:25). The shedding of blood is what consecrated things and people to the Lord (Leviticus 16:19; cf. Hebrews 9:22).

With no blood sacrifice today, the Jews have no lawful way of atoning for their sin.

Passover is still observed, but without the sacrifice. Yom Kippur (the Day of Atonement) is still on the calendar, but there is never an offering made for sin. The stipulations of the Mosaic Law remain unchanged, but the Jewish people cannot make things right with God—they cannot find forgiveness—without an animal sacrifice.

Modern Jews believe that forgiveness of sin is obtained through repentance, prayer, and good deeds. They use verses like Hosea 6:6 to devalue the need for sacrifices: “I desire mercy, not sacrifice, and acknowledgment of God rather than burnt offerings.” Still, it is hard to overlook such passages as Leviticus 17:11, “The life of a creature is in the blood, and I have given it to you to make atonement for yourselves on the altar; it is the blood that makes atonement for one’s life.”

The fact remains that there is no forgiveness without the shedding of blood (Hebrews 9:22). The animal sacrifices of the Old Covenant have been replaced by the once-for-all sacrifice for sin given by Jesus, the Messiah. As Jesus established the New Covenant, He “died as a ransom to set them free from the sins committed under the first covenant” (Hebrews 9:15).

Lesson 10: “Christian” [Orthodox Catholic]: Questions

In answering the following questions, you will become familiar with religious views, concepts and teachings that are somewhat or vastly different from your present understandings. Please research each on your own to gain a greater insight. You can then walk in wisdom to answer with seasoned speech when a door opens for You. Col. 4:3-6

1. Define Orthodox?90
2. What is the application of the term “First Among Equals”?90
3. Which of the 6 teaching distinctions bother you the most?90
4. When was Roman persecution of Christians ended in Rome?90,91
5. List the resolved issue in each of the 7 Ecumenical Councils?91
6. Why do you believe the Crusades occurred?92
7. Explain the two primary issues concerning the “Great Schism”?92
8. Why did the seat of authority shift from Turkey to Russia?92
9. Define “transubstantiation”?92
10. When you “Venerate” Mary or “Venerate” deceased Saints --- What results?93
11. What is the Orthodox view of “deification”?93
12. Explain the “second great source of religious authority”?93

13. Why have prayers, for the dead and alms giving for the dead?93
14. Can we put too much emphasis on religious holidays and pomp in religious services?
15. How or who originated this religion and when?
16. Are there written instructions or scripture? Do these instructions evolve or change with time?
17. How are other religions viewed?
18. How are one's actions/thoughts viewed? Right, Wrong, Sin, etc.
19. Is one's actions/thoughts rewarded or punished, etc.?
20. What occurs after physical death?
21. What is the purpose of one's life?
22. How is Jesus of Nazareth viewed?
23. How are the sixty-six books of the bible viewed?
24. What religious teachings do you share?
25. In there any teaching that you view as unique, peculiar, repulsive, or admired?

What is the Orthodox Church and what are the beliefs of Orthodox Church?

According to their literature, the Orthodox Church is the one church founded in AD 33 by Jesus Christ and His apostles on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2). The Orthodox Church claims to be the one true church of Christ and seeks to trace its origin back to the original apostles

through an unbroken chain of apostolic succession. **The word Orthodox is derived from the Greek *orthos*, “right”; and *doxa*, “teaching” or “worship.”** Worldwide, the Orthodox Church is estimated at 200 million members or more.

The Orthodox Church is not a single church but rather a family of 15 self-governing bodies, denominated by the nation in which they are located (e.g., the Greek Orthodox Church, Russian Orthodox Church). They are united in their understanding of the sacraments, doctrine, liturgy, and church government, but each administers its own affairs.

The head of each Orthodox church is called a "patriarch" or "metropolitan." The patriarch of Constantinople (Istanbul, Turkey) is considered the ecumenical - or universal - patriarch. **He is the closest thing to a counterpart to the Pope in the Roman Catholic Church.** Unlike the Pope, who is known as VICARIUS FILIUS DEI (the vicar of the Son of God), the bishop of Constantinople is known as PRIMUS INTER PARES (**the first amongst equals**). He enjoys special honor, but he has no power to interfere with the 12 other Orthodox communions. Protestants and Orthodox Catholics affirm the Trinity, the Bible as the Word of God, Jesus as God the Son, and many other biblical doctrines. In doctrine, however, they have much more in common with Roman Catholics than they do with Protestants.

A. Orthodox teaching distinctions as contrasted to a Protestant:

1. The equal authority of church tradition and Scripture
2. The Perpetual virginity of Mary
3. Prayer for the dead
4. Baptism of infants without reference to individual responsibility and faith
5. The possibility of receiving salvation after death-Purgatory
6. Emphasizes theosis (“divinization”)

Orthodox Church historians teach the Church of Alexandria was founded by Mark, the Church of Antioch by Paul, the Church of Jerusalem by Peter and James, the Church of Rome by Peter and Paul, and the Church of Constantinople by Andrew. These five churches represent the patriarchates of the Orthodox Church. Emperor Justinian I (AD 527—565) proposed a system of ecclesiastical government, naming Rome, Constantinople, Alexandria, Antioch, and Jerusalem as the pentarchy. Justinian’s system was later ratified at the Council of Trullo in AD 692. Today, the Patriarchate of Constantinople (renamed Istanbul in 1930) is the Ecumenical Patriarchate.

B. Constantine:

In October 312, Emperor Constantine, claiming to have seen a vision\sign of a cross, before the battle with Maxentius, with the inscription **“In this sign conquer,”** became the first Roman emperor to embrace Christianity. The following year, Emperor Constantine and Emperor Licinius issued the Edict of Milan, **which ended Christian persecution within the Roman Empire.** Half a century later,

In 324, Emperor Constantine moved his imperial capital from Rome to Byzantium, a city in

eastern Greece on the Strait of Bosphorus. In this transfer of power, Rome lost a measure of influence and prestige to Byzantium. Renamed in honor of the emperor, **Constantinople became the seat of world power and the capital of Christendom.** In 325, Constantine summoned church bishops to the Greek city of Nicaea for what was to be the first of seven ecumenical councils that would further shape church history.

C. The Seven Ecumenical Councils:

For settling doctrinal and disciplinary issues, seven assemblies of church leaders met from 325 to 787. The highlights of these councils are as follows:

The Council of Nicea I (325) condemned the **heresy of Arianism** and summarized the teaching of the apostles in credal form.

The Council of Constantinople I (381) expanded the Nicene Creed and **reaffirmed teachings** concerning the Holy Spirit and the doctrine of the Trinity. Like the first council in 325, this council condemned heretical teachers who were waging war against the Bible's trinitarian teachings. **The council also proclaimed Constantinople as the "New Rome."**

The Council of Ephesus (431) **denounced another heretical teaching, Nestorianism.** The council also discussed the Virgin Mary's title of *Theotokos*, that is, the "Birthgiver of God."

The Council of Chalcedon (451) **anathematized monophysitism.** The council also assigned equal honor to the Church of Constantinople and the Church of Rome and gave the title "patriarch" to the most prominent bishops. **These decisions widened the rift between Rome in the West and Constantinople in the East.**

The Council of Constantinople II (553) met to **reaffirm that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is one and the same divine Person (hypostasis)** who united personally (hypostatically) in Himself the two natures of God and Man, without fusing them together and without allowing their separation. Additionally, Origen's teaching on the pre-existence of the soul was condemned.

The Council of Constantinople III (681) met to **condemn the monothelite heresy,** ruling that, as Christ has two natures, He also has two wills, one human and one divine.

The Council of Nicea II (787) affirmed the use of icons in worship, **rejecting the view that the veneration of icons amounts to idolatry.**

D. The Rise of Islam Against Catholicism:

The rapid expansion of Islam dealt a number of blows to the Orthodox Church. In 647, fifteen years following Mohammad's death, Islamic invaders had overtaken Syria, Palestine, and

Egypt. The first of the 8 “Crusades” started in 1095. Fifty years later, Islamic troops had encamped outside the gates of Constantinople, though the city would stand until 1453. North Africa and Spain were the next to fall. Ultimately, the Byzantine Empire would lose the Patriarchates of Alexandria, Antioch, and Jerusalem to Islamic conquerors.

E. The Great Schism of 1054:

In 1054, an irreconcilable split, known as the Great Schism, between Constantinople and Rome occurred. The Roman Catholic Church separated itself from the Orthodox Church primarily over the issues of (1) papal authority and (2) an addition to the Nicene Creed known as the filioque clause. The relationship between Constantinople and Rome had been deteriorating over many years, partly due to language and cultural differences, and these tensions were further aggravated by hostile Islamic forces that made travel between Greece and Italy difficult. The sacking of Constantinople by Roman Crusaders in 1204 drove the two factions even further apart. Attempts at reunification, most notably the Council of Lyons in 1274 and the Council of Florence in 1438, were unsuccessful. Rome has been actively seeking reunification since the 1970’s. The phrase “queen of the kingdoms” in Isaiah 47:5 is their prophetic justification for reunification.

F. The Fall of Constantinople and Islamic Oppression:

In 1453, Constantinople fell to the forces of Turkish sultan Mohammad II. For nearly five centuries, the Greek-speaking Christians struggled under the yoke of Islam. With Constantinople under Islamic rule, the Orthodox Church’s seat of authority shifted northward to Russia.

Separate from Eastern Orthodoxy is the Oriental Orthodox Church, a family of six self-governing church bodies. The Oriental Orthodox Church was begun as an offshoot of Eastern Orthodoxy in AD 451 and accepts only the first three of the ecumenical councils.

G. Beliefs in the Orthodox Catholic Church:

Many Orthodox Churches conduct their Sunday service, called a Divine Liturgy. Worship services are filled with formality, ritual, and choral music. Within a typical 75-minute service, they will light candles for various reasons, kneel in tandem, kiss icons, and make the “sign of the cross,” although they repeat the gesture backward from the way Roman Catholics do. Observing the Eucharist is central to their service.

1. Communion – Only baptized and faithful Orthodox may partake of the elements of Holy Communion, which they suggest become the actual body and blood of Christ, a belief called “transubstantiation,” although some Orthodox theologians object to that term.

2. Veneration of saints – The Orthodox Church states that their practice of kneeling before or kissing the images of Mary and deceased saints is a way of showing reverence to their memories, rather than worshipping them. Their website states, “The Orthodox Church worships God alone. Yet, she does offer veneration to individuals who have been important

human instruments of God in the history of salvation. Among those so venerated is Mary, the Mother of God, the Theotokos.”

3. Salvation – The Orthodox Church claims that salvation is by faith in Christ. However, they differ from the evangelical concept of faith by adding, “Orthodox Christians throughout their lives receive salvation and renewal through faith, works, and the sacraments of the Church.” They teach that the purpose of Christ’s death and resurrection was so that we could become divine as He is divine.

Their website states that “the Holy Spirit is the agent of deification whose task it is to incorporate us into the life of the Holy Trinity.” They believe that it is baptism that “introduces the believer into the life of the Kingdom”; therefore, they baptize infants, stating that “holy anointing or Chrismation grants the gift of the Holy Spirit for growth in the image and likeness of God.”

4. Scripture – The Orthodox Church uses Scripture but includes twelve non-inspired, apocryphal books. On par with Scripture is their “Holy Tradition,” which includes “the writings, teachings, and acts of the apostles, saints, martyrs, and fathers of the Church, and the decisions of the Ecumenical Councils.” Their website states, “All of this collective wisdom and experience through the centuries are combined to form this **second great source of sacred authority.**” It is dangerous to consider human experience and man’s “collective wisdom” as a “source of sacred authority.”

5. Life after death – The Orthodox Church’s doctrine of life after death is vague. They maintain that they do not support the Catholic idea of purgatory, yet they state that “a partial judgment is instituted immediately after our physical death, which places us in an intermediate condition of partial blessedness (for the righteous), or partial suffering (for the unrighteous).” They believe that “a change is possible during this intermediate state and stage.” and therefore include prayers for the dead, along with almsgiving on their behalf.

6. Feasts and holy days – Orthodoxy resembles ancient Judaism in its designation of holy days, feasts, and remembrance celebrations. The extreme focus on tradition, ritual, repetition, and formality creates an environment for a false understanding of what it means to have a saving relationship with Jesus. Although perhaps not intentional, such focus on outward displays can leave the impression that pleasing God equals strict obedience to the Orthodox Church tradition.

Any church tradition that replaces or nullifies God’s truth or that exalts itself as the only right way to God should not be.

Lesson 11: “Christian” [Roman Catholic]: Questions

In answering the following questions, you will become familiar with religious views, concepts and teachings that are somewhat or vastly different from your present understandings. Please research each on your own to gain a greater insight. You can then walk in wisdom to answer with seasoned speech when a door opens for You. Col. 4:3-6

1. How or who originated this religion and when?96
2. How important was the “Edict of Milan”?96
3. Name three examples adapted from paganism.96,97
4. In affect what are the Roman Catholic bishops denying by the blending of paganism?97
5. What is a “sacrament”?97
6. List the Seven Sacraments.97,98
7. Explain “Extreme Unction”?98
8. What is annulment?98
9. Is there any difference in the sacraments of Catholics and the Orthodox Church?98
10. What is a catechism?99
11. How is the Roman Catechism different?99,100
12. What is the meaning when the Roman Catholic Catechism says, ““Sacred Tradition and Sacred Scripture make up a single sacred deposit of the Word of God”?99,100

13. Define Purgatory.100

14. The Apocrypha books bring what beliefs to Roman Catholics?100

15. What could you conclude if the Apocrypha are not quoted in the New Testament?100

16. Why would the Protestant Reformation approve of “Sola scriptura”?100,101

17. What are the objections to Sola scriptura by the Roman Catholic Church?101,102

18. Define Papal, Church Council and Magisterium infallibility?102-104

19. Are there written instructions or scripture? Do these evolve or change with time?

20. How are other religions viewed?

21. How are one’s actions/thoughts viewed? Right, Wrong, Sin, etc.

22. Is one’s actions/thoughts rewarded or punished, etc.?

23. What occurs after physical death?

24. What is the purpose of one’s life?

25. How is Jesus of Nazareth viewed?

26. How are the sixty-six books of the bible viewed?

27. What religious teachings do you share?

28. In there any teaching that you view as unique, peculiar, repulsive, or admired?

What is the origin of the Roman Catholic Church?

The Roman Catholic Church contends that its origin is at the death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus Christ in approximately AD 30. The Catholic Church proclaims itself to be the church that Jesus Christ died for, the church that was established and built by the apostles.

On the contrary. Even a cursory reading of the New Testament will reveal that the Catholic Church does not have its origin in the teachings of Jesus or His apostles. In the New Testament, there is no mention of the papacy, worship/adoration of Mary, the immaculate conception of Mary, the perpetual virginity of Mary, the assumption of Mary, or Mary as co-redemptrix and mediatrix, petitioning saints in heaven for their prayers, apostolic succession, the ordinances of the church functioning as sacraments, infant baptism, confession of sin to a priest, purgatory, indulgences, or the equal authority of Catholic church tradition, etc. So, if the origin of the Catholic Church is not in the teachings of Jesus and His apostles, as recorded in the New Testament, what is the true origin of the Catholic Church?

For the first 280 years of Christian history, Christianity was banned by the Roman Empire, and Christians were persecuted. This changed after the “conversion” of the Roman Emperor Constantine. Constantine provided religious toleration with the **Edict of Milan in AD 313**, effectively lifting the ban on Christianity. Later, in AD 325, Constantine called the Council of Nicaea in an attempt to unify Christianity. Constantine envisioned Christianity as a religion that could unite the Roman Empire, which at that time was beginning to fragment and divide. While this may have seemed to be a positive development for the Christian church, the results were anything but positive. Constantine did not fully embrace the Christian faith but continued many of his pagan beliefs and practices, so the Christian church that Constantine and his successors promoted, **progressively became a blending of Christianity and Roman paganism.**

Following are a few examples of the **blending**:

1. Most Roman Catholic beliefs and practices regarding Mary are completely absent from the Bible. The Roman Catholic view of Mary has far more in common with the Isis mother-goddess religion of Egypt than it does with anything taught in the New Testament. Interestingly, the first hints of **Catholic Mariology** occur in the writings of Origen, who lived in Egypt, which happened to be the focal point of Isis worship.
2. The Lord’s Supper being a consumption of the literal body and blood of Jesus is not taught in the Bible. The idea that bread and wine are miraculously transformed into the literal body and blood of Jesus (**transubstantiation**) is not biblical. However, several

ancient pagan religions, including **Mithraism**, which was very popular in the Roman Empire, had some form of “theophagy” (the eating of one’s god) as a ritualistic practice. 3. Roman Catholicism has **“saints” one can pray to** in order to gain a particular blessing. For example, Saint Gianna Beretta Molla is the patron saint of fertility. Francis of Assisi is the patron saint of animals. There are multiple patron saints of healing and comfort. Just as the Roman pantheon of gods had a god of love, a god of peace, a god of war, a god of strength, a god of wisdom, etc., so the Catholic Church has a saint who is “in charge” over each of these and many other categories. Many Roman cities had a god specific to the city, and the Catholic Church provided “patron saints” for cities as well.

The supremacy of the Roman bishop (the papacy) was created with the support of the Roman emperors. While most other bishops, from other cities, and resisted the idea of THE Roman bishop being supreme, the Roman bishop eventually rose to supremacy, again, due to the power and influence of the Roman emperors. After the western half of the Roman Empire collapsed, the popes took on the title that had previously belonged to the Roman emperors—Pontifex Maximus.

The Roman Catholic Church denies the pagan origin of its beliefs and practices. The Catholic Church **disguises its pagan beliefs** under layers of complicated theology and church tradition. Recognizing that many of its beliefs and practices are utterly foreign to Scripture, the Catholic Church is thereby practically forced to deny the authority and all sufficiency of Scripture.

The origin of the Catholic Church is the tragic compromise of Christianity with the pagan religions that surrounded it. Instead of proclaiming the gospel and converting the pagans, the Catholic Church “Christianized” the pagan religions and “paganized” Christianity. By blurring the differences and erasing the distinctions, the Catholic Church made itself attractive to the idolatrous people of the Roman Empire. One result was the Catholic Church becoming the supreme religion in the Roman world for centuries.

The seven Catholic sacraments:

“Sacraments are outward signs of inward grace, instituted by Christ for our sanctification” (taken from the *Catholic Encyclopedia*). The Roman Catholic Church teaches that while God gives grace to man without outward symbols (sacraments), He has also chosen to give grace to man through visible symbols. Because God has done this, man is foolish to not make use of this God-provided means of gaining sanctification per Catholic teaching.

In order to qualify as a sacrament, the Roman Catholic Church states that it must meet the following three criteria: a) the external, that is, a sensibly perceptible sign of sanctifying grace, b) the conferring of sanctifying grace, c) the institution by God or, more accurately, by Jesus Christ. **Thus, sacraments are not merely a symbol, but are believed to actually confer sanctifying grace upon the recipient.** The Roman Catholic Church believes that all of their seven sacraments were instituted by Christ Himself.

There are seven Roman Catholic Sacraments:

- 1) **Baptism**, which the Roman Catholic Church teaches removes original sin while infusing the act with sanctifying grace.
- 2) **Penance**, in which one confesses his/her sins to a priest.
- 3) **The Eucharist**, considered the reception and consumption of the actual body and blood of Christ.
- 4) **Confirmation**, a formal acceptance into the church along with special anointing of the Holy Spirit.
- 5) **Anointing of the sick**, performed by a priest using oil. The priest anoints the sick person's forehead and hands with oil. This is associated not only with bodily healing but with forgiveness of sins. When performed on a dying person, it is called **Extreme Unction** (or last rites or final anointing).
- 6) **Holy Orders**, the process by which men are ordained to clergy.
- 7) **Matrimony**, which provides special grace to a couple. **Annulment: Marriage never occurred.**

What is sacramentalism?

The word *sacrament* comes from the Latin word *sacrare*, meaning "hallow" or "consecrate." In its most literal sense, **sacrament means "holy obligation."** In practice, a sacrament is an act or ritual that is believed to grant or bestow God's grace. According to the Roman Catholic Church, "The **sacraments** are efficacious signs of grace, instituted by Christ and entrusted to the Church, by which divine life is dispensed to us, the visible rites by which the sacraments are celebrated signify and make present the graces proper to each sacrament" (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1131).

Sacramentalism is the teaching that the sacraments are efficacious in and of themselves and necessary for salvation. **The doctrine is common to both the Roman Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church**, which teach that participation in the rites confers God's grace upon the participants.

The Seven sacraments of **Roman Catholicism** are as follows:

Baptism
Eucharist
Confirmation
Reconciliation
Anointing of the sick
Marriage
Holy Orders

The Seven sacraments of the **Orthodox Church** are as follows:

Baptism
Communion
Chrismation
Penance
Anointing of the sick

Marriage
Holy Orders

What is the Catholic catechism?

A catechism is a summary of instructions through a series of questions and answers, prepared in book form, containing instruction on religious doctrine. The intent of these instructions is that they be used in a class environment or other means of formal instruction. The Westminster Confession, every part of which contains scriptural backing, is one such set of instructions.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church, however, is different in that it is not written in a question-and-answer format. Instead, the Catholic catechism is a summary of the official teachings of Roman Catholic beliefs **including** creeds, sacraments, commandments, and prayers.

The Catholic catechism is divided into four parts:

- Profession of Faith (the Apostles Creed)
- Celebration of the Christian Mystery (the Sacred Liturgy, especially the sacraments)
- Life in Christ (including The Ten Commandments in Roman Catholic theology)
- Christian Prayer (including The Lord's Prayer)

Also, the Catholic catechism is replete with footnotes referencing not only Scripture but also the Church fathers, the ecumenical councils, and other authoritative statements, especially those delivered by the Popes. And therein lies the greatest difference between Catholicism and Scripture! The Roman Catholic Church equates Catholic traditions with the Bible as authoritative for their beliefs and teachings. The Catechism of the Catholic Church says that “the Church, to whom the transmission and interpretation of Revelation is entrusted, **does not derive her certainty about all revealed truths from the Holy Scriptures alone. Both Scripture and Tradition must be accepted and honored with equal sentiments of devotion and reverence” (paragraph 82).**

According to the Catholic catechism, the Catholic Church relies on the authority of church tradition for their doctrines not found in the Bible. These doctrines include such practices and teachings as these:

- the Mass
- penance
- veneration of Mary
- purgatory
- indulgences
- the priesthood (with enforced celibacy)
- the confessional
- the rosary
- venial and mortal sins

Protestants, who reject the Catholic catechism, assert that the Bible is intended by God to be the sole source of doctrinal truth (2 Timothy 3:16; Revelation 22:18–19). But **Roman**

Catholics say, “Sacred Tradition and Sacred Scripture make up a single sacred deposit of the Word of God” (Catechism of the Catholic Church, paragraph 97).

The Catholic’s reasoning, as found in the Catholic catechism, is as follows:

- “The apostles left bishops as their successors. They gave them ‘their own position of teaching authority’” (Catechism of the Catholic Church, paragraph 77).
- “This living transmission, accomplished through the Holy Spirit, is called tradition” (Catechism of the Catholic Church, paragraph 78).
- “Both Scripture and Tradition must be accepted and honored with equal sentiments of devotion and reverence” (Catechism of the Catholic Church, paragraph 82).

An example of the results of this kind of thinking is the number of doctrines concerning Mary, the mother of Jesus. **Throughout the centuries, Catholics have “revealed” new doctrines concerning Mary.** These new teachings, which are part of the Catholic catechism, are:

- Mary is the Mother of God — AD 431
- Prayers are offered to Mary — AD 600
- The Immaculate Conception (establishing her sinlessness) — AD 1854
- The Assumption of Mary — AD 1950
- Mary is the Mother of the Church — AD 1965

Another example is the doctrine of purgatory:

“All who die in God’s grace and friendship, but still imperfectly purified, are indeed assured of their eternal salvation, but after death they undergo purification, so as to achieve the holiness necessary to enter the joy of heaven” (Catechism of the Catholic Church, paragraph 1030).

The Apocrypha / Deuterocanonical books:

The Apocrypha / Deuterocanonical books teach many things that are not true and are not historically accurate. While many Catholics accepted the Apocrypha / Deuterocanonicals previously, the Roman Catholic Church officially added the Apocrypha / Deuterocanonicals to their Bible at the Council of Trent in the mid 1500s A.D., primarily in response to the Protestant Reformation. The Apocrypha / Deuterocanonicals support some of the things that the Roman Catholic Church believes and practices which are not in agreement with the Bible. **Examples are praying for the dead, petitioning "saints" in Heaven for their prayers, worshiping angels, and "alms giving" atoning for sins.** The nation of Israel treated the Apocrypha / Deuterocanonical books with respect, but never accepted them as true books of the Hebrew Bible. The early Christian church debated the status of the Apocrypha / Deuterocanonicals, but few early Christians believed they belonged in the canon of Scripture. **The New Testament quotes from the Old Testament hundreds of times, but nowhere quotes or alludes to any of the Apocryphal / Deuterocanonical books. One can therefore reason what?**

"Sola scriptura" is the Standard Approach:

The phrase *sola scriptura* is from the Latin: *sola* having the idea of "alone," "ground," "base," and the word *scriptura* meaning "writings" referring to the Scriptures. *Sola scriptura* means that Scripture alone is authoritative for the faith and practice of the Christian. The Bible is complete, authoritative, and true. "All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness" (2 Timothy 3:16).

Sola scriptura was the rallying cry of the Protestant Reformation. For centuries the Roman Catholic Church had made its traditions superior in authority to the Bible. Martin Luther, the founder of the Lutheran Church and father of the Protestant Reformation, was publicly rebuking the Catholic Church for its unbiblical teachings. The Catholic Church threatened Martin Luther with excommunication and death if he did not recant. **Martin Luther's reply was,** "Unless therefore I am convinced by the testimony of Scripture, or by the clearest reasoning, unless I am persuaded by means of the passages I have quoted, and unless they thus render my conscience bound by the Word of God, I cannot and will not retract, for it is unsafe for a Christian to speak against his conscience. Here I stand, I can do no other; may God help me! Amen!"

The primary Catholic argument against *sola scriptura* is that the Bible does not explicitly teach *sola scriptura*. Catholics argue that the Bible nowhere states that it is the only authoritative guide for faith and practice. However, this is only true in the shallowest sense. The principle is strongly indicated by verses such as Acts 17:11, which commends the Bereans for testing doctrine—taught by an apostle, no less—to the written Word. *Sola scriptura* is all-but-explicitly indicated in 1 Corinthians 4:6, where Paul warns not to “go beyond what is written.” See also Rev 22:18-19. Jesus Himself criticized those who allowed traditions to override the explicit commands of God in Mark 7:6-9.

Sola scriptura is the only way to avoid subjectivity and keep personal opinion from taking priority over the teachings of the Bible. The essence of *sola scriptura* is basing your spiritual life on the Bible alone and rejecting any tradition or teaching that is not in full agreement with the Bible. 2Timothy 2:15. declares, "... a workman who correctly handles the word of truth."

On a practical matter, **a frequent objection to the concept of *sola scriptura* is** the fact that the canon of the Bible was not officially agreed upon for at least 250 years after the church was founded. Further, the Scriptures were not available to the masses for over 1500 years after the church was founded. How, then, were early Christians to use *sola scriptura*, when they did not even have the full Scriptures? And how were Christians who lived before the invention of the printing press supposed to base their faith and practice on Scripture alone if there was no way for them to have a complete copy of the Scriptures? This issue is further compounded by the very high rates of illiteracy throughout history. How does the concept of *sola scriptura* handle these issues?

Answer to this Objection: The problem with this argument is not understanding that it essentially says that Scripture's “authority” is based on its availability. The fact that Scripture was not readily available, or that people could not read it, does not change the fact that Scripture is God's Word. Further, rather than this being an argument against *sola*

scriptura, it is actually an argument for what the churches should have done, instead of what they did. The early church should have made producing copies of the Scriptures a high priority for wide distribution. While it was unrealistic for every Christian to possess a complete copy of the Bible, it was possible for every church to have some or all of the Scriptures available to it. Early church leaders should have made studying the Scriptures their highest priority so they could accurately teach it and also available for all to check to see if the teaching was sound. Even if the Scriptures could not be made available to the masses, at least church leaders could be well-trained in the Word of God. Instead of building traditions upon traditions and passing them on from generation to generation, the church should have copied the Scriptures and taught the Scriptures (2 Timothy 4:2).

Papal Infallibility:

The Roman Catholic Church teaches that the pope is infallible when he speaks from his position of authority on a particular issue or doctrine (speaking *ex cathedra*). Many misunderstand “papal infallibility” as indicating that everything the pope says is infallible. This is not what the Roman Catholic Church means by “papal infallibility.” According to the Roman Catholic Church, this infallibility of the pope, only when speaking *ex cathedra*, is part of the Roman Catholic Church’s Magisterium, or the “teaching authority of the Church” which God gave to the “Mother Church” to guide her infallibly. **This “teaching authority of the Church” is made up of the (1) pope’s infallible teaching, (2) the infallible teaching ability of church councils assembled under the authority of the pope, and (3) the “ordinary” Magisterium of the bishops.** This “ordinary” Magisterium involves, among other things, bishops in various places beginning to teach the same particular doctrine (for instance, the teaching that Mary was conceived without sin), and that if this teaching gains acceptance throughout the church as a whole, it is an indication that the Holy Spirit is working through the bishops and that this teaching is from God. The pope may later recognize this and proclaim infallibly that it comes from God and is to be accepted by all Roman Catholics.

The question is whether this teaching is in agreement with Scripture. The Roman Catholic Church sees the (1) papacy AND (2) the infallible teaching authority of “mother Church” as being necessary to guide the Church, and uses that as logical reasoning for God’s provision of it. But in examining Scripture, we find the following:

1) While Peter was central in the early spread of the gospel (part of the meaning behind Matthew 16:18-19), the teaching of Scripture, taken in context, nowhere declares that Peter was in authority over the other apostles or over the entire church (see Acts 15:1-23; Galatians 2:1-14; 1 Peter 5:1-5). Nor is it ever taught that the bishop of Rome was to have primacy over the church. However, Scripture shows that Peter’s authority was shared by the other apostles (Ephesians 2:19-20).

2) Nowhere does Scripture state that, in order to keep the church from error, the authority of the apostles was passed on to those they ordained (the Roman Catholic Church teaching of “apostolic succession”). Apostolic succession is “read into” those verses that

the Roman Catholic Church uses to support this doctrine (2 Timothy 2:2; 4:2-5; Titus 1:5; 2:1; 2:15; 1 Timothy 5:19-22). Paul does NOT call on believers in various churches to receive Titus, Timothy, and other church leaders based on their authority as bishops, but rather based upon their being fellow laborers with him (1 Corinthians 16:10; 16:16; 2 Corinthians 8:23). The Bible does not teach that the apostles were infallible, apart from what was written by them and incorporated into Scripture (2 Timothy 3:16; 2 Peter 1:18-21). Paul, in talking to the church leaders in the city of Ephesus, makes note of coming false teachers, and to fight against such error he does NOT commend them to “the apostles and those who would carry on their authority”; rather, he commends them to “God and to the word of His grace” (Acts 20:28-32).

3) Nowhere in Scripture is **the “teaching Magisterium,” or mastery of bishops**, taught and treated as of equal weight with Scripture. What history has shown is that, when any other source of authority is treated as being of equal weight with Scripture, that second authority always ends up superseding Scripture (such is the case with the Mormons’ other accepted writings and the Jehovah’s Witnesses’ *Watchtower*). So it is with the Roman Catholic Church. For Roman Catholics, it is the “mother Church” that is the final authority, not Scripture, no matter that they say that the Magisterium is the “servant of Scripture.” Again, the Bible teaches that it is Scripture that is to be used as the measuring stick to determine truth from error. In Galatians 1:8-9, Paul states that it is not WHO teaches but WHAT is being taught that is to be used to determine truth from error.

4) While the Roman Catholic Church sees apostolic succession and the infallible Magisterium of the church as logically necessary in order for God to unerringly guide the Church, Scripture states that God has provided for His church through:

- (a) Infallible Scripture (Acts 20:32; 2 Timothy 3:15-17; Matthew 5:18; John 10:35; Acts 17:10-12; Isaiah 8:20; 40:8; etc.),
- (b) Christ’s unending high-priesthood in heaven (Hebrews 7:22-28),
- (c) The provision of the Holy Spirit who guided the Apostles into truth after Christ’s death (John 16:12-14), Who uses the written Word (Hebrews 4:12; Ephesians 6:17).

In summary, the Bible speaks of only one abiding, "tangible," infallible guide left by God for His church. It is the written word of God, not an infallible leader (2 Timothy 3:15-17). And, as He gave the Holy Spirit to holy men in the writing of those Scriptures (2 Peter 1:19-21).

Vatican II's, 1962-65, Explanation of Infallibility per Catholic.com:

Vatican II explained the doctrine of infallibility as follows: “Although the individual bishops do not enjoy the prerogative of infallibility, **they can nevertheless proclaim Christ’s doctrine infallibly**. This is so, even when they are dispersed around the world, provided that while maintaining the bond of unity among themselves and with Peter’s successor, and while teaching authentically on a matter of faith or morals, they concur in a single viewpoint as the one which must be held conclusively. This authority is even more clearly verified when, **gathered together in an ecumenical council**, they are teachers and judges of faith and morals for the universal Church. Their definitions must then be adhered to with the submission of faith” (*Lumen Gentium* 25).

Infallibility belongs in a special way to the pope as head of the bishops (Matt. 16:17–19; John 21:15–17). As Vatican II remarked, it is a charism the pope “enjoys in virtue of his office, when, as the supreme shepherd and teacher of all the faithful, who confirms his brethren in their faith (Luke 22:32), he proclaims by a definitive act some doctrine of faith or morals. Therefore his definitions, of themselves, and not from the consent of the Church, are justly held irreformable, for they are pronounced with the assistance of **the Holy Spirit, an assistance promised to him in blessed Peter.**”

The infallibility of the pope is not a doctrine that suddenly appeared in Church teaching; rather, it is a doctrine that was implicit in the early Church. It is only our understanding of infallibility that has developed and been more clearly understood over time. **In fact, the doctrine of infallibility is implicit in these Petrine texts: John 21:15–17 (“Feed my sheep . . . ”), Luke 22:32 (“I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail”), and Matthew 16:18 (“You are Peter . . . ”).**

Lesson 12 – Bible Attitudes/Truths

1. It doesn't make any difference what you believe:

- Whether there is a God? Psalms 14:1; Rom 1:18, 25; Acts 17:27, 30-31
- Whether Jesus is the Son of God? **John 14:6; Mark 16:15,16; John 3:16**

A. As long as you believe in Christ, it doesn't make any difference which church you go to or what religion you practice

- Vain worship makes a difference? Matt 15:9
- Holding the pattern of sound words make a difference? **2 Tim 1:13**
- Teaching truth about the plan of salvation makes a difference. **Acts 19:1-5**

B. Christians shouldn't argue/debate about the Bible.

- Jesus did **Matt 4:6,7; 22:23-46**, as did Stephen **Acts 6:9-10**, Paul **Acts 15:1-2**, and others **1 Peter 3:15; Jude 3; Matt 10:32-39**

C. Accepting another teaching would condemn my family

- Disciples love Christ more than any others – **Matt 10:34f**
- What we believe will not change other's destiny – **2 Cor 5:10; Ezek 18:20**
- Believing and living religiously different from one's family does not mean one does not love family – David/Absalom; Saul/Jonathan; Job/Job's wife; believer/unbeliever in a marriage **1 Cor 7:12f; 1 Peter 3:1f**. In fact it is love that may cause one to differ with their family...to try to save them!
- Rich man **Luke 16:27-28**
- If Timothy had not obeyed the gospel (**Acts 16:1** – father unbeliever)? The Thessalonians from idolatry **1 Thess 1:9?**

D. My church/priest/pastor say's that I'm all right

- Christ has ALL authority. We must observe HIS commandments. **Matt 28:18-20**. Churches, "priests," and preachers do not have ANY authority to make, change, or void divine laws. **1 Cor 14:37,38; Gal 1:8-9; 1 Thess 4:8**
- The Scriptures warn that churches and leaders would apostatize. **Acts 20:29-30; Rev 2:14, 20; 2 Cor 11:13-15. Matt 15:14** – blind lead blind, BOTH fall.
- Every person has the personal responsibility to test what he hears. **Matt 7:15; 1 John 4:1; 1 Thess 5:19-21**

E. Look at the numbers – how can so many be wrong?

- Jesus said "many" will be lost; "few" will be saved, **Matt 7:13, 14**.
- So it has been throughout history – Eight versus the world **Gen 6; 1 Peter 3:20-21**; two spies versus the twelve (**Num 13,14**); Elijah versus the 450 prophets of Baal and the 400 prophets of the Asherah **1 Kings 18:19-22**; twelve versus the many **John 6:66-69**

F. My religion or church follows revered tradition

- **Mark 7:8-13** – "You have invalidated the word of God for the sake of your tradition."
- Beware of following tradition **1 Peter 1:18; Gal 1:14; Matt 15:9**

G. I feel in my heart that I'm right

- **Proverbs 14:12; 16:25; Saul – Acts 23:1; 26:9**

2. Scripture is Inspired by God only:

1. Read **2 Tim 3:16-17**
 - Define “Scripture” and “inspired”
 - Jesus often referred to scripture **Matt 4:4, 7, 10; 5:17-18; 19:4; 24:15; Luke 4:17-21; John 5:39, 46-47; 10:35**
2. What did Jesus promise the apostles? **John 16:13.**
3. What did Peter claim about life and godliness? **2 Peter 1:3.**
4. What did John claim about eternal life? **1 John 1:1-4; 5:13, 18-21.**
5. What did John warn about? **Rev 22:18, 19.**

3. Let Us Make Man in Our Image:

1. Read **Gen 1:26-27**. Being in the "image of God" was peculiar to man.
2. **John 4:24; Luke 24:39; Heb 10:5; Phil 2:7** God is a Spirit and a spirit does not have flesh and bones. When Jesus came to earth he took upon himself a flesh and bones body like men have - he did not have one before.
3. Man is in the "likeness" of God in his SPIRITUAL NATURE
 - Man has a DUAL nature. He has a body of flesh. He has a SPIRIT residing IN the body. In the following scriptures this dual nature is seen and certain things can be learned about the nature of the spirit.
 - **Acts 17:29-31** God, or the spirit of man is not represented in any image of stone.
4. Man's spiritual nature makes him unique in God's creation. This is seen in his:

- Mental capacity - rational thought, e.g. algebra; conceive of God; Accumulate knowledge; build machines to lessen work. Contrast animal kingdom.
- Moral nature - sense of "ought." No crime for animals to kill; no indecency for animals to make display; might makes right.
- Aesthetic nature - capacity to appreciate a beautiful painting or the value of a string of pearls. A hog would rather have a bucket of slop.
- Religious nature - wherever you find man you find some form of religion, an inherent desire to worship something or someone.

4. The Lord our God is One Lord:

1. How did Jesus rate the importance of belief about God, **Mark 12:28-29**?
2. How would faith in the LORD as the one God impact the moral and spiritual norm Israel would live by? **Exodus 19:7-9; Deut 4:9-14, 39-40; 6:1-8**
3. If one believes in and serves the God of Israel and of the gospel of Christ, what view must he have relative to other gods? **Deut 5:7-10; Matt 4:10; 1 Cor 8:5-6; Eph 4:4-6**
4. According to the Scriptures of Israel and of the apostles and prophets of the gospel of Christ, who may rightly be called "God"?
 - **1 Peter 1:3**
 - **Hebrews 1:8**
 - **Acts 5:3, 4**
5. How was Israel to be *assured* that Jehovah was indeed the God who delivered them and made them a nation and that there is no other ("The Lord is one")? See **Exodus 13:14-16; Deut 4:32-35**
6. What truth is evidenced in the created world that holds men "without excuse" for their failure to believe it? **Rom 1:18-25**.
 - What mistaken notion had mankind adopted about God? vv. **21-25**
 - What are consequences of this kind of religious thinking? vv. **18, 24, 27, 32**
7. What was the focus or theme of the sermon preached in **Acts 17:16-31**?

5. The Christ, the Son of the living God:

1. Read **Matt 16:13-19; Mark 8:27-29; Luke 9:18-20**. what question did Jesus ask?

2. Prophet, Priest, King
 - “Anointed” by God to be Prophet - **1 Kings 19:16**. Reveal the true grace of God **Deut 18:18, 19; John 1:25; Acts 3:22-26; John 12:48-50**.
 - Priest - **Exodus 30:30** Offer his own blood as the eternal sacrifice for the sins of men **Hebrews 5:1, 4, 6; 9:11-12, 15**
 - King - **1 Sam 16:1, 3**. Deliver people from the bondage of sin and rule in their hearts and lives for their salvation **2 Sam 7:12-13...Acts 2:30, 36**.

3. What does it mean, Jesus as “the Son of the living God”? **Luke 1:35; John 1:1-3, 14-18**

4. What is one thing about Jesus which is absolutely essential to understanding, believing in, and following Him as the Christ of both the Old Testament and New Testament? **Matt 1:21; 16:21-23; Luke 24:44-47; John 1:29; 3:14-15; 3:18-19; 1 Cor 2:2; 15:1-4**.

5. Why should we believe Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God? See **Mark 1:1; 16:15-16; Luke 1:1-4; John 20:30-31**.

6. Name the 5 witnesses that Jesus appealed to as evidence of who he was **John 5:30 - 47**

7. Eternal Nature of Jesus
 - **John 1:1-3, 14-18** eternal, “God,” Creator, existed before John though born after him
 - **John 5:18-23** equal with God (Deity)
 - **Rom 9:5** “the Christ...who is over all, God blessed forever” – simply, called God
 - **John 6:38-42, 62** “came down from heaven” “where he was before.”
 - **John 8:23-24, 56-59** “not of this world”; “before Abraham was born, ‘I AM’”

Is the Bible today what was originally written? By A. Kastenberger

The Bible was originally written in Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek. The Bibles we use today are translations from those original languages into English and other languages. The existing manuscripts (mss.) gives the highest degree of confidence in the text of the Bible. Both the Old and New Testaments are deemed trustworthy because of a very large number of mss. that span many millenniums! The question, "Is the Bible today what was originally written?" involves two important questions: **(1a)Textual Transmission and (2a)Textual Translation.**

(1a) Are the many available manuscripts (mss.) of the Bible accurate representations of the original mss. of the 66 books of the autographs of Scripture (the Bible)?

This is an issue of textual *transmission*.

- (A) Please note that no original autographs exist of any biblical text; only copies are available! The word "manuscript" is used to denote anything written by hand, rather than copies produced from a printing press. Textual evidence for the Bible constitutes anything written on clay tablets, stone, bone, wood, various metals, potsherds (ostraca), but most notably papyrus and parchment (vellum).
- (B) Most ancient books were compiled and then rolled into a scroll. Since a papyrus roll rarely exceeded 35 feet in length, ancient authors divided a long literary work into several scrolls. Later, sometime during the first or second century A.D., the codex came into use. The codex consisted of bound sheets of papyrus and constitutes the prototype for the modern book format. Thus early Christians began to collect and collate individual books into what is now the canonical NT. The term "Bible" derives from the Greek word *biblion* (book); the earliest use of *ta biblia* (the books) in the sense of "Bible" is found in 2 Clement 2:14 (c. A.D. 150).
- (C) The primary manuscripts (ms.) to the **OT** come from the Masoretic texts (the Masoretes were Jewish scribes) including the Cairo Geniza (A.D. 895), the Leningrad Codex (A.D. 916), the Codex Babylonicus Petropolitanus (A.D. 1008), the Aleppo Codex (c. A.D. 900), the British Museum Codex (A.D. 950), and the Reuchlin Codex (A.D. 1105). The Leningrad Codex remains the oldest complete ms. and serves as the main source for the Hebrew text. However, since the earliest of these mss. date from the ninth century A.D., they are removed from the original autographs by a considerable period of time.
- (D) So other ms./witnesses include the Talmud (Aramaic translations and commentaries), the Septuagint (LXX; the Greek translation of the OT), the Samaritan Pentateuch, and the Dead Sea Scrolls (DSS). The DSS, discovered during the 1940s and 50s, provided scholars with witnesses to the OT text that can be dated between 250-100 B.C. DSS-Cave four (4Q), e.g., has yielded about 40,000 fragments of 400 different ms., 100 of which are biblical, representing every OT book except Esther. Remarkably, a comparison of the DSS and the Masoretic text reveals a fairly small number of discrepancies.

Thus the evidence for the OT firmly demonstrates that the original texts were carefully preserved and are accurately represented in our modern Bible. Additionally the OT receives little to no questions as to its authenticity and accuracy by all other world religions.

(1b) The NT text remains the best attested document in the ancient world! The manuscripts to the NT fall into **three** broad categories: (1) the Greek mss.; ancient translations into other languages; and quotations from the NT found in early ecclesiastical writers (“Church Fathers”- Linus, Clement of Rome, Polycarp, Ignatius, Justin Martyr, Augustine, Chrysostom). (2) The Greek mss. include papyrus fragments, uncials (written in all capitals without spaces and punctuation), and (3) minuscules (small cursive-like script).

- (A) The versions and Church Fathers (defined in (2a)C) provided helpful early solid evidences that aided scholars in reconstructing the most plausible original readings. The total tally of more than 6,000 Greek mss., more than 10,000 Latin Vulgate mss., and more than 9,300 early versions results in over 25,000 witnesses to the **text of the NT**.
- (B) The papyri form the most significant group due to the fact that their early date implies that they are chronologically the closest to the original autographs. For example, both p52 (containing a few verses of John 18) and p46 (containing all of Paul’s epistles except the Pastorals) are most likely dated within 30 years of the original writings. The uncials follow the papyri in chronological importance. Codex Sinaiticus, an uncial written about A.D. 350, is the earliest existing copy of the entire NT. Other uncials, such as the Codex Vaticanus, Alexandrinus, Ephraemi, and Bezae, constitute significant witnesses as well.
- (C) The minuscules compose the largest group of Greek mss., but they are dated considerably later.
- (D) The sheer numbers of mss. does not, however, result in absolute uniformity of the texts. Thousands of variant readings (most of them minor) exist between the mss. While scribes exhibited great care in their effort to reproduce an exact copy, they were not immune from human error. These typically include errors of the eyes (e.g., skipping words or losing one’s place); hands (slips of the pen or writing notes in the margins); and ears (confusing similar sounding words or misunderstanding a word). These errors often became standardized through subsequent copies made from the copy.
- (E) Additionally, the transmission of the Greek mss. exhibited traits that enable scholars to classify them into text families (Alexandrian, Western, Byzantine) based on geographic origin, Greek style, date, comparative analysis in order to reproduce the most plausible reading of the original autographs in each individual case. Textual critics then made formal judgements between readings through exacting criteria such as dating, text type, clear readings, and possible reasons for variants and other relevant witnesses (i.e., versions and the Church Fathers).

*Although textual criticism is a very complex and at times controversial science, it has provided us with at least two assured results. First, none of the variant readings (including omissions) affect the central message or theological content of the Scriptures. Second, it can confidently be asserted that **the text of the Bible today is an accurate and faithful representation of the original autographs.***

(2a) Are the available translations faithful renderings of the Bible in the original languages? This is an issue of *translation*.

- (A) *Translation* follows once the question of the textual *transmission* is settled. To assess the truthfulness and accuracy of the Bible today compared to the original texts one must investigate the issues of translation theory and the history of the English Bible. The task of translating the Bible from its source languages (Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek) into a receptor language (English) involves many issues related to the nature of language and communication. Is word meaning found in some fixed form of inherent meaning, or is meaning determined by contextual usage? Is meaning located in the formal features of the original grammar, or in the function of words within the grammar? These are just a few of the questions pertaining to translation theory.
- (B) Some translators maintain that accurate translation requires a word-for-word approach of formal equivalence (KJV, NKJV, AS, NASB, etc.). Others contend that construing a straightforward one-to-one correlation between two languages actually distorts meaning. These translators employ a phrase-for-phrase approach of dynamic or functional equivalence (NRSV, NIV, CEV, NLT, NIV). The presumed goal of all translators is the production of an English version that is an accurate rendering of the text written in such a way that the Bible retains its literary beauty, theological grandeur, and, most importantly, its message.
- (C) For centuries the only Bible available to people was the Latin Vulgate prepared by **Jerome**, who was commissioned by Pope Damasus toward the end of the fourth century A.D. The Vulgate served as the official version of the Bible throughout Medieval Europe and was restricted to the clergy, monastic orders, and scholars. A British priest and Oxford scholar, **John Wycliffe** (1330-1384), was the first to make the entire Bible accessible to the common English-speaking people though limited available copies. His translation, however, was based on the Vulgate and not on the Hebrew and Greek. (The Gutenberg Bible, a Latin Vulgate bible, was the first bible produced with the new printing press in 1454. Thus causing a much greater distribution. The press could print up to 3600 ppd where hand printing was 40 ppd.) **William Tyndale** published the first English NT based on the Greek text in 1526. Two close associates of Tyndale, **Miles Coverdale** and **John Rogers**, finished his work by publishing their own respective translations of the entire Bible: the Coverdale Bible (1535) and Matthew's Bible (1537). The Geneva Bible of 1560 provided a translation of the Bible entirely from the original languages. King James I, in 1611, issued a translation, the **Authorized Version** or King James Bible, largely based on Tyndale's work, which became the unrivaled English translation for 270 years, the 1880's.

The twentieth century has given rise to a number of new translations. The updating and production of new translations were necessitated by new ms. discoveries, changes in the English language, the advancement of linguistics and questionable cultural changes. Today, when someone opens any Bible, they must remember that being true to the manuscripts is the only path to Jehovah God's eternal heaven. So choose wisely.

How Do I Know the Bible Is True? from Norman Geisler

How do I know the Bible is true? Sound reasons to trust the scriptures In Systematic Theology (Vol. I), Dr. Norman Geisler presents many lines of evidence supporting claims for the **Bible as the Word of God**. In unique fashion, he labels each line of evidence with a word beginning with the letter "**S**" making his arguments relatively easy to follow and to remember:

A. The testimony of Science Much in the Bible demonstrates advanced scientific knowledge – that is, God revealed through human scribes information that only He knew long before scientists discovered these truths. For example:

- The exact order of events in the origin of all things. “In a day when the ancient polytheistic myths of origin prevailed, the author of Genesis declared that the universe came into being out of nothing by the act of a theistic God in the exact order that modern science discovered a millennium and a half later,” writes Geisler. “The universe came first (Gen. 1:1a), then the earth (1:1b), then the land and sea (1:10). After this came life in the sea (1:21), then land animals (1:24-25), and finally ... human beings (1:27). This too supports the view that the author of Genesis, Moses, had access to intelligence as to how the Creator made the universe” (p. 545) possibly 2,000-4,000 years before Moses was born.
- Reproduction after each creature’s own kind. This scientific fact runs contrary to many ancient and even early modern views. Observation and the fossil record demonstrate that each type of life produces its own kind.
- The earth as the raw material of human bodies. Many ancient polytheistic beliefs claim that people came from the gods; the Koran teaches that human beings were made from a blood clot (Sura 23:14); but the Bible explains that God made Adam from the earth (Gen. 2:7).
- Rainwater returning to its source (Eccl. 1:7). Perhaps without even understanding it, the writer recorded the process of evaporation, condensation, and precipitation long before scientists figured it out.
- The shape of the world as it hangs in space. Job (26:7) and Isaiah (40:22) make remarkable statements contrary to the ancient belief that the earth was flat, or square. Some myths held that the earth rested on the back of Hercules or on pillars.
- Life is in the blood (Lev. 17:11), a fact declared in scripture more than 3,000 years ago and recently attested to in science.
- The sea’s paths and boundaries (Ps. 8:8; Prov. 8:29). The continental shelf that makes this possible is a fairly recent scientific discovery.
- The laws of sanitation (Lev. 12-15). Long before there was scientific knowledge of bacteria and germs, God instructed His people through laws of sanitation to protect themselves from diseases spread by unseen organisms.

B. The testimony of the Scrolls

While the autographs, or original manuscripts, of the Bible have not survived the ravages of time, no other book from the ancient world has more, earlier, or precisely copied manuscripts than the Bible. Thousands of examples abound:

1. The number of manuscripts and their age:

- Both the Old and New Testaments are attested by many manuscripts in a variety of forms spanning many centuries. The word “manuscript” is used to denote anything written by hand, rather than copies produced from printing presses.
- According to scholar F.F. Bruce, we have 10 good copies of Caesar’s Gallic Wars; 20 copies of Livy’s Roman History; 2 copies of Tacitus’s Annals; and 8 manuscripts of Thucydides’ History. The most documented secular work from antiquity is Homer’s Iliad with 643 copies. But there are roughly 6,000 Greek manuscripts of the New Testament, making this collection of 27 books the most highly documented book from the ancient world (The New Testament Documents, Are They Reliable? p. 16).
- Generally speaking, the older the manuscript copies, the better. The oldest manuscript for Gallic Wars, 10 copies, is roughly 900 years after Caesar’s day. The 2 manuscripts of Tacitus are 800 and 1,000 years later, respectively, than the original. The earliest copies of Homer’s Iliad, 643 copies, date from about 1,000 years after the original was authored around 800 B.C. But with the New Testament, we have complete manuscripts from only 300 hundred years later. Most of the New Testament is preserved in manuscripts less than 200 years

from the original, with some books dating from a little more than 100 years after their composition and one fragment surviving within a generation of its authorship. No other book from the ancient world has as small a time gap between composition and the earliest manuscript copies as the New Testament.

- “In the original Greek alone, over 6,000 manuscripts and manuscript fragments or portions of the NT have been preserved from the early centuries of Christianity. The oldest of these is a scrap of papyrus containing John 18:31-33, 37-38, dating from A.D. 125-130, which is less than 70 years after John’s Gospel was most probably written” (Craig L. Blomberg, “The Historical Reliability of the New Testament,” *Reasonable Faith: Christian Truth and Apologetics*, pp. 193-94).
- “The versions and Church Fathers provide helpful early attestation that can aid scholars in reconstructing the most plausible original readings. The total tally of more than 6,000 Greek mss., more than 10,000 Latin Vulgate mss., and more than 9,300 early versions results in over 25,000 witnesses to the text of the NT” (“Is the Bible Today What Was Originally Written?” by Andreas J. Kostenberger.)

2. The accuracy of the manuscript copies:

- Mormons and Muslims allege that the Bible’s documents were substantially corrupted as they were copied over time, but there is overwhelming evidence that proves these claims wrong.
- Scholars of almost every theological belief attest to the profound care with which the Old and New Testament documents were copied. For the New Testament, for example, the books were copied in Greek, and later translated and preserved in Syriac, Coptic, Latin and a variety of other ancient European and Middle Eastern languages.
- The New Testament is the most accurately copied book from the ancient world. Textual scholars Westcott and Hort estimate that only one-sixtieth of its variants rise above “trivialities,” which leaves the text 98.33 percent pure. Noted historian Philip Schaff calculates that of the 150,000 variants known in his day, only 400 affected the meaning of a passage; only 50 were of any significance; (*Companion to the Greek Testament and English Version*, p. 177).
- Sir Frederick Kenyon, a New Testament authority, writes, “The number of manuscripts of the New Testament, or early translations from it, and of quotations are from the oldest writers of the Church, is so large that it is practically certain that the true reading of every doubtful passage is preserved in some one or other of these ancient authorities.... This can be said of no other ancient book in the world” (*Our Bible and the Ancient Manuscripts*, p. 55).
- Many of the apparent discrepancies in the gospels, Acts and the writings of Paul – minor as they are – disappear once we judge ancient historians by the standards of their day rather than ours. As Craig L. Blomberg writes, “In a world which did not even have a symbol for a quotation mark, no one expected a historian to reproduce a speaker’s words verbatim” (“The Historical Reliability of the New Testament,” *Reasonable Faith: Christian Truth and Apologetics*, p. 207).
- “The point is simply that the textual evidence for what the NT authors wrote far outstrips the documentation we have for any other ancient writing, including dozens which we believe have been preserved relatively intact. There is absolutely no support for claims that the standard modern editions of the Greek NT do, in fact, closely approximate what the NT writers actually wrote” (Craig L. Blomberg, “The Historical Reliability of the New Testament,” *Reasonable Faith: Christian Truth and Apologetics*, p. 194).
- The only textual variants in the New Testament that affect more than a sentence or two are John 7:53-8:11 and Mark 16:9-20. 97-99% of the NT can be reconstructed beyond any reasonable doubt, and no Christian doctrine is founded solely or even primarily on textually disputed passages” (“The Historical Reliability of the New Testament,” *Reasonable Faith: Christian Truth and Apologetics*, p. 194).
- “If we compare the present state of the New Testament text with that of any other ancient writing, we must ... declare it to be marvelously correct. Such has been the care with which the New Testament has been copied – a care which has doubtless grown out of true reverence for its holy words.... The New Testament [is] unrivaled among ancient writings in the purity of its text as actually transmitted and kept in use” (Benjamin B. Warfield, *Introduction to Textual Criticism of the New Testament*, pp. 12-13, quoted in *The Case for Christ* by Lee Strobel, p. 70).

3. **The eyewitness accounts in the presence of hostile witnesses:**

- The New Testament was written by eyewitnesses and contemporaries of Jesus. For example, Luke probably wrote his gospel around 60 A.D., before he wrote Acts. Since Jesus died around 33 A.D., this would place Luke only 27 years after the events, while most eyewitnesses – and potentially hostile witnesses – were still alive and could have refuted Luke’s record.
- The apostle Paul speaks of more than 500 eyewitnesses of the resurrected Christ when he wrote 1 Corinthians 15:6, which critics date around 55-56 A.D. John and Peter add similar testimonies (1 John 1:1-2; 2 Peter 1:16).

B. The testimony of the Scribes

- The 40 men who penned the scriptures over a period of 1,500 years insisted that their message came from God. Many were persecuted and even killed for their faith. Of the 12 faithful apostles plus Paul, only John probably escaped a martyr’s death, although he was boiled in oil and banished to Patmos; even at that, he continued to boldly proclaim divine truth.
- The authors of the Bible claimed to be under the direction of the Holy Spirit (2 Sam. 23:2; 2 Tim. 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:21).
- The prophets ascribed their message to God. Phrases such as “Thus saith the Lord,” “God said,” and “the Word of the Lord came to me” are found hundreds of times in the Bible.
- The prophets were convinced they were speaking and writing God’s Word. Near the end of the Old Testament, Zechariah mentioned “the law (and) the words that the Lord Almighty had sent by His Spirit through the earlier prophets” (Zech. 7:12). Peter wrote in 2 Peter 1:21 that “prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.” Many of the prophets suffered and died for their belief that they were speaking God’s Word (Matt. 23:34-35).
- Writing about the Old Testament, Paul declared that “All Scripture is God breathed ...” (2 Tim. 3:16-17). New Testament writers like Peter referred to the writings of Paul as “Scriptures” (2 Peter 3:16). And the author of Hebrews ranked the New Testament with the Old Testament (Heb. 1:1-2; 2:3).
- Non-Christian ancient writings attest to the truthfulness of the eyewitness accounts of Christ. Ancient history dealt almost exclusively with political or military rulers, or with religious and philosophical leaders of established and respected religions. Since Jesus fits none of these categories, we would expect to see very little about Him in non-Christian writings. Yet the Jewish historian Josephus, in his Jewish Antiquities, written in the last third of the first century, corroborates the claims of the New Testament writers that Jesus was more than a man, was the Messiah, and rose from the dead on the third day (18:63-64, quoted in “The Historical Reliability of the New Testament,” Craig L. Blomberg, Reasonable Faith: Christian Truth and Apologetics, p. 215).

C. The testimony of the Supernatural

- The Bible features nearly 300 prophecies of the Messiah, the latest of which dates to more than 200 years before the birth of Jesus. Every prophecy has been fulfilled, except for those pertaining to His second and last return. Many are clear and specific, including:
 - † His virgin birth (Isa. 7:14; Matt. 1:21)
 - † His being “cut off” or killed 483 years after the declaration to reconstruct the temple in 444 B.C. (Dan. 9:24-26)
 - † His birthplace in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2; Matt. 2:1; Luke 2:4-7)
 - † His miracle-working authority (Isa. 35:5-6; Matt. 9:35)
 - † His rejection by the Jews (Ps. 118:22; Isa. 53:3; Acts 4:11; 1 Peter 2:7)
 - † His suffering and death (Ps. 22; Isa. 53; Matt. 27:27ff)
 - † His resurrection (Ps. 2:7; 16:10; Mark 16:6; Acts 2:31; 1 Cor. 15:3-8)
 - † His ascension into heaven (Ps. 68:18; Acts 1:9)
 - † His place today at the Father’s right hand (Ps. 110:1; Heb. 1:3)

- Contrast these specific predictions and their fulfillment in Jesus of Nazareth with the predictions of psychics today who, according to The People’s Almanac, are wrong 92 percent of the time. Even the highly reputed visions of Nostradamus are suspect. He was often wrong, especially when being specific, and his predictions were usually so vague as to be practically useless.
- The Bible gives us many supernatural confirmations of its divine origin. For example, Moses, Elijah and other prophets were given the authority to perform miracles to confirm God’s sovereign power and divine message. Jesus, we are told by Luke, was “a man accredited by God to you by miracles, wonders and signs, which God did among you through him, as you yourselves know” (Acts 2:22).

D. The testimony of Structure

- Even though the Bible was recorded by some 40 different authors – from different backgrounds, occupations and levels of education; who spoke in three different languages; who wrote over a period of 1,500 years – there is unparalleled unity amid the vast diversity of scripture’s 66 books.
- There is throughout scripture the unfolding drama of redemption, with Jesus Christ as its central person, seen in the Old Testament by way of anticipation and in the New Testament by way of revelation.
- The Bible proclaims a unified message: Mankind’s problem is sin, and the solution is salvation by grace through faith in Jesus Christ (Gen. 2:16-17; 3:16-19; Luke 19:10; John 3:16; 5:24; Rom. 3:10, 23; 4:4-5; 6:23; 10:9-13; Eph. 2:8-9; Titus 3:5-7).

E. The testimony of the Stones

- Geisler writes, “No archaeological find has ever refuted a biblical claim, and thousands of finds have confirmed in general and in detail the biblical picture” (Systematic Theology, Vol. 1, p. 557).
- Noted archaeologist Nelson Glueck states, “As a matter of fact ... it may be stated categorically that no archaeological discovery has ever controverted a biblical reference. Scores of archaeological findings have been made which confirm in clear outline or exact detail historical statements in the Bible” (Rivers in the Desert, p. 31, quoted in Systematic Theology, p. 557).
- Examples of archaeological confirmations include the Tower of Babel (Gen. 11); Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen. 18-19); the fall of Jericho (Josh. 6); King David (2 Sam.); and the Assyrian Captivity (Isa. 20).
- In the New Testament book of Acts alone there are hundreds of archaeological confirmations. During decades of research, Sir William Ramsay wrote, “I found myself often brought into contact with the book of Acts as an authority for the topography, antiquities, and society of Asia Minor. It was gradually borne in upon me that in various details the narrative showed marvelous truth” (St. Paul the Traveler and the Roman Citizen, p. 8, quoted in Systematic Theology, p. 558).

F. The testimony of the Savior

- Jesus claimed to be the Messiah / Christ, the divine Son of God and the divine Son of Man (Matt. 16:16-18; 26:63-64; John 8:58). He was confirmed by acts of God (John 3:2; Acts 2:22) and declared that He had been given all authority in heaven and earth to rule and to judge (Matt. 28:18; John 5:22). Therefore, His views on the Bible are extremely important. What did He have to say?
- Geisler writes, “Jesus declared that the Old Testament was divinely authoritative (Matt. 4:4, 7, 10); imperishable (Matt. 5:17-18); infallible (John 10:35); inerrant (Matt. 22:29; John 17:17); historically reliable (Matt. 12:40; 24:37-38); scientifically accurate (Matt. 19:4-5; John 3:12); and ultimately supreme (Matt. 15:3, 6)” (Systematic Theology, Vol. 1, p. 559).
- Jesus also personally affirmed many things that Bible critics deny, for example: 1) God created a literal Adam and Eve (Matt. 19:4); Jonah was actually swallowed by a great fish (Matt. 12:40); the whole world was

destroyed by a flood in Noah's day (Matt. 24:39); and there was one prophet Isaiah (not two or three) who wrote all of Isaiah (Mark 7:6-7; Luke 4:17-20).

- Jesus called the Old Testament “the word of God” (Matt. 15:6; Mark 7:13; John 10:35). He introduced Biblical quotes with “It is written,” the standard Jewish introduction to Scripture. In Matt. 22:43, he referred to David's words in Psalm 110:1 as spoken by the Holy Spirit. He also promised that the Spirit would bring more truth through the prophets, referring to the New Testament (John 14:25-26; 16:13).
- Jesus promised that the New Testament would be God's Word. He told the apostles that the Holy Spirit would teach them “all things” and lead them into “all truth” (John 14:26; 16:13). The apostles later claimed this divine authority for their words (John 20:31; 1 John 1:1; 4:1, 5-6). Peter acknowledged Paul's writing as “Scripture” (2 Peter 3:15-16).

G. The testimony of the Spirit

- The same Holy Spirit who authored all Scripture (2 Tim. 3:16-17) and confirms it with signs, wonders and miracles. ??? lives in the hearts of all believers and “testifies with our spirit that we are God's children” (Rom. 8:16). This means the indwelling Holy Spirit confirms the truth of God's Word to us. • Jesus taught that the Holy Spirit would convince unbelievers of their sin of unbelief, of the righteousness of Christ, and of the judgment they will share with Satan if they persist in their unbelief – all clear teachings of Scripture (John 16:7-11).

H. The testimony of the Saved

- The Bible's life-changing power is widely known through the testimony of those who have come to know Christ. The apostle Paul, once known as an enemy of Jesus (Acts 8:1,3), declared, “For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is God's power for salvation to everyone who believes, first to the Jew, and also to the Greek” (Rom. 1:16).
- The writer of Hebrews declares: “For the word of God is living and effective and sharper than any two-edged sword, penetrating as far as to divide soul, spirit, joints, and marrow; it is a judge of the ideas and thoughts of the heart” (Heb. 4:12).
- Peter added, “... you have been born again – not of perishable seed but of imperishable – through the living and enduring word of God” (1 Peter 1:23).
- Testimonies throughout the centuries and in this day speak emphatically and gloriously of the power of God's Word to bring about a conviction of sin and forgiveness of that sin by faith in Jesus Christ.

Summary: Geisler concludes, “The Bible is the only known book in the world that both claims to be and proves to be the Word of God.... The testimony of science that demonstrates it, of the scrolls that transmit it, the scribes who wrote it, the supernatural that confirms it, the structure that manifests it, the stones that support it, the Savior who verified it, the Spirit that witnesses to it, and the saved who have been transformed by it. These combined testimonies confirm that the Bible is what it claims to be – the divinely inspired, infallible, and inerrant Word of God” (Systematic Theology, Vol. I, p. 561).

Early World Religions were Diverse: BC to 970AD

Early Beliefs	Date	Basis for Naming	Key Belief
Greco-Roman Deities, Mythology	Bridged N.T times	Legend or Myths	Based on variety of myths, legends and folklore. Each deity has a specific position and interactions with man. Note: Acts 14:12
Judaizers	~33-70	Holding onto Jewish ways	Gentile Christians should observe Jewish laws Note: Books of Galatians, Hebrews
Gnosticism	~90-400/600	“Knowledge” gnosis	Jesus was never in the flesh, just an appearance, and is superior to the God of OT Note: Col 2:21; I Tim 4:1-5; 1 Cor 6:12-20
Marcionism	~140	Marcion	Gnostic, only valued “Gentile” epistles and Luke’s gospel Note: All apostles now dead

Montanism	172-472	Montanus	Special dispensation to Montanus of Armageddon coming; New Jerusalem on Earth
Monarchianism	2 nd & 3 rd centuries	“Rule of one” / one authority	Jesus was born a man and became God at baptism or God/Holy Spirit/Christ all suffered on the cross
Manichaeism	~250	Mani, eastern mystic	Mani was manifestation of Christ; reincarnation
Donatism	~250	Donatus	Lord’s supper should only be served by one free of sin; church is just a collection of individuals...individuals are the focus
Arianism	~300	Arias	Christ was a created being and cannot be part of the Godhead
Pelagianism	411	Pelagius	Questioned original sin and believed man was responsible for only his own sins, also denied total depravity of man
Nestorianism	428	Nestorius	Denied "Mother of God" title; God could not be a baby or born of human; Jesus as man and God was not an "essential union" but a merging of wills
Monophysitism	449-8th century	“One Nature”	Christ had one nature, which was manifested as flesh and as God
Paulicians	500-970	Apostle Paul	Only Paul’s writings were from God, the others from an evil spirit

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Reformation Movement: 1519-1729

Beliefs	Date	Basis for Naming	Key Belief
Lutherans	1519	Martin Luther	Reform the Catholic church; notably issues with indulgences; later "Faith alone"
Anabaptists	~1525	"Baptism again"	One must be baptized as an adult believer; no infant baptism
Calvinism(TULIP)	1536	John Calvin	God has already determined the fate of every man, and therefore that God's grace alone saved men; United Church of Christ and Presbyterianism among denominations to grow from this teaching

Anglicanism	1537	Church of England	King Henry VIII wanted a divorce
Baptists	1608	Immersion	Doctrinally gravitated towards Calvinism
Quakers - Religious Society of Friends	1648	“Shaking with emotions”	George Fox received special revelations that Christianity is more about a society than the church
Pietism	17th century	Movement within Lutheran church	Desired to have a deeper personal faith as opposed to the often-cold liturgical faith of the Lutheran establishment; influenced by Jan Hus followers from earlier
Wesleyanism	1729	John and Charles Wesley	Need for personal faith, sanctification, and "personal holiness," the continual development of maturity in Christian faith; original intent to reform the Church of England but in America, the Methodists split off from the Church of England and formed their own church

Religions in the Free World/America: 1827-1901

Beliefs	Date	Basis for Naming	Key Belief
Plymouth Brethren	1827	Four individuals from Plymouth	Did not agree with the denominational attitudes of the "churches" around them so worshiped by themselves; notable for the dispensational/premillennial belief system
Restoration Movement	~1820s	Denominations had departed from the true way	<p>Began in the 1820s in America by the preaching of Thomas and Alexander Campbell and Barton Stone. The Campbells established the Disciples of Christ and Stone the Christian Church, which merged into the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).</p> <p>Division came due to a belief of growing liberalism in the Disciples of Christ churches and questions on some of the doctrines of the Disciples of Christ (missionary societies and instrumental music) leading to a splinter of independent churches often calling themselves the Church of Christ.</p>
Mormonism; Latter Day Saints	1830	Book of Mormon	Joseph Smith found plates written in "Reformed Egyptian" and tools by which to translate these plates; essentially believes in modern day revelation, though varying degrees within its own denomination
Seventh Day Adventism	1844	Doctrinal beliefs	Originally founded on prophecy the world would end in 1844; still urge to prepare for the second coming; hold to many Jewish traditions such as Sabbath and dietary restrictions
Christian Science	~1860s	Superiority of "Mind" and Spirit over physical	Modern day revelation to Mary Baker Eddy; pain, illness, and even reality are merely mental conditions and that through correct discipline and training, one can control illness and disease
Salvation Army	1865	Literalizing the metaphors in the Bible concerning "military"	Methodist offshoot focusing on the need for benevolence

Denomination	Date	Basis for Name	Key Beliefs
Jehovah's Witnesses; Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society	1872	Witnessing to others concerning the power in the "name" of God	New World Translation of the Scriptures was made to support doctrines concerning the name of God, the lesser divinity of Jesus Christ, the lack of person of the Holy Spirit, and the perpetual existence of the earth
Pentecostalism AOG	~1901	Receiving the baptism of the Holy Spirit as seen in Acts	Baptism of the Holy Spirit demonstrated through gifts and speaking in tongues; some believe in Baptism in the name of Christ alone; many offshoots

Major Modern-Day Movements

Movement	Key Tenants
Evangelicalism	Go out and evangelize; based mostly on a "faith only" belief system; generally some form of the "once saved, always saved" doctrine. tends to be dispensational/premillennial
Ecumenism	Attempts to unify divergent Christian denominations by emphasizing shared beliefs while minimizing differences
Fundamentalism	Began in the late nineteenth century as a reaction to the "liberal" tendencies in many Protestant denominations that undermined confidence in the inspiration of the Bible; generally characterized by strong support for the "fundamentals" which can range from Biblical truth to traditions
Community Church	Result of ecumenical movement; denominational boundaries are not going to be considered important anymore, the impetus is there to have an organization without any such denominational affiliation
House Church	Movement to rid churches of many of the vestiges of traditionalism; members meet in houses
Megachurch	As it implies, large churches with attendance in the thousands and often a wide range of amenities, comforts, services to serve the whole person.
Emergism	Need to work within postmodernist society marked by subjectivism, relativism, and a much more limited view of human ability, especially in being able to discern truth; the "embodied Gospel" in postmodern culture is very broad and open for many "alternative worship" approaches. Previous notions of church are deemed "not viable" for postmodern culture; the differences between emergism and historic Christianity.

I am Jewish, can I become a Christian?

What a wonderful question! Here is my story; the story of another Jew, who had asked this very same question many years ago:

I grew up in an orthodox Jewish home in New York, and several years ago I came to believe that Yeshua (Yeshua is the Hebrew way to say the Greek name Jesus) is truly the Jewish Messiah. Believing that Yeshua is the Messiah wasn't easy. I had many, many questions, and I spent months examining the evidences and seeking G-d's answers. During my journey, I constantly reminded myself of a very important verse from the Jewish Scriptures (the Tanakh). The Jewish prophet Jeremiah records the words of G-d, "You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart (Jeremiah 29:13).

The Jewish Scriptures (The Torah, The Prophets, and The Writings, which make up the Tanakh or the Jewish Bible) paint a very clear picture of who the Mashiach (Messiah/anointed/future Jewish king) will be when He eventually comes to the nation of Israel. In fact, there are over 300 prophecies in the Hebrew Scriptures, which detail many facts about this coming Messiah/king. Here is just a sampling (and remember, all these verses come from the Jewish Bible):

Messiah was to be born at Bethlehem: Micah 5:1.

Messiah would be from the tribe of Judah: Genesis 49:10.

Messiah would present himself by riding on an ass: Zechariah 9:9.

Messiah would be tortured to death: Psalm 22.

Messiah would arrive before the destruction of the Second Temple: Daniel 9:24-27.

Messiah's life would match a particular description, including suffering, silence at his arrest and trial, death and burial in a rich man's tomb, and resurrection: Isaiah 52:13-53:12.

Christian prophecy is remarkably specific. In detail as to lineage, birthplace, time and lifestyle, Jesus matched the Messianic expectations of the Hebrew Scriptures. The record of this fulfillment is to be found in the pages of the New Testament. As you review the more extensive list of Jewish Messianic prophecies, allow G-d to speak to your heart and your mind as you seek HIS truth.

Interestingly, the Jewish Scriptures paint seemingly two different pictures about the Messiah to come. For one, they talk about the Messiah who will come as the reigning King, who will usher in a period of unprecedented peace on earth. But many verses talk about the Mashiach who will be a suffering servant, who will suffer and die for the sins of the people. For many hundreds of years the rabbis believed that there would be two Messiahs, the King Mashiach ben David, and the suffering servant Mashiach ben Joseph. The rabbis, unfortunately, were not able to see that one Messiah would accomplish both missions.

Christian prophecy was indeed fulfilled in the Jewish Messiah. Yeshua came to the "lost sheep of the House of Israel" 2000 years ago. He came as Isaiah chapter 53 so clearly states, to die and "suffer" for the sins of the Jewish people. He came to the nation of Israel

but was rejected. If the Jews would have accepted His "once for all" (Hebrews 10:10) atonement for sins, Yeshua would have welcomed them as being among the saved. But the Jews did not recognize Him. Even though they had the Word of G-d in their own Hebrew Scriptures, and more than 300 descriptions of who He would be when He comes. As a result, the Good News of God's Kingdom went forth to the Gentile world, and for 2000 years now both Jew and Gentile have come together in Mashiach, looking forward to His soon return, just as the rabbis have always expected.

Although the nation of Jews rejected Yeshua when He came, G-d has always, through the last 2000+ years, kept a "remnant" of believing Jews for Himself. I and many thousands of Jews alive today, have received Yeshua as their Lord, and Savior, and Mashiach. We have been blessed with "new life" in Him, and we look forward to eternal life with Him in G-d's heavenly Kingdom.

Pray that you will continue your examination of the evidences of who Jesus really is and His claims to be the Jewish Messiah in fulfillment of Hebrew prophecy. Remember the words of Yeshua, "Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me" (Revelation 3:20).