

So that's what it's all about !

A guide to the bible in plain English.

By

Peter Michell

Introduction

The bible is the record of God's dealings with man and with the earth. It covers history from the beginning right through to the future, to the end of things as we know them.

In accomplishing its objective, the bible reveals much, of the actions, and of the character, of God Himself.

We are going to take a journey through time. To do that we are going to assume that the bible is totally true, without error or contradiction - because this is the historic view of the church and of the Jews. (We will discuss and justify this view at the end.)

'knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation,
for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.'
2 Peter 1:20-21

The views and interpretation of scripture expressed in this booklet are mine. Not everyone will be able to agree with every statement or every line of understanding – nor do you have to.

Take what you can and enjoy it together with me. What you can't take ask the Holy Spirit about He will lead you into all truth.

Whatever, I pray that you find the booklet uplifting and that it enhances you in your life in Jesus.

Peter Michell

The bible -what is it?

The bible is a combination of writings by a number of different human authors over a period of a couple of thousand years. Each section is clearly defined and named – such as the book of Genesis, the gospel of Matthew, the letter of Paul to the Ephesians and so on.

It is split into two parts or covenants:

<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Covenant</i></p> <p>A solemn agreement. In theology it is held to be the basis of relationship with God.</p>

The Old Testament (or Covenant)

This is the first part of the bible starting with Genesis and ending with Malachi. This is the whole bible so far as the Jews are concerned and they have it organised in a different order.

The Old Testament deals with the creation of the earth, the choosing by God of a special people, His dealings with them, and the promise of a coming Messiah.

It was written almost completely in Hebrew.

The New Testament (or Covenant) (written in Greek)

This is the second part of the bible which deals with the coming of the Messiah, the extension of His ministry and purpose to include the Gentiles, the new covenant, the establishment of the early believers, the coming judgement on the earth and eternity beyond.

Messiah.

‘the promised deliverer of the Jewish nation prophesied in the Hebrew bible’

Oxford English Dictionary

The Hebrew bible is identical to the Old Testament except that the books are arranged in different order.

So let's start at the beginning in the Book of Genesis

Genesis:

‘The origin or mode of formation of something.’

The Oxford English Dictionary

Genesis is the account of the beginning of things – the account of the formation of things.

It opens stating that the earth had become without form and void, in darkness and covered in water. The earth was in need of redemption!

So we see the account of how God recreated the world over a six day period. How He created the earth and all that is in it, including the first man and woman. So immediately we see the bible fulfilling our description – it tells the account of God's dealings with the earth and then with mankind.

The simplicity of the story has given rise to a mountain of disbelief and to many theories of alternative ways in which the world and the universe came into being.

The bottom line - whatever you believe about how the universe came into being is a matter of faith, a matter of trust. Is our trust to be placed in God who declares that He created it in short time? Or is it to be placed in ‘pseudoscientific’ theories of something out of nothing – starting with a ‘big bang’ or something similar?

Either way it is a matter of placing one's trust in something incapable of scientific proof.

Pseudoscience.

‘ a collection of beliefs or practices mistakenly regarded as being based on scientific method.’

English Oxford Dictionary

Science

‘the systematic study of the structure and behaviour of the natural world through observation and experiment.’

English Oxford Dictionary

No one was around to observe the creation of the world and it cannot be reproduced by experiment in the laboratory. Therefore everything said about it is not true science but just theories.

Mankind in perfect surroundings.

The account of creation tells us a number of times that God considered what He had created and that He ‘saw that it was good,’ culminating on the sixth day with ‘very good.’

God’s creation was perfect. Man (Adam and Eve) dwelt in the Garden of Eden

Later on the bible will tell us that God is love and that He wants to have a relationship of love with mankind. Love is choosing to consider the one loved more important than oneself, and thus it can only exist where there is free will.

So mankind was created with free will.

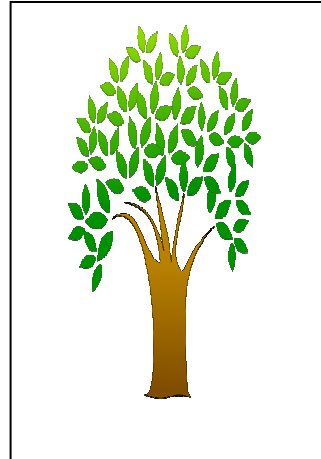
‘For God so loved the world that He sent His only begotten Son that whosoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

John 3:16.

The Lord God restricted the activity of man on the earth in only one way. He had created a tree in the garden where man dwelt – the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

God said, 'Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.' (literally translated from the Hebrew – 'dying you will die')

Genesis 1:16-17.



Mankind in danger

We have seen that the creation was very good.
We have seen that mankind was created with free will
We have seen that mankind lived in the garden of perfection with only one restriction – do not eat of the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil.

Now we need to understand another character – one with evil intent. The serpent was the most cunning of all God's creation. Later on the bible will tell us that the serpent was created as 'Lucifer.' The name means 'the bearer of light.' He was the highest of God's creation and he was perfect until iniquity was found in him. The bible will also indicate that the earth was the realm given to Lucifer. When iniquity was found in Lucifer it manifested as a rebellion in which he tried to replace God Himself. Lucifer was thrown out of heaven and resided then on earth. In this fallen state Lucifer's light was removed from him. That is why we find the earth, Lucifer's domain, without form and void and in darkness in the 2nd verse of Genesis.

(Lucifer had also lost his name now and is variously referred to as satan [which literally means 'no name'], the devil, the serpent.)

It seems that in the first place the earth was created as a mineral garden and that it was given to Lucifer as his possession. This is found in Ezekiel chapter 28 verses 11-19 where Lucifer is called the King of Tyre. Verse 7 makes it clear that he walked to and fro on 'fiery' stones. 'Walking to and fro' is a idiom for ownership – we see Lucifer, now satan, using that expression in the book of Job. (Chapter 1:7) It is not surprising then that when Genesis opens we find the earth already there but covered in darkness and water.

Whilst this understanding makes the best use of all the scriptural facts it is not universally accepted. I believe it, and use it, to demonstrate that the Lord God intends to take back dominion of the earth through man. However, whether one accepts this or not, it is still abundantly clear that the Lord God wants dominion over the earth exercised through man, as He explicitly gives that instruction to Adam in Genesis 1:28.

God wanted to take control over the earth again and to demonstrate His wisdom to His enemy, satan. So God (re)created the earth starting with the creation of light which was separated from darkness to make the first day. Five days followed with increasing levels of preparation of the earth. On the sixth day God created man on the earth to take dominion over the earth in its re-created state. Satan, the serpent wanted to maintain his control. Somehow he had to take control from man. Could he persuade man to disobey God?

So we read the sad story of how the serpent deceives Eve and how Eve then gives the fruit to Adam also. Adam was the family head, made in the image of God, and Eve was made out of Adam. Adam's leadership completely failed at this point. Instead of eating the fruit he should have refused and thus obeyed God. So Adam deliberately disobeyed and that is sin and the source if what is known as 'original sin' inherited by all subsequent human beings. (1 Corinthians 15:22)

Thus mankind had just disobeyed the Lord God who created them. Judgement was to follow – mankind was thrown out of the Garden of Eden. The earth fell under a curse. Now man would eat by the sweat of his brow.

This is what happened:

Man sinned. There was one rule only and man broke it. No longer was man like God for God is perfect and without sin.

Man had been created in God's image. God is a Spirit. Man was created alive in both spirit and in a physical body.

The warning given by God – 'dying you will die'

The reality - the spirit of man died that instant. His physical body would now also come to death in due course. Close fellowship with God was severed.

For fellowship with God to be restored sin would have to be dealt with.

This event is known as 'the fall of man.' From this point onwards God's dealings with man are aiming towards the restoration of fellowship between God and man. Because God is perfect, and perfection involves perfect judgement, God could not just ignore man's sin – sin has consequences. The bible will tell of God's plan of redemption both for mankind and again for the earth

Adam and Eve – literal people

We have treated Adam and Eve as literal people. That is because the bible does exactly that. Later on, in the gospel of Luke, we will find the genealogy of Mary, Joseph's wife and the mother of Jesus (the genealogy of Joseph is found in Matthew's gospel). Mary's genealogy traces her line right back to Adam.

Whilst there is no direct reference to Adam from Jesus, Paul refers to him in Romans, 1st Corinthians and 1st Timothy. Jude refers to him. All the references treat Adam as a literal and the first man.

Literal people have literal children – so now we find Genesis giving the account of some of the children of Adam and Eve. The scripture tells us that they had other children also.

Sin becomes overwhelming.

Genesis tells us of the descendants of Adam. In these very early days we anticipate that the world was very different from the world we live in today. From the ages given in the bible we can see that mankind lived much longer – even to 969 years for the longest living man, Methuselah.

However, sin was multiplying in its effect. Cain murders his brother Able and as time passes we arrive at the position where, *'the Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.'* (Genesis 6:5)

We must be careful not to underestimate the dreadful nature and the importance of sin. One step of disobedience led to this terrible conclusion.

The Lord God had enough – He was sorry He had made man. But one man – Noah – found favour in the eyes of the Lord. Noah was a just man, blameless in his generation.

Through Noah, God would start again. Noah gets his instructions – he builds a massive boat* to God's design and God fills it with living creatures. The earth is flooded. Everything is destroyed.

The concept of a world wide flood is another one of those areas which cause widespread disagreement.

There are many scientists, who are also Christians, who emphatically believe that, the world was created by God and that there was a worldwide flood. They have developed a huge body of evidence and learned papers which are available from

Creation Science Movement
50, Brecon Avenue, Cosham, Portsmouth. PO6 2AW

We are taking the bible as being literally true – so we will stick with the bible account.

After the flood subsides Noah, his wife, his three sons and their wives, eight persons in all, repopulate the earth. (Genesis 9:19)

Everyone alive today is descended from Noah. In the science of genetics it has been announced, as a scientific fact, that everyone is descended from one woman – that would be Noah's wife, and before that Eve.

*The exact size of Noah's ark depends on the size of a cubit. There are two different cubits. Using the smaller the ark would be a 20,000 ton vessel. (Nelson's Victory was just over 2,000 tons.) It would be the 20th century before a larger boat was built.



The literal meaning of 'Noah' is 'rest.'

God's plan of redemption moves on – and man's disobedience continues

Only 2 generations after the flood and trouble is brewing.....
Among the descendants of Noah is a man named Nimrod. Nimrod is the first to establish a 'kingdom' of his own after the flood. He builds cities. His first city is Babel. (You can read about Nimrod in Genesis 10)

Nimrod's whole concept was that man does not want and does not need God – indeed the bible describes him as a mighty hunter before the Lord – 'before' meaning 'in front of' in importance. At Babel a massive tower was built in waterproof materials so that if God were to flood the earth again man could survive in his massive tower.

Mankind is again following the way of sin. A 'big lie' is being developed. That 'lie' is that man can do without the Lord God who created him. Man can do 'his own thing' without fear of judgement – that is the lie. Man can achieve anything he wants – that is the lie. Man is unaccountable – that is the lie. Man is supreme – that is the lie.

Later the bible refers to this system built around the 'big lie' as being 'Babylon,' which is seen both as a physical place and as a subversive system that controls the world.

God chooses His man and His people

One of Noah's sons was called Shem (the others were Ham and Japheth). The genealogy of Shem is given in Genesis 11. Here we also note that the longevity of man has been greatly reduced. It seems that after the flood the environment had so changed that man's lifespan was seriously shortened.

The massive change of environment after the flood helps us to understand what otherwise appear as strange anomalies. It is thought that before the flood the earth was surrounded by an atmosphere of water vapour – giving virtually equal near tropical conditions throughout. This could be the explanation for the continuing discoveries of the skeletons of mammoths in the Siberian ice. The mammoths still have undigested foodstuffs in their mouths and stomachs. Those foodstuffs being tropical in nature.

God is always looking for people to enjoy relationship with Him and Him with them. In the beginning the fellowship between man and God was open and free. Adam's sin ended that! The Lord God still looked for people to call His own – people who would love, trust and obey Him.

He does the same today.

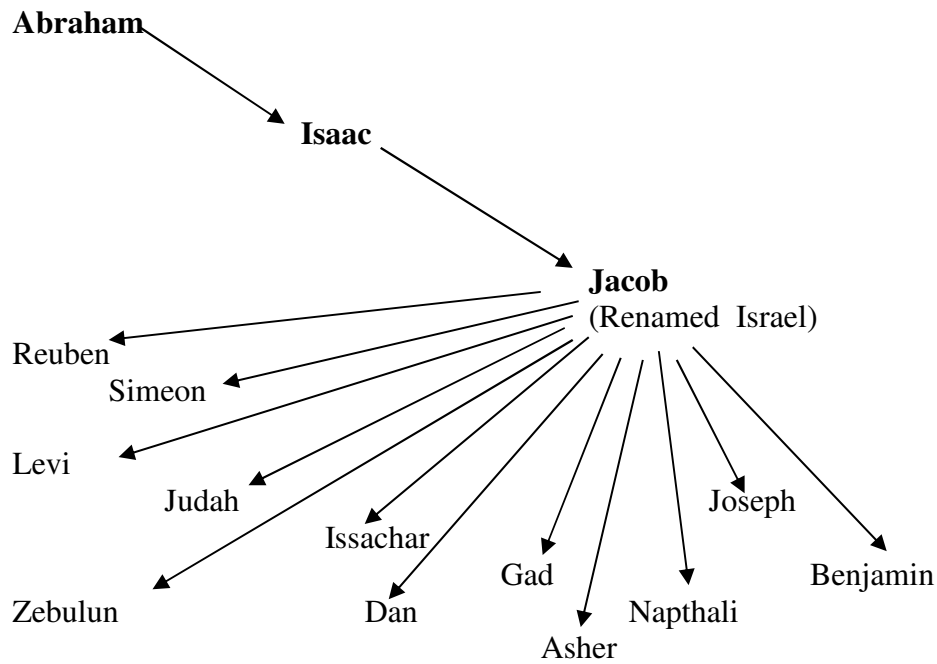
10 generations after Noah Abram was born. God chooses Abram to be the father of a people called out of the earth's population to be God's own people.

The Lord God promises Abram that he will be the father of a great nation and that those who bless him will in turn be blessed.

The Lord God promises Abram the land of Israel and more (then called Canaan) as an everlasting possession for him and his descendants.

The sign of God's covenant with Abram (whose name is now changed to Abraham) was circumcision of all the males.

The covenant with Abraham is confirmed to his son Isaac and to Isaac's son Jacob.



Jacob's 12 sons are the fathers of the twelve tribes of Israel.

Israel was the chosen nation of God at this time.

Now the dealings of God with man will be focussed through one chosen nation. God's intention is that the nation would be so blessed that it would stand out as a witness to Him in the whole world. (This was partially fulfilled under David and Solomon – but not completely.)

So far as God's dealings with the earth are concerned – that will have to wait until the Messiah establishes His rule. In the meantime, man will eat by the sweat of his brow and the earth will bring forth seedtime and harvest accompanied by thorns and thistles. Creation will have to wait for the revealing of the sons of God – more later.

For the rest of the Old Testament the bible will deal predominantly with Israel –

Its history in quite a lot of detail.

The giving of the Law - a set of 'rules' for Israel to live by.

The worship of God through feasts and sacrifices.

Its relationship with God – the ups and the downs.

The communication from God through His prophets.

Promises and warnings from God about its future.

Israel

Its history in quite a lot of detail.

Whilst the bible gives a lot of detail we are only going to look at a brief summary here.

Israel is found to be in Egypt by the time we reach the end of Genesis. There was a world wide shortage of food and only Egypt had supplies. Through divine circumstances Joseph was in a very senior position of rulership and influence in Egypt at the time. His father and his brothers joined him there to avoid famine.

However, as time went on, the sojourn in Egypt became intolerable and after 400 years the Israelites come out of Egypt under the leadership of Moses.

Moses leads Israel through the wilderness and to the edge of the land promised to them by the Lord God, though he does not at that time enter himself.

A new leader emerges – his name is Joshua. Under instruction from God Israel starts the process of conquering the land. The existing inhabitants have become so intensively sinful that eventually the Lord God decrees their extermination and uses Israel to achieve it.

After Joshua Israel is led by a series of ‘Judges.’ These are people raised up by God and anointed to lead the nation.

However, Israel is not satisfied and they insist of having a King like all the other nations. The first King is Saul – who certainly looks the part but is not entirely faithful to the Lord. Saul is replaced by David – a man after God’s own heart.

Israel prospers greatly under David and has a great deal of military success.

After David comes Solomon and Israel’s ‘golden age.’

Under Solomon Israel is the greatest nation on earth. All the other Kings come to pay annual tribute to Solomon. The Queen of Sheba, one of the richest rulers of the day, is overwhelmed by the greatness of Israel under

Solomon. Solomon's navy go on 3 year long voyages and seem to have covered the globe.

Solomon does not remain faithful to the Lord in his old age and after him things get progressively worse under a long list of Kings. In the long list some are much better than others – but the end is great godlessness.

The principal historical books of the Old Testament are Kings and Chronicles – though other books also contain elements of history.

Israel

The giving of the Law - a set of 'rules' to live by.

God gave Israel quite a detailed set of rules under Moses. The 'Ten Commandments' are well known and they form a part of the Law.

Israel was quite unable to keep the law.

Indeed the spiritual leaders became very concerned and added a much greater set of laws designed to try to put a sort of 'ring fence' around the law.

As an example:

The law said you must not boil a kid in its mother's milk.

Even today, in Israel, you cannot have steak followed by ice cream in a kosher restaurant – just in case by some inconceivable chance the ice cream was made from the milk of the mother of the meat you have just eaten.

When we reach the New Testament we are told that the law was given for a number of reasons:

To identify sin

Because of its existence it would have the effect of increasing sin.

As a tutor leading to the Messiah – Jesus Christ. (Demonstrating the need for a saviour – one who would carry the penalty of sin.)

The New Testament tells us that whilst the law was glorious and perfect, nevertheless it was a ministry of condemnation and death.

We are told in the New Testament that we are not under law and that we are not to place our trust in keeping the law or in trying to keep the law. Instead we live under grace (unmerited favour) and are in the process of being changed from one degree of glory to another by the Holy Spirit who has taken up residence inside us.

The law could be described as being like a map – it was here to guide Israel to the Messiah. Once you know the Messiah, you reach your destination, the map has no further use. That is why born again Christians are not bound by the law – they have already arrived at the destination!

Israel

The worship of God through feasts and sacrifices.

Alongside the instructions on behaviour were the sacrifices and feasts.

The Lord God instituted these to show His intentions and His promises and to provide the way of at least temporary release from sin.

Examples:

The feast of 'Passover.'

When Israel were leaving Egypt it was under duress. They had to leave very quickly and the Lord told them to kill a lamb, to mark the doorposts with the blood of the lamb and to eat the lamb with unleavened bread. In the night the angel of Lord passed through the land of Egypt killing every first born – it was part of God's judgement on Egypt. Where the angel saw the blood of the lamb he 'passed over' that house and did not slay the first born. Thus Israel were wonderfully delivered.

The feast of Passover was then instituted as an annual remembrance. However, it was also a prophetic sign. Again in the future God would provide His own Passover Lamb – the Messiah, the deliverer. God's

Lamb would also die. All those who place their reliance on the blood of the Lamb would not be subject to the penalty of sin, they would be 'passed over' and they would inherit eternal life.

Jesus celebrated Passover with His disciples, on the last occasion He introduced the bread and wine as symbols of His own body and blood. Jesus is our Passover lamb.
'This do in remembrance of Me.'

The peace offering.

A perfect sheep or goat is taken from the flock, killed and its blood sprinkled around the altar of God. It is a sacrifice. The animal is then cooked and some specific parts are burned as the offering to God and the others are eaten.

Jesus is described as the Lamb of God and He, Himself is our peace – that is why Christians do not offer up sheep and goats. Nevertheless the peace offering looks forward to Jesus - the great 'once and for all' peace offering.

There are more feasts and offerings which show us insight into the way the Lord God was dealing with and instructing His people under the Old Covenant. The New Covenant is a new and better way in which Jesus is the fulfilment of these biblical types.

Israel

Relationship with God – the ups and the downs.

Although Israel was chosen by God to be His special people, and although they reached amazing heights under Solomon, Israel's history is punctuated by disobedience.

In particular Israel was instructed to have no other Gods and warned that their disobedience would eventually lead to them being ejected from the land given to them.

When they left the wilderness and entered the promised land they were instructed to exterminate the inhabitants. That was because the inhabitants

were intensively sinful. If Israel mixed with them they would inevitably take on some of their evil practices. (Intermarriage would inevitably create problems)

Israel failed to exterminate the existing inhabitants and took on the worship of other gods – even involving child sacrifice.

Solomon was greatly blessed being the son of David he inherited the kingdom coming up to its peak. God blessed Solomon abundantly. However, Solomon took foreign wives, allowed them to worship their own gods and built places of worship for them.

After Solomon came Rehoboam and under him the kingdom split into two – Israel and Judah. Israel, also known as the northern kingdom, consisted of 10 tribes. Judah consisted of 2.

Israel became intolerably sinful and was taken into captivity by the Assyrians in 723 BC. (Since then Israel has been called the ‘Lost Tribes’ or ‘the 10 lost tribes.’
(However, it is known that many of the people drifted back to the land of Israel from Assyria later on).

Judah follows suit and is taken into captivity by the Babylonians in 587 BC. God promises restoration and after 70 years captivity in Babylon some of the Jews return to the land of Israel.

Before the coming of the Messiah there is a period of silence - there being a gap of about 400 years since the last prophetic input.

Israel

The communication from God through His prophets.

During the Old Testament period the Lord God spoke through people anointed to bring His particular message to the nation – these people are referred to ‘prophets.’

Many of the books of the Old Testament record the messages brought to Israel or to the ruling monarch by the prophets.

The message of the prophets could be summed up as containing the following:

- 1) Warning to the nation/monarch about its/his disobedience coupled with....
- 2) Promises to the nation/monarch of blessing for obedience
- 3) Promises of the coming Messiah.
- 4) Promises of future blessing regardless of the state of the nation

The prophets in chronological order:

Joel
Jonah
Amos
Hosea
Isaiah
Micah
Nahum
Zephaniah
Jeremiah
Habakkuk
Daniel
Ezekiel
Obadiah
Haggai
Zechariah
Malachi

When one reads any of the prophetic books it is helpful to bear in mind that the prophets were sent to Israel. Their words deal very specifically with Israel as a nation. Some of what the prophets say also involves other nations – but primarily in relation to their interaction with Israel.

Some of what is declared by the prophets deals with future world history and as such affects all nations..

Israel

Promises and warnings from God about its future.

In the Old Testament (covenant) we find the Lord God promises Israel a future in spite of the fact that, as a nation, Israel failed the Lord God and failed to recognise the Messiah when He came to them.

Nevertheless, the word of God is true and stands for ever.

Consider these specific promises to Israel: *in Jeremiah 31:31-37*

<i>God's promise is as certain as the sun and the moon.</i>
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31 *"Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah--*

32 *"not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, though I was a husband to them, says the LORD.*

33 *"But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.*

34 *"No more shall every man teach his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for they all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, says the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more."*

35 *Thus says the LORD, who gives the sun for a light by day, the ordinances of the moon and the stars for a light by night, who disturbs the sea, and its waves roar (The LORD of hosts is His name):*

36 *"If those ordinances depart from before Me, says the LORD, then the seed of Israel shall also cease from being a nation before Me forever."*

37 *Thus says the LORD: "If heaven above can be measured, and the foundations of the earth searched out beneath, I will also cast off all the seed of Israel for all that they have done, says the LORD.*

16 *Moreover the word of the LORD came to me, saying:*

17 *"Son of man, when the house of Israel dwelt in their own land, they defiled it by their own ways and deeds; to Me their way was like the uncleanness of a woman in her customary impurity.*

18 *"Therefore I poured out My fury on them for the blood they had shed on the land, and for their idols with which they had defiled it.*

19 *"So I scattered them among the nations, and they were dispersed throughout the countries; I judged them according to their ways and their deeds.*

20 *"When they came to the nations, wherever they went, they profaned My holy name-- when they said of them, 'These are the people of the LORD, and yet they have gone out of His land.'*

21 *"But I had concern for My holy name, which the house of Israel had profaned among the nations wherever they went.*

22 *"Therefore say to the house of Israel, 'Thus says the Lord GOD: "I do not do this for your sake, O house of Israel, but for My holy name's sake, which you have profaned among the nations wherever you went.*

23 *"And I will sanctify My great name, which has been profaned among the nations, which you have profaned in their midst; and the nations shall know that I am the LORD," says the Lord GOD, "when I am hallowed in you before their eyes.*

24 *"For I will take you from among the nations, gather you out of all countries, and bring you into your own land.*

25 *"Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols.*

26 *"I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh.*

27 *"I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them.*

28 *"Then you shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; you shall be My people, and I will be your God.*

33 *"As I live," says the Lord GOD, "surely with a mighty hand, with an outstretched arm, and with fury poured out, I will rule over you.*

34 *"I will bring you out from the peoples and gather you out of the countries where you are scattered, with a mighty hand, with an outstretched arm, and with fury poured out.*

35 *"And I will bring you into the wilderness of the peoples, and there I will plead My case with you face to face.*

36 *"Just as I pleaded My case with your fathers in the wilderness of the land of Egypt, so I will plead My case with you," says the Lord GOD.*

37 *"I will make you pass under the rod, and I will bring you into the bond of the covenant;*

38 *"I will purge the rebels from among you, and those who transgress against Me; I will bring them out of the country where they dwell, but they shall not enter the land of Israel. Then you will know that I am the LORD.*

39 *"As for you, O house of Israel," thus says the Lord GOD: "Go, serve every one of you his idols-- and hereafter-- if you will not obey me; but profane My holy name no more with your gifts and your idols.*

40 *"For on My holy mountain, on the mountain height of Israel," says the Lord GOD, "there all the house of Israel, all of them in the land, shall serve Me; there I will accept them, and there I will require your offerings and the firstfruits of your sacrifices, together with all your holy things.*

41 *"I will accept you as a sweet aroma when I bring you out from the peoples and gather you out of the countries where you have been scattered; and I will be hallowed in you before the Gentiles.*

42 *"Then you shall know that I am the LORD, when I bring you into the land of Israel, into the country for which I lifted My hand in an oath to give to your fathers.*

<i>God will make Israel a great nation</i>	<i>Genesis 12:1-3</i>
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(God's promise to Abraham, repeated to Isaac and Jacob – the father of Israel)

1 *Now the LORD had said to Abram: "Get out of your country, from your family and from your father's house, to a land that I will show you.*

2 *I will make you a great nation; I will bless you and make your name great; and you shall be a blessing.*

3 *I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse him who curses you; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."*

<i>God's choice and faithfulness</i>	<i>Deuteronomy 7:6-9</i>
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6 *"For you are a holy people to the LORD your God; the LORD your God has chosen you to be a people for Himself, a special treasure above all the peoples on the face of the earth.*

7 *"The LORD did not set His love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any other people, for you were the least of all peoples;*

8 *"but because the LORD loves you, and because He would keep the oath which He swore to your fathers, the LORD has brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you from the house of bondage, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt.*

9 *"Therefore know that the LORD your God, He is God, the faithful God who keeps covenant and mercy for a thousand generations with those who love Him and keep His commandments;*

Israel will become the chief nation on earth. (When Jesus rules from Jerusalem) *Deuteronomy 26:16-19*

16 *"This day the LORD your God commands you to observe these statutes and judgments; therefore you shall be careful to observe them with all your heart and with all your soul.*

17 *"Today you have proclaimed the LORD to be your God, and that you will walk in His ways and keep His statutes, His commandments, and His judgments, and that you will obey His voice.*

18 *"Also today the LORD has proclaimed you to be His special people, just as He has promised you, that you should keep all His commandments,*

19 *"and that He will set you high above all nations which He has made, in praise, in name, and in honour, and that you may be a holy people to the LORD your God, just as He has spoken."*

These promises are yet to be fulfilled. They are promises to the nation of Israel and will be fulfilled in, and for, the nation of Israel. This is a separate issue from the Bride of Christ – the true church.

Once we are aware that the regathering of Israel is God's plan and His doing we need to be careful how we relate to it. The terrible situation in the Middle East is a clash of spiritual forces. Israel is back in the land because of the promises of God. Satan, working through the misguided religious beliefs of some, is determined to exterminate Israel – the term used is to 'push them into the sea.' By this we do not excuse or agree with every act of the Israeli government – it is made up of fallible humans – but we do see the greater purpose of God being worked out in our time.

Israel was promised the Messiah.

The coming of the Messiah was long expected in Israel because of the promises of God.

A most specific promise is found in the prophetic book of Daniel.

At this time the Jews were in captivity in Babylon.

24 "Seventy weeks are determined for your people and for your holy city, to finish the transgression, to make an end of sins, to make reconciliation for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy, and to anoint the Most Holy.

25 "Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the command to restore and build Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince, there shall be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks; the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublesome times.

26 "And after the sixty-two weeks Messiah shall be cut off, but not for Himself; and the people of the prince who is to come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary. The end of it shall be with a flood, and till the end of the war desolations are determined.

27 Then he shall confirm a covenant with many for one week; but in the middle of the week he shall bring an end to sacrifice and offering. And on the wing of abominations shall be one who makes desolate, even until the consummation, which is determined, is poured out on the desolate."

Daniel 9:24-27

At first sight the prophecy is hard to understand – but its meaning is actually well known.

The ‘seventy weeks’ of verse 24 is literally, in the Hebrew, ‘seventy sevens.’ The interpretation, which is very widely accepted and is now proved by biblical chronology, is that it refers to 70 times of 7 years. That is a period of 490 years. The prophecy specifically says that after the command to rebuild Jerusalem there will be 69 times seven – 483 years. The ‘command to rebuild Jerusalem’ has given rise to discussion. King Artaxerxes gave such a command in 458 BC.

Israel rejects the Messiah

From this we can see that Israel was expecting the Messiah to come. It was the duty of the religious rulers to consider any claims to Messiahship and rule upon them. They carried out this duty first by observation. They would observe and see if the claimant was manifesting the character and the actions that would give weight to such a claim. The second stage was to question the claimant – to see if his answers accorded with scripture. Then the judgement – is this claimant the Messiah or not.

We can see the culmination of this process in Matthew 12. Jesus has just delivered and healed a man who was both blind and mute.

In Jewish history it was considered that only the Messiah could deliver from a dumb demon. (It was also considered that only the Messiah could heal leprosy. **)

The people are amazed at the deliverance and call out '*Could this be the Son of David?*' (A term used for the Messiah)

Now the religious rulers have to make a judgement and here it is:
'*This fellow does not cast out demons except by Beelzebub, the ruler of the demons.*'

So here is the 'official rejection' of Jesus by the religious rulers.

(Many individuals believed that Jesus was the Messiah.)

** In the book of Leviticus there were particular offerings for the healing of leprosy. In all of Jewish history they had never been performed. No Jew had ever been healed of leprosy until Jesus came and healed. Thus it became their understanding that only the Messiah could heal leprosy. When Jesus healed the lepers he told them to go and show themselves to the priests, so that the law could be fulfilled, and as a testimony.

Time for a New Covenant

Jesus came at exactly the right time – as prophesied by Daniel – only to be rejected by His own people, the Jews. It was a tragedy for Israel and a great blessing for the gentiles.

God knows the end from the beginning and the beginning from the end – so the rejection of the Son of God is not a surprise to the Father.

God's dealings with man are now going to take another turn:

We have seen that in the first place God created Adam and Eve and that sin found its way in, multiplied enormously and resulted in judgement – the flood.

God chose a family – Noah, his wife and sons with their wives. Interestingly God changed the diet of mankind after the flood. Before the flood mankind was vegetarian. After the flood man was told that every living that moves is food for you.

As the population grew and grew God chose a nation. He chose it from its beginning with Abraham. Through this nation God would bless both the nation itself and all those that blessed it would in turn be blessed. The special position of this nation brought with it obligations expressed in the form of laws. (Some of which covered what they could and could not eat.) They completely failed to keep the law and they were promised a deliverer – the Messiah.

Because man could not keep the law a completely new dimension is going to be introduced. Something that has not happened since before the fall of man. God, Himself is going to take up residence inside every man and every woman who places their trust in the finished work of the Messiah by His Spirit.

The power to live a Godly and pleasing life is going to be set up inside the human body which will become the 'temple of the Holy Spirit.'

How is this to be?

One of the leaders of the Jews, a Pharisee, named Nicodemus came by night (he didn't want to be seen!) to see Jesus. He addressed Him as Rabbi (meaning 'teacher.') and said, *'we know that you are a teacher come from God; for no one can do these signs that you do unless God is with him.'*

Jesus gets straight to the point:

'Unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.'

Here is the 'punch line.' Whatever you think you see, you can't see the kingdom of God until you are born of water (Jewish idiom for natural birth) and of the Spirit – born again.

Later, Paul will explain that 'in Adam we all died.' When Adam took the fruit in direct disobedience to God he suffered the penalty. 'Dying you will die' was God's warning. Adam's physical body lived on for many years thereafter, but immediately he was thrown out of God's presence.

We understand that spiritual death had taken place and that we all inherit that spiritual death – in Adam we all died. So we must be born again.

How is one born again?

Its very simple –

14 *"And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up,*

15 *"that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life.*

16 *"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.*

17 *"For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.*

18 *"He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.*

John 3:14-18

The reference to the serpent holds a key to understanding the passage.

Israel had left Egypt and was in the wilderness before entering the promised land. They were in an area festooned with poisonous snakes. God told Moses to make a bronze serpent and fix it to a pole and erect it

high up. He told Moses to tell Israel – if you are bitten by a snake look up at the serpent on the pole and you will be healed. Those who did so were healed and those who did not died. The individuals were being asked to place their personal trust in a ‘deliverer’ – in this case in the God who gave clear instructions. Obey the instructions and you will live.

The instructions in the New Testament are equally clear – believe in Jesus and you will have everlasting life. Believe in Jesus and you are born again – the human spirit comes back from death to life.

Why is this necessary, why do we need to be born again?

God cannot abide sin

We are all sinful. Sin entered the world through Adam and was passed on to his descendants - from then on all men sinned. (Romans 5:12)

Therefore:

Sin must be dealt with.

But:

Sin carries a penalty – death.

Therefore:

There must be an atoning sacrifice (A sacrifice that makes up for the wrong)

God provides the perfect Lamb for the sacrifice - Jesus His sinless Son.

The ‘gospels’ of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John tell of Jesus.

The four gospels are accounts of the events surrounding the life, death and resurrection, of Jesus by, people who actually walked with Him in the case of Matthew, Mark and John, and by Luke who studied the matter very closely from eye witness accounts.

The gospels each have a slightly different perspective.

Matthew very much sees Jesus as the ‘King of the Jews’ and seems to have some passages which refer particularly to the Jews.

Mark sees Jesus very much as ‘the suffering servant.’

Luke depicts Jesus as ‘the perfect man’

John emphasises 'Jesus, the son of God.'

In reading the gospels we find that Jesus declares that He came for His people Israel. They received Him not, and He was crucified. The gospels give a historical record of the facts surrounding Jesus life from birth to death.

Jesus knew He was going to be crucified and made the most amazing statements to His disciples:

12 *"Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do he will do also; and greater works than these he will do, because I go to My Father.*

13 *"And whatever you ask in My name, that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son.*

14 *"If you ask anything in My name, I will do it.*

15 *"If you love Me, keep My commandments.*

16 *"And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever--*

17 *"the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you.*

John 14:12-17

The disciples must have been 'shattered' when a little later he said to them:

7 *"Nevertheless I tell you the truth. It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him to you.*

8 *"And when He has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment:*

9 *"of sin, because they do not believe in Me;*

10 *"of righteousness, because I go to My Father and you see Me no more;*

11 *"of judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged.*

12 *"I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now.*

Salvation comes in three stages:

The human spirit is saved by being born again – it is indwelt by the Holy Spirit and its inheritance is guaranteed. We become one spirit with the Lord. We can never be separated.

The human body will be replaced in due course by a new glorified body. This will either happen when we die or when the Lord returns – whichever comes first.

The human soul – that is the mind, the will and the emotions, are changed over time from one degree of glory to another.

The process of being changed from one degree of glory to another.

A large part of the New Testament is given over to teaching about the need to be changed, so that we become holy in all our ways, and the process of change. It paints a picture of what the Christian life should look like.

The letters of Paul to various churches in particular give very clear instruction.

Romans deals with the ‘much more’ gospel, see 5:9,10,15,17,20 and 11:12, 24,

The gospel is much more than we can hope for. Consider for example 8:28 where the promise of God is that He will bring good out of every situation for those who love Him.

1st Corinthians gives lots of practical advice about how the life of the Spirit can manifest when we gather together in the meeting. (The church.)

2nd Corinthians - this New Covenant is a glorious thing, walked by faith, therefore flee from idolatry and all uncleanness.

Galatians - This New Covenant is a covenant of freedom – don’t go back to relying on Law – it is powerless to help.

Ephesians – Understand who you are in Christ, and the mystery of His calling, receive equipping to do the works of the ministry. Then walk in love, light and wisdom. Stand fast, fully armoured, resist the enemy.

Philippians - stand fast, be like minded, rejoice, be generous.

Colossians – Christ is pre-eminent. Avoid worldly wisdom and philosophy. You are a new man in Christ. Be fair. Be wise. Speak with grace.

Thessalonians 1 and 2 – Paul was concerned for them. The coming of Christ – don't be afraid, or misled.

What is the objective of being changed?

To be made into the likeness of Christ. To become like Him.

What is the key to the process of being changed?

We cannot change ourselves. The law of the Old Testament proved that – they had God given law but could not keep it.

It is the role of the Holy Spirit to change us from one degree of glory to another. We can co-operate!

God's purpose in all of this is that His Kingdom is manifest on the earth through the believers. In that way His enemy, satan and his minions, are shown the manifest wisdom of God.' (Ephesians 3:10)

What is the driving force of change?

Love.

When asked what was the greatest commandment Jesus replied by quoting from the Old Testament:

36 *"Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law?"*

37 *Jesus said to him, "You shall love* the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind."*

38 *"This is the first and great commandment. Matthew 22:36-38*

Here is the power that will propel us into change. Love the Lord with all your heart, soul and mind. Not just words, but become a lover – for that is what a bride is!

Actually you cannot achieve it. Paul tells us that the flesh lusts against the Spirit. So it is not possible. But, with God all things are possible. James says, *'You have not because you ask not.'*

**Here is a very
practical prayer:
'Holy Spirit fill
me with love for
Jesus.' Amen.**

I pray this prayer every day – the Holy Spirit delights to answer it because it's the very thing He wants to do. It has the effect of completely changing one's attitude to life – from one degree of glory to another degree of glory.

Jesus extended the call to love to our neighbours and says that all the law and the prophets hang on this. We cannot manifest love for the Lord and love for our neighbours from our flesh – we need to agree, and co-operate, with the ministry of the Holy Spirit which is changing us from one degree of glory to another

* The command to love the Lord is not new – it was given to Israel in Deuteronomy 6:5. The Jews took this very seriously and in accordance with verse 8 they tie phylacteries to their arm and forehead. The phylactery is a box containing passages of scripture. However, the result for them seems often to be ‘religious observance’ rather than a passionate love relationship.

The emergence of the chosen generation

The book of Acts records for us the emergence of the body of believers. In the first instance the Holy Spirit comes to empower the Disciples. We should learn from this that we can do nothing of spiritual value without this empowering ourselves.

The first to come to belief are Jews. Jews from many areas, speaking different languages, hear the disciples speaking in the language of the listener – a miracle of hearing! (The author has experienced this same miracle himself in a recent meeting. A speaker spoke in English but it was heard in French and Hebrew as well, without translators.)

As we go through the book of Acts we find that gentiles are added to the church and that the Jews are dispersed.

It was necessary for the Jews to be dispersed because the Jews who became believers misunderstood the whole truth of the New Covenant and became zealous for the law – exactly the wrong thing to do as the law was now fulfilled in Jesus. They didn’t need the map anymore they had arrived at their destination!

Acts contains details of Paul’s missionary journeys after his dramatic conversion.

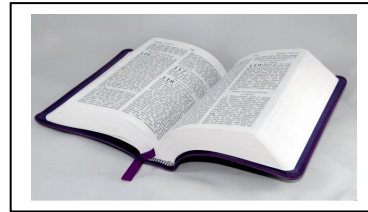
Just as Israel was God’s chosen nation so now the believers are God’s chosen generation. The believers are often referred to as ‘the church’ – but this is not an exactly correct description. ‘Church’ means ‘meeting’ and in the meeting there are believers and unbelievers – this is clear from our experience and from the letters to the churches found in the book of Revelation.

More accurately the believers are referred to as ‘the body of Christ,’ and as ‘the bride of Christ.’

This chosen generation will face great opposition and tribulation. This is because both human and spiritual forces oppose the truth. Nevertheless within that scenario this chosen generation are fully blessed by the Lord God. So much so that, as they learn what it means to live by faith, by tapping into the grace of God (Hebrews 4:16), they will ‘reign in life,’ (Romans 5:17) over all the obstacles and opposition. In doing this they will demonstrate the ‘manifest wisdom of God.’ (Ephesians 3:10)

..... this is part of God’s plan – mankind to take dominion of the earth and to demonstrate to satan that he is not in control.

The bible way is the way of truth



The Lord God has from the beginning wanted man to demonstrate His wisdom to His enemy – satan and his followers. God intended that this would happen by man obeying Him in Spirit and Truth.

In Spirit means being led by the Spirit of God with His specific instructions on a day by day basis.

Jesus said,

4 "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.'" Matthew 4:4

When He said every word we know that He meant every specific word that is proceeding now from the mouth of God. (We know that from the particular Greek word [*rhema*] translated into the English ‘word.’)

This is being led by the Spirit.

The truth is laid out for us in the bible. That truth has to be ‘rightly divided’ because the bible contains instructions for different periods of time.

We have noted how God gave mankind a different diet at different times. Vegetarian in the first instance.

Eat everything that moves – after Noah’s flood.

Explicit dietary instructions in the law of Moses.

When Jesus came He pronounced all foods clean.

The early disciples gave only one restriction - do not eat blood or food offered to idols.

The same principle applies to all the bible – some parts refer specifically to Israel and to the way the Lord dealt with Israel under the law. The New Covenant deals with freedom from the law and a new heart attitude.

Prayer.

‘Holy Spirit lead me into all the truth.’

Take at least daily!

Jesus said this

37 *Jesus said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind."*

38 *"This is the first and great commandment.*

39 *"And the second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbour as yourself.'* *Matthew 22:37-39*

Again we cannot love our neighbour as ourselves – but we can ask the Holy Spirit to give us love for our neighbours. This is the gospel (good news), supernatural help is available to us and will be provided when we walk in His ways.

The way of truth follows the shepherd

The bible likens Jesus to the good shepherd and to believers as sheep. The shepherd goes in front and the sheep follow.

Paul told the Ephesians that ‘God has prepared good works for us to walk in them.’

This is the way of Spirit and Truth – to follow the shepherd in the works that He has prepared beforehand.

God deals with us all as individuals. Though the bible is there for all to read it speaks of, and leads us to, an individual relationship with the Lord Himself. It's a love relationship.

We discover the specific works God has prepared for us through prayer and through receiving His guidance. We learn to recognise and to hear His voice. *'My sheep hear My voice.'*

Grace and reigning in life.

The New Covenant is a covenant of grace – that is unmerited favour. Grace is received by faith. Faith comes by hearing the specific word of God. This in some ways takes us back to the way in which the Lord God wanted to communicate with Israel. The Lord wanted all Israel to hear His voice. They refused and said they would listen to Moses instead. The result was a set of commandments written in stone.

The concept of a relationship with God on a personal basis was thus minimised.

In the New Covenant the Lord wants each of His children to hear His voice and to follow – like the shepherd knows and calls His sheep by name, the Lord wants to call each of His children by name. - It's very personal.

It's very personal because it's the way to reign in life.

Consider these three scriptures:

1 *'For if by the one man's offense death reigned through the one, much more those who receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ.)'*
Romans 5:17

Objective – reign in life. That is overcome all life's difficulties.

Method – receive the abundance of grace.

Conditional – restricted to those who have received the gift of righteousness – God's gift when you are born again.

2 *'Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.'* Hebrews 4:16

Invitation – come

When – in time of need

What for – to find help

Result:

In this life there will always be problems of one sort or another because satan is the ruler of this world for a season.

The Lord has already equipped us with all we need for life and godliness, nevertheless circumstances need to be resolved – we need specific strategy.

When we receive specific grace to meet specific needs satan is shown up for what he is. He is not the King of the Universe. He is not able to run rings round God's children unless they let him do it.

As God speaks to us so that we can have faith, for faith comes from hearing Him speak, then nothing is impossible. For when the Lord speaks with an instruction, and we place our trust in what He says and do it – then the whole power of heaven is there to deliver the result and satan does not get a look in. Thus fulfilling God's purpose:

3 *'to the intent that now the manifold wisdom of God might be made known by the church to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places, according to the eternal purpose which He accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord,'*
Ephesians 3:10-11

Satan also has a mission – the bible tells us clearly that his mission is to rob, to kill and to destroy. It also tells us clearly that we have a responsibility to stand against the wiles of the enemy and that we have authority over all his works.

Favour.

In order to stand we need to understand that we are the recipients of God's unlimited favour. That He has already equipped us and blessed us so that we can overcome all life's problems by learning how to 'reign in life.'

Favour is the central message of the bible.

God favoured Israel as a nation – they failed to take full advantage through unbelief and a stubborn refusal to follow the Lord.

God favours this chosen generation – the believers. We can learn how to receive His favour in full or we can scrape by on less than the best – that much is up to us.

It is His plan that, by receiving His favour, through the working of His grace, we will demonstrate to His, and our enemy, that he does not rule the world.

[We have not sought to deal with every book of the bible whether in the old or the new covenant; rather we are trying to establish a clear overview of God's plan for mankind and for the earth.]

There are other booklets that deal with some of the understanding necessary for 'reigning in life' in this series, either available now as free PDF files at www.freebiblebooklets.com or in printed booklet form from Amazon (.com or .co.uk or .EU) [Type Peter Michell in the Amazon search box for access]

The future – Revelation.

The bible goes on to reveal what will happen in the future.

It is beyond the scope here to go into detail – for that read 'Understanding Daniel' and 'Revelation' and 'Ostrich Christianity' available as above.

In summary:

Jesus is seen amongst representatives of the churches.
He has specific words for each one.

After that heaven is open and John is taken up into heaven. (Some commentators see that as representing the fact that the church is raptured at this point, before the judgements which are then seen being released over the earth. I agree.)

The rapture.

This is the name given to the time when the believers are instantly changed into spiritual beings and taken up to meet with Jesus in the air.
It is a future event.

God's wrath in the form of Judgements is released over a sinful world in stages.

The first stage is opened in a series of seals, the second announced by a series of trumpets and the third poured out from a series of bowls. They are shown as consecutive – that is following on one from another.

During the time of judgement the bride of Christ is in heaven preparing herself for the coming marriage to Jesus, having been taken into heaven at the rapture.

After the wrath of God has been poured out on the earth Jesus returns to earth with His bride to set up His own Kingdom.

Now God's plan is nearing completion. The earth will take on new form in the reign of King Jesus (called the Millennium)

At the end of the Millennial period there is a further rebellion as satan is released for a little while. After this rebellion the old order all passes away. The earth and the heavens are removed and a new earth and new heavens are revealed. God's plan of redemption is complete. We will dwell with the Lord for ever in His Kingdom dominated by love.

The plan is complete

The Lord God has dealt with mankind by changing all who were willing to be changed into His likeness.

He has dealt with the earth by first ruling over it Himself and then by revealing a completely new earth as an eternal dwelling.

In this process love has been the outstanding force. God is love and He wants us to dwell in a mutual love relationship – first with Him and then with each other.

For us, our first focus is the love of Jesus. His love for us and our love for Him. As this relationship deepens and deepens so we will increasingly look forward to His promised return to earth. Thus increasingly we will find ourselves fulfilling Paul's words to Titus

Titus 2:11-14

11 For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men,

12 teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age,

13 looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ,

14 who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works.

We will join with the Holy Spirit saying:

'Come, Lord Jesus.'

Summary.

From the beginning God wants to take control of the earth.

He makes man in His image for that purpose – to have dominion over the earth.

Man follows the voice of the serpent and sin enters.

God chooses a nation to be His special people and gives them the opportunity. They miss the best option by refusing His voice. Instead they get laws cast in stone. The law is to show them the need for a deliverer – the Messiah.

When Messiah comes they fail to recognise Him. (Officially that is, many individuals did.)

Messiah comes to establish a new covenant – a covenant of grace instead of law. A covenant that can be fulfilled because God, Himself, in the person of the Holy Spirit will dwell in each of the born again children.

The Messiah is crucified.

The believers can, should, and will to some extent, demonstrate to satan that whilst he has some power to operate in this world for a season, he is not God and that they (the believers) have authority over his works.

The Messiah will return and establish His own rule during which satan is bound.

Satan is released a little while, there is a final rebellion.

Heaven and earth pass away and there is a new heaven and a new earth – the home of the believers who will then be dwelling with God.

So that's what its all about - God's purpose is fulfilled:

The earth is redeemed.

All those who would receive it are redeemed.

The scripture is true.

It will always end up as a matter of belief rather than a matter of provable fact – is the scripture the inspired word of God, faultless and profitable as Paul describes it to Timothy:

14 But you must continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned them,

15 and that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.

16 All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness,

17 that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.

2 Timothy 3:14-17

Of course if you believe that the scripture is the inspired word of God then you agree with Paul and if you don't then Paul has to be wrong. Amongst unbelievers it is widely said that the scripture is full of error and contradiction – however, when asked no one can point out any error or any contradiction.

Here are some things that point to the accuracy of scripture.

Historical accuracy.

The old testament contains a great deal of historical information regarding Israel and some other countries. Absolutely nothing has been proved to be untrue. As archaeological work continues more and more biblical statements are shown to be true.

Prophetic accuracy.

There are many prophetic statements in the Bible. Many of them concerned the Messiah. Jesus fulfilled every one that did.

There are prophecies concerning nations – again we can see many fulfilled prophecies. We can also see that the time line of scripture is not yet finished and there are yet more prophecies to be fulfilled.

Scientific accuracy.

There are some interesting ‘scientific’ statements in the bible which could not have been known to the authors:

- 1) In Job (the earliest book of the bible) the world is said to be suspended on nothing. This is true, but how would Job have known that. It is also clear from Job that the world is round – written many hundreds of years before ‘science’ caught up!
- 2) Light is unapproachable. It is fact that matter cannot be sped up to the speed of light, it disintegrates - light is unapproachable. Peter wrote that God dwells in unapproachable light – how did he know?
- 3) It is medically true that the growth of the body is controlled in the head – by the pituitary gland. Paul, when writing about the church, called it the body of Christ and said that its growth was controlled by the head.
- 4) A future prophecy requires that the whole world see a specific event in Jerusalem at the same time. Without satellite television it would be quite impossible. Yet the scripture has written down 2,000 years ago.

We haven’t touched on the nature of the text itself or the way in which the written word can and does ‘speak’ to us today as the Holy Spirit illuminates it to us.

For me, I don’t doubt it for I have come to learn something else:

The bible is true and good for doctrine, reproof, correction and instruction. As I learn to understand it and to actually live according to it – then I find that what it says is true in my experience.

What more proof do I need?

I came to see that understanding comes from revelation. Study is good and part of the process, but life changing result came from revelation. So I frequently pray:

‘Holy Spirit lead me into all the truth.’ Amen.

You now have two life changing prayers:

Holy Spirit fill me with more and more love for Jesus.

Holy Spirit lead me into all truth.

I still pray these prayers frequently because I want to love Jesus more and I want to know all the truth. If that is what you want and pray these prayers frequently you will receive the same – increasing love for Jesus and increasing understanding of the truth.

You will be greatly blessed.