

Assurance

For

Eternity

By Buff Scott III

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Introduction

Welcome to our study!

Have you ever asked yourself, “Who am I?”, “Why am I here?”, or “Is there a God?” Most of us have at one time or another in our lives. This study will answer those questions and more. Note that this study presumes the existence of God, but it will nonetheless provide a basic study of who God is, who man is, and explain the separation that exists between the two. In the last sections of this study, we will discover the way this separation between God and man can be bridged – what we will refer to as the “bridge to life”, or the “good news”.

This study uses the Bible as its foundation. But you do not need to have any Bible knowledge to participate.

The Bible is often referred to as “God’s Word”, and so before we look at God, man, and the “bridge to life”, let’s take a look at the Bible to determine how we got the Bible, whether it really is “God’s Word”, and how to know if it is accurate.

Let’s get started!

The Bible – God’s Word?

By all estimates, the Bible is one of the best-selling books of all time. If you do a search on the internet of how many Bibles are sold each year in the world, you will learn that over 100 million copies are sold or given away free every year. If you do a search asking how many copies of the Bible have been printed, you will find that the Guinness Book of World Records estimates over 5 billion copies of the Bible have been printed. It contains a variety of controversial subjects (origin of the universe; God's existence and personality; the nature of man; the existence of evil; what happens when we die, etc.)

The word “bible” is from the Greek *biblia*, which means “scrolls” or “books”. It has been translated in its entirety into over 698 languages (as of 2019) and partially translated into over 1,548 languages. The Bible’s contents (books) have been written in three different languages – Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek.

The Bible consists of the “Old” and “New” Testaments. The word “testament” is the English translation of the Hebrew word *berith*, which is usually rendered *covenant*. Thus, the Old and New Testaments are the written record of covenants between two parties, and in this case, between God and man. The central theme and purpose of the Bible is the “good news” or “gospel” regarding Jesus of Nazareth, also referred to as the “Messiah” or “Christ”. We will look at the life of Jesus of Nazareth later in this study.

Let’s examine the structure of the Christian Bible and the order of the “books”.

The total number of books in the Bible is 66:

- Old Testament = 39
- New Testament = 27

Old Testament Structure

The Old Testament is often referred to as the “Hebrew Scriptures”, and was often quoted in the New Testament. The Old Testament prophesied about the coming Messiah.

History (17)			Poetry (5)	Prophecy (17)		
Law, Torah, Pentateuch (5)	Historical (9)	Babylonian Exile (3)	(5)	Major (5)	Minor (9)	Babylonian Exile (3)
Genesis	Joshua	Ezra	Job	Isaiah	Hosea	Haggai
Exodus	Judges	Nehemiah	Psalms	Jeremiah	Joel	Zechariah
Leviticus	Ruth	Esther	Proverbs	Lamentations	Amos	Malachi
Numbers	1 Samuel		Ecclesiastes	Ezekiel	Obadiah	
Deuteronomy	2 Samuel		Song of Solomon	Daniel	Jonah	
	1 Kings				Micah	
	2 Kings				Nahum	
	1 Chronicles				Habakkuk	
	2 Chronicles				Zephaniah	

New Testament Structure

The New Testament represents the fulfillment of the Old Testament covenant and prophecies, namely in the form of the written record of the life and death of Jesus Christ, the Messiah.

Gospels	Propagation of the Gospel	Explanation of the Gospel		Consummation of the Gospel
		Pauline Epistles	General Epistles	
Matthew	Acts	Romans	Hebrews	Revelation
Mark		1 Corinthians	James	
Luke		2 Corinthians	1 Peter	
John		Galatians	2 Peter	
		Ephesians	1 John	
		Philippians	2 John	
		Colossians	3 John	
		1 Thessalonians	Jude	
		2 Thessalonians		
		1 Timothy		
		2 Timothy		
		Titus		
		Philemon		

Why the different versions of the Bible?

Originally, the Bible was written in three languages – the Old Testament was written in Hebrew and Aramaic, and the New Testament was written in Greek.

As the message of the Bible spread, people wanted to read it for themselves. But unless they knew Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek the Bible was a closed book to them. They couldn't understand it. Therefore, the Bible was translated into other languages so that people could read the Bible in their own language. Eventually there were English translations, for example, the King James Version. However, since most people don't speak in "thee's" and "thou's" anymore, there was a need for more modern translations such as the New American Standard Bible, English Standard Bible, and the New International Version.

Some versions are not good translations so you have to be careful. In fact, some versions are not translations at all, but rather a paraphrase. In other words, what they say are not the same exact words as the original manuscripts, but rather they are how a writer will try to restate what was written in his own words. They can be helpful in understanding a passage more clearly. The versions mentioned in the previous paragraph are probably your best ones. All quotations in this study are from the New American Standard Bible.

Originals versus Copies

How do we know that the words in our Bibles today are the same words that were in our very first Bibles and in the original manuscripts? How do we know that we can trust our Bibles to be accurate? Perhaps somewhere along the line someone changed the words in the Bible so that today they are not the same as the ones the original authors used. Is our Bible trustworthy?

We should realize that the original manuscripts no longer exist. Why? What they were written on (papyrus and animal skins) was very perishable. Though this is true, our text today is still accurate. Bible scholars know this by taking the copies that they have, comparing them, and then reconstructing the text.

For example, if we receive a letter from the President, everyone copies it, and then the original is lost, we could still reconstruct the text of the original by comparing our copies.

There are two important factors when considering reconstructing:

1. The time span between the date the original was finished and the earliest existing copy.

Suppose your great grandfather had a letter from the President and hand copied it and then lost the original. Next, your grandfather made a hand copy of his father's copy. In turn, your father made a hand copy of his father's copy. Finally, you made a hand copy of your father's copy. Then one day you lost your grandfather's copy and your father's copy. All you had left was your copy and your great grandfather's copy. Now which one of the two would tend to be more accurate? Answer - your great grandfather's. Why? It was closer in time to the original. The closer in time span the more dependable the copy; the longer the time span, the more likely errors are apt to creep in.

Let's compare the Bible historically with another ancient piece of literature:

- Homer's Iliad was written around 900 B.C. The earliest copy of it is dated 400 B.C. – this is a time span of 500 years. Yet it is taught in schools as being an accurate representation of Homer's original. The New Testament on the other hand, was written from 40-100 A.D. The earliest copy of it is dated around 125 A.D. – a time span of just 25 years!

2. The number of copies.

If only two of us made copies of the President's letter and then we tried to reconstruct the text of the original, it is possible that our reconstruction might have errors in it since there were only two of us who copied the original and one of us, or both of us could have made a mistake in our copying. However, if there were 500 of us who made copies of the letter, and then we reconstructed the text, it is more likely that we would be able to accurately reconstruct the original text. Why? We would have more copies to compare. So, the more copies the better because there is more evidence to compare to help you decide what the original said.

Let's compare the Bible with other pieces of ancient literature:

- Homer's Iliad, 643 copies
- Caesar's Gallic Wars, 9 or 10 copies
- Plato, 7 copies
- Aristotle, 5 copies (of any one work)
- New Testament alone, over 5,000 copies or pieces of copies plus 19,000 early translations

Summary: Based on reliable and sufficient evidence, our Bibles are accurate in their texts and can be totally trusted.

Is the Bible really from God?

How do we know that what we read in the Bible is really God's Word to us? First and foremost, the Bible says it is! The Bible says that the words of Scripture are from God:

2 Timothy 3:16: "All Scripture is **inspired** by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness". (The word "inspiration" as used here means that God is the one who moved upon men to write His word.)

2 Peter 1:20-21: ²⁰"But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation, ²¹for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God".

We can see from the previous two verses that the Bible is self-authenticating, or self-attesting. You might say, "Wait a minute! Isn't that circular reasoning – to argue that the Bible says it is God's word?" Yes, it is circular

reasoning. We will study who God is in the next section, but if He is who he says He is – this circular reasoning is of necessity. The Bible (written by men) claims to consist of God's words and claims it is authoritative. A claim is proved to be true by appealing to some higher authority. That authority must be more authoritative than the claimant making the claim. If the Bible claims to be the ultimate authority, then it needs to appeal to a supreme authority. That is God. This principle of authority is illustrated in Hebrews 6:13 – *"For when God made the promise to Abraham, since He could swear by no one greater, He swore by Himself."* Since Scripture (the Bible) claims to be God-inspired (2 Timothy 3:16), it cannot be subjected to lesser authorities, but must be authenticated by God himself. (Authority can be defined as the right to issue commands and demand obedience. You will see why God has this authority in the next section.)

When we talk about the Bible being from God, the key word that we use is the word "inspired" or "inspiration." We say that the Bible is inspired from God or it is God's inspired word. Now what does that mean?

We mean that God, through His Holy Spirit, exerted His supernatural influence upon man to write down His words, word for word, without error, in its entirety, yet without disregarding the writer's own personality.

Let's take a deeper look at what the word inspiration means. Let's concentrate on 3 key words or phrases in describing it. These key words are: *all*, *every*, and *human personality*.

1. All – all parts of it are the words God wanted to be recorded; in other words, the whole of it, in its entirety (Luke 24:44-45 – *"⁴⁴ Now He said to them, 'These are My words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things which are written about Me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.'⁴⁵ Then He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures,"*)
2. Every – every single word is from God, not just the whole (Jeremiah 26:2 – *"Thus says the LORD, 'Stand in the court of the LORD'S house, and speak to all the cities of Judah who have come to worship in the LORD'S house all the words that I have commanded you to speak to them. Do not omit a word!'"*).
3. Human personality – the writers were not machines or mere secretaries writing down what God dictated, but rather they were men whom God moved upon to write His words without error. There were some writers to whom God spoke directly, e.g. – Moses, to whom God gave the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20); and to Jeremiah, *"Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, 'Write all the words which I have spoken to you in a book'"* (Jeremiah 30:2). God inspired (moved upon men) and was able to do this without canceling out the writer's own personality, background, and talents. For example, Moses (author of the first 5 books of the Bible) was trained in all the learning of the Egyptians while Amos (another author) was just a shepherd. Their writing style reflects their backgrounds. And yet what they say is in complete harmony with the rest of the books of the Bible. The same could be said about all the other writers of the Bible.

There are those who don't believe that the Bible is from God. Some of their opinions are:

1. Though the Bible is inspiring, it is not from God and is no different than any other piece of literature. It inspires or is uplifting as you read it, but it isn't from God.
2. Certain parts of the Bible are from God but not all of it.
3. The Bible was dictated by God. God dictated His word to the writers.

What are some proofs the Bible is from God?

Let's look at some proofs that the Bible really is from God. There is good and *sufficient* evidence that it is God's Word. The emphasis is on the word "sufficient" because you cannot prove it by putting it in a test tube and observing the results. But there is sufficient evidence if a person really wants to examine it.

There are two fundamental proofs:

1. Jesus Christ says it is God's Word.

We will look at the life of Jesus Christ later in this study, but He believed it was God's word. In Matthew 5:17, Jesus said, *"Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them,"* meaning that Jesus believed and trusted in the Hebrew Scriptures "Law"

and “Prophets” – i.e. – the books that make up the Old Testament. In John 10:35-36, Jesus said – “³⁵ *If he called them gods, to whom the word of God came (and the Scripture cannot be broken),* ³⁶ *do you say of Him, whom the Father sanctified and sent into the world, ‘You are blaspheming,’ because I said, ‘I am the Son of God?’*” Jesus also said, “*It is written: ‘Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God’*” (Matthew 4:4). In Mark 7:10-13, He said, “¹⁰ *For Moses said, ‘HONOR YOUR FATHER AND YOUR MOTHER’; and, ‘HE WHO SPEAKS EVIL OF FATHER OR MOTHER, IS TO BE PUT TO DEATH’;* ¹¹ *but you say, ‘If a man says to his father or his mother, whatever I have that would help you is Corban (that is to say, given to God),’* ¹² *you no longer permit him to do anything for his father or his mother;* ¹³ *thus invalidating the word of God by your tradition which you have handed down; and you do many things such as that.*” Here Jesus was directly quoting from the Old Testament and referring to it as the “word of God”.

2. The accurate fulfillment of prophecy

The prophecies recorded in the Bible are 100% accurate and detailed (more on this in a later section).

What additional confirming evidence is there?

1. Its unity – the Bible is composed of 66 books written over a period of around 1500 years, by over 40 authors, from a variety of backgrounds and places.

Backgrounds:

- David – a shepherd
- Joshua – a military general
- Daniel – prime minister
- Matthew – a tax collector
- Luke – a physician
- Nehemiah – a court servant
- Paul – a rabbi
- Peter – a fisherman

Places:

- David wrote some Psalms in the wilderness
- Ezekiel was a captive in Babylon
- Paul was in prison in Rome
- Jeremiah was in a dungeon

With all of this diversity, it is a unified whole, from beginning to end, proclaiming God's message of love to humankind. Try coordinating this type of continuity with just 5 people over a period of 10 years, let alone 40 people over 1500 years.

2. The Bible has the ability to change lives for the better (e.g. - Chuck Colson, several of the Manson followers, Franklin Graham, and many others.)
3. The Bible has the ability to convict of wrong-doing (Hebrews 4:12).
4. It's indestructibility (over 3500 years have passed since the first book of the Bible was written and we still have it today, accurate and complete). Isaiah 40:8 – “*The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God stands forever.*”
5. It is historically & archaeologically reliable. Not one piece of history or archaeological finding has contradicted what the Bible has said. For example, a group of people called the Hittites once existed but before 1906, critics pointed to the fact that no trace of a Hittite civilization had ever been found and therefore the Bible was inaccurate. However, in 1906 the Hittite capital city was dug up in Asia Minor.

6. It speaks with authority. In it is written *"Thus says the Lord ..."* hundreds of times. Matthew 7:28-29 – ²⁸*When Jesus had finished these words, the crowds were amazed at His teaching;* ²⁹*for He was teaching them as one having authority, and not as their scribes."*
7. Knowing the characteristics of God (whom we will learn about next), it is no problem for Him to preserve His book.

The Bible *is* God's Word

The Bible doesn't just contain the word of God; it is the Word of God!

Sufficient reasons for believing that the Bible *is* God's Word:

1. Jesus Christ says so (His credentials will be established in the last sections of this study).
2. Fulfilled prophecy (see Messianic Prophecy sheet later in study).

Confirmatory evidence:

1. Unity
2. Ability to change lives
3. Ability to convict
4. Indestructibility
5. Historically and archaeologically reliable (Tacitus, Mark, Matthew, John, Luke, Josephus)
6. Speaks with authority

Summary: When seriously taking the sufficient evidence, we can say with confidence that the Bible is God's Word. Since that is so, how important for us to read it, study it, and listen to what God has to say.

Having examined and established facts concerning the Bible, let's see what it says about God and about man.

What Is God Really Like? - Part 1

The first question we need to address is, "What do you mean by "God"? In the previous section, we established facts regarding the Bible. Here, we are talking about the God of the Bible. The proper name for God in the Hebrew Bible is "Yahweh" (YHWH) and the Latinization of Yahweh is Jehovah.

The next question that might be asked is, "Can you scientifically prove the existence of God?" The answer is that we cannot prove the existence of God using scientific tools and instruments. But having just learned that our Bibles are accurate in their texts and can be totally trusted, the Bible says that God exists. Man is limited in his capabilities and understandings. So it is only logical that he could never prove the existence of the infinite, eternal, all-powerful, all-knowing God that the Bible describes. Only an infinite, eternal, all-powerful, all-knowing being could prove the existence of the God described in the Bible. The Bible (God's Word) says God is the creator of the heavens and the earth; that He is an all-knowing and eternal being; with no beginning and no end. So we must take God at His Word.

So, if I were to ask you to think about God for a moment, what would go through your mind? How would you describe Him? Would you have pleasant thoughts regarding Him, or negative ones?

There are many ways people think of God. Sometimes we use expressions like: "the man upstairs," "the old guy with the white beard," etc. Or, we think of God as a mean old ogre just waiting to pounce on us whenever He sees us having any fun at all in life. Often times it's hard for people to trust and love a "heavenly Father" if their earthly father had been especially mean or cruel to them.

Some people in the world see an "all-knowing, eternal being" as a statue made out of stone, wood or metal, or perhaps even see it as "the force" from Star Wars. Some think that even though there may be a God, He really isn't interested all that much in the affairs of the world, let alone their own personal lives.

Is this really what the God of the Bible is like? How can we know who He is and, more importantly, can we get to know Him personally?

Fortunately, God has given us His Word – the Bible. In it, He tells us about Himself and how much He loves us. So let's look now at just a few verses to see how God, in His own Words, describes Himself.

1 John 1:5 – *"This is the message we have heard from Him and announce to you, that God is Light, and in Him there is no darkness at all."*

A. What does the verse say about God's nature? ¹ _____.

B. Think about some of the characteristics of light? What does it do?

- It shines
- It gives cheer
- It enables you to see where you are going
- It reveals things for what they are

Can you think of other characteristics of light? ² _____.

C. Let's think about those same characteristics of light and see how they can apply to God's character:

- He shines, or in other words, reveals Himself
- He gives cheer
- He enables us to see where we are going in life
- He reveals things (such as our hearts) for what they are

He doesn't hide Himself (remember – He is light, not darkness). He is personal. He has let us know who He is in these ways:

1. Psalm 19:1-2 – *“¹The heavens are telling of the glory of God; And their expanse is declaring the work of His hands. ²Day to day pours forth speech, and night to night reveals knowledge.”*

He has let us know who He is through ³_____.

2. Hebrews 1:1 – *“God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways,”*

He has let us know who He is through ⁴_____.

3. Hebrews 1:2 – *“in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world.”*

He has let us know who He is through ⁵_____.

- D. Summary: The first thing we see about God is that He is light and He is personal. He reveals Himself to us.

Deuteronomy 6:4 says – *“Hear, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD is **one**!”*

- A. What does the verse say about God? ⁶_____.

There is something interesting about this verse. The Hebrew word for “one” used here means a “unity in plurality,” as opposed to an absolute oneness, or as in “united.”

- B. Let's look at some other verses to see if we can better understand this.

Unity in plurality:

Genesis 2:24 – *“For this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother, and be joined to his wife; and they shall become **one** flesh.”*

Ezekiel 37:15-17 – *“¹⁵The word of the LORD came again to me saying, ¹⁶“And you, son of man, take for yourself one stick and write on it, ‘For Judah and for the sons of Israel, his companions’; then take another stick and write on it, ‘For Joseph, the stick of Ephraim and all the house of Israel, his companions.’ ¹⁷Then join them for yourself one to another into one stick, that they may become **one** in your hand.”*

God speaking in the plural:

Genesis 1:26 – *“Then God said, ‘Let **Us** make man in **Our** image, according to **Our** likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.’”*

Three persons are mentioned in these verses:

Isaiah 48:12-16 – *“¹²Listen to Me, O Jacob, even Israel whom I called; I am He, I am the first, I am also the last. ¹³“Surely My hand founded the earth, and My right hand spread out the heavens; when I call to them, they stand together. ¹⁴“Assemble, all of you, and listen! Who among them has declared these things? The LORD loves him; he will carry out His good pleasure on Babylon, and His arm will be against the Chaldeans. ¹⁵“I, even I, have spoken; indeed I have called him, I have brought him, and He will make his ways successful. ¹⁶“Come near to Me, listen to this: From the first I have not spoken in secret, from the time it took place, I was there. And now the **Lord God** has sent **Me**, and **His Spirit**.”*

Matthew 28:18-19 – “¹⁸And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.”¹⁹Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the **Father** and the **Son** and the **Holy Spirit**,”

(Note the word “name” is singular, and yet there are three persons listed!)

- C. Summary: The evidence of the Bible is that there is only one God, but He exists in three persons or consciences, namely, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. They are all equal in their characteristics and they all exist at the same time. This may be hard to understand, but it only makes sense that God Himself would reveal the fact that He is a tri-unity.

Malachi 3:6 – “For I, the LORD do not change; therefore you, O sons of Jacob, are not consumed.”

Summary: God’s character never ⁷ _____. How He chooses to do things may change, but His character never does.

1 John 4:16 – “We have come to know and have believed the love which God has for us. God is love, and the one who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him.”

Summary: This tells us that God is ⁸ _____. Love is part of His nature. He can’t help but love. He doesn’t choose to love one day and choose not to the next. He is love and can’t help but love us. Not only that, but because God is unchangeable, what does this tell us about His love for us 20 years from now? It tells us that it will *always remain the same*.

“What Is God Really Like?” Part 1 conclusion:

- God is personal and reveals Himself to us.
- God is one and exists in three persons – the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
- God never changes.
- God is love.

Final thought: John 3:16 – “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.”

This verse tells us that God offers us His love and eternal life and we receive it by believing in what His Son did for us. We will understand what His Son did for us later in this study.

What Is God Really Like? - Part 2

In the last section, we took our first look at what the Bible says God is really like. We discovered that He:

- Is personal.
- Is one, but exists in three persons – the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
- Never changes.
- Is love.

Let's continue to discover what the Bible says about God by looking at some additional verses that talk about the nature and character of God.

The Bible says that God is a living, personal being. Jeremiah 10:10 – *"But the LORD is the true God; He is the living God and the everlasting King."*

The Bible reveals that God is a personality, and as a personality He:

- **Loves** – John 3:16 – *"For God **so loved** the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life."*
- **Hates** – Proverbs 6:16 – *"There are six things that the LORD **hates**, seven that are an abomination to Him:..."*
- **Cares** – 1 Peter 5:7 – *"having cast all your anxiety on Him, because He **cares** about you."*
- **Grieves** – Genesis 6:6 – *"So the LORD was sorry that He had made mankind on the earth, and He was **grieved** in His heart."*

John 4:21-24 – *"²¹ Jesus *said to her, 'Woman, believe Me, an hour is coming when neither in this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father. ²² You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. ²³ But an hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers. ²⁴ God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.'"*

The summary of these verses is that God is ¹ _____.

This means that God is not something tangible, something you can touch, feel and see. He is spirit – not a ghost, but a Spirit. This is why if we were to worship a statue made of wood, stone, or anything else, that is exactly what we would be worshipping – wood and stone, but not God.

Psalms 103:8 – *"The LORD is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in lovingkindness."*

The summary of this verse is that God is ² _____.

God is compassionate and gracious (tender toward those who don't deserve it); God is patient (slow to get angry); God is full of kindness and love.

This doesn't quite fit the concept we have sometimes of God being a mean old ogre, does it?

2 Timothy 2:13 – *"If we are faithless, He remains faithful, for He cannot deny Himself."*

The summary of this verse is that God is ³ _____.

In other words, God is someone we can always trust. Though everyone else may disappoint us or break our trust (e.g. – loved ones, politicians, friends, etc.), God never will. When God says He'll do something, He'll do it!

So, if God were to promise a way where we could have a relationship with Him that would last forever and ever, do you think He would keep His promise?

Psalm 86:5 – *“For You, Lord, are good, and ready to forgive, and abundant in lovingkindness to all who call upon You.”*

The summary of this verse is that God is ⁴_____.

In other words, being good is part of His nature. He can't help but be good in all that He does.

So, if God is good in all that He does, does this mean that when He allows us to experience really hard times, that He is good in that, too?

Isaiah 40:21-26 – *“²¹Do you not know? Have you not heard? Has it not been declared to you from the beginning? Have you not understood from the foundations of the earth? ²²It is He who sits above the circle of the earth, and its inhabitants are like grasshoppers, who stretches out the heavens like a curtain and spreads them out like a tent to dwell in. ²³He it is who reduces rulers to nothing, who makes the judges of the earth meaningless. ²⁴Scarcely have they been planted, scarcely have they been sown, scarcely has their stock taken root in the earth, but He merely blows on them, and they wither, and the storm carries them away like stubble. ²⁵“To whom then will you liken Me that I would be his equal?” says the Holy One. ²⁶Lift up your eyes on high and see who has created these stars, the One who leads forth their host by number, He calls them all by name; because of the greatness of His might and the strength of His power, not one of them is missing.”*

The summary of these verses is that God is ⁵_____.

He is the king of the universe. To make it a little more down to earth, it means that God is in control. Nothing takes Him by surprise. There aren't any loose ends. God is in control of everything.

So, if God is in control of all things, do I really need to get worried when the world around me seems like it has gone crazy and absolutely out of control. Psalm 46:1-2 says, *“¹God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. ²Therefore we will not fear, though the earth should change and though the mountains slip into the heart of the sea;”*

Isaiah 6:1-3 – *“¹In the year of King Uzziah's death I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, lofty and exalted, with the train of His robe filling the temple. ²Seraphim stood above Him, each having six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. ³And one called out to another and said, ‘Holy, Holy, Holy, is the LORD of hosts. The whole earth is full of His glory.’”*

The summary of these verses is that God is ⁶_____.

The word “holy” means “to be set apart.” In God's case, He is set apart from anything that is evil, wicked, or sinful. God is pure. He is righteous. He is perfect.

Have you ever read Greek mythology? If so, remembering those imaginary gods' character – were any of them moral, pure, good, or righteous in all that he or she did? The God of the Bible is all of these things, all the time, because He is holy.

Psalm 7:11 – *“God is a righteous judge, and a God who has indignation every day.”*

The summary of this verse is that God is ⁷_____.

This naturally follows from God being holy. All that God does is right. God cannot stand sin or evil in His presence. When God pronounces judgment on something, it is fair. Keep this in mind – God always loves the sinner (person), but He despises the sin (behavior).

Jeremiah 23:24 – *“Can a man hide himself in hiding places so I do not see him?” declares the LORD. “Do I not fill the heavens and the earth?” declares the LORD.”*

Jeremiah 32:17 – *“ ‘Ah Lord GOD! Behold, You have made the heavens and the earth by Your great power and by Your outstretched arm! Nothing is too difficult for You,”*

The summary of these verses is that God is ⁸ _____.

This means He has no limits or limitations like we do. He is not limited in space, so he is present everywhere at all times. He is not limited in ability, so He is all-powerful. He is not limited in knowledge, so He knows everything. He has no limits.

So, if God is infinite and has no limits, what does this say about how much He loves us? What does it say about His goodness, His compassion, His mercy, His faithfulness, His patience, etc.?

Psalms 90:1-2 – *“¹Lord, You have been our dwelling place in all generations. ²Before the mountains were born or You gave birth to the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, You are God.”*

The summary of these verses is that God is ⁹ _____.

This is hard for us to understand perhaps, but He had no beginning and will have no end. He is eternal.

So, if God is eternal, what does this say about how long His love for us will last?

“What Is God Really Like?” Part 2 conclusion:

- God is spirit.
- God is merciful.
- God is gracious.
- God is patient.
- God is faithful
- God is good.
- God is in control.
- God is holy.
- God is fair.
- God is infinite.
- God is eternal.

Are these characteristics of a person we would like to know personally?

The Bible says that God created man to reflect His image, His likeness. If God is so good and loving, and man is to reflect His image, what happened to man?

What Is Man Really Like? - Part 1

Today we are told that man is getting better and better. Having evolved from mere apes, he can now send men to the moon and communicate with one another via the watch on one's wrist. His technology seems to know no bounds. Somehow, someday, man will create for himself a heaven on earth, a utopian society where he will have conquered all diseases and limitations. There will be peace among men and all will live in harmony. This is the end result when you see man as getting better, evolving eventually almost to a state of perfection. But is this really what man is like? Does this description really match up with people we see in our lives, or for that matter, even ourselves?

In this section, we will begin to answer the questions, "Who am I?", "Why am I here?", and "Is there a nature common to man?" Is there a common behavior exhibited by people everywhere? Or, are we simply born with a "blank slate" and our subsequent behaviors merely shaped by our environment? If there is such a thing as a "human nature", what is its source?

Let's go to the Bible and see how God describes man. The first place to look for our roots is in the beginning.

Genesis 1 (read)

In this chapter, we see:

- God creates all things, including ¹ _____.
- Man is made to reflect God's ² _____.
- Man, as the highest form of creation, is to be the master of all created life (vs. 26).

The Bible tells us in Genesis chapter one that God created the heavens and the earth and all that is in them, including man. God took six full days to do His creation work and then rested on the seventh day. It isn't that God could not have created everything in a split second. He could have, with just a word. But He set forth from the beginning, what is often His gradual method of divine working and grace.

Man was created on the sixth day. As to how man was made, we can look to Genesis 1:27 – *"And God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them."*

But why was man created?

Isaiah 43:7 gives us the answer – *"Everyone who is called by My name, and whom I have created for My glory, whom I have formed, even whom I have made."*

So, it was for God's ³ _____ that man was created; that man might glorify God and have fellowship with Him.

Genesis 2 (read)

Except for man, all of creation was spoken into being. Genesis 2:7 – *"Then the Lord God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being."* Man was formed by God's own hands and was given life by God's own breath (or Spirit).

Man was created in the image of God. God is perfect, therefore man was made perfect. Genesis 1:31 substantiates this statement – *"God saw all that He had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day."* If God looked upon His creation and saw that it was good, indeed it was very good. Because to a perfect being, what could be good to Him except that which is perfect? God went

on to create a woman from man. Genesis 2:22 – “The Lord God fashioned into a woman the rib which He had taken from the man, and brought her to the man.” The two were identical in nature, different only in sex.

So we see that in the beginning man was created with a perfect nature (God breathed His own Spirit into him), for the purpose of glorifying God and having fellowship with Him.

But man did not keep his perfect nature for long. God gave man the ability to choose his own way. God did not want a being that was programmed to worship Him. God, in His making of man, did not create robots that had no choice but to be obedient and thus demonstrate their love for Him. God wanted man to choose to love and glorify Him.

True love cannot be forced. But in order for anyone to really know if someone loves them (e.g. – “for better or for worse, for richer or for poorer, in sickness and in health”), there must come about something that tests that love.

Genesis 2:16-17 tells us that God gave man a commandment concerning his life in the Garden of Eden. ¹⁶“The LORD God commanded the man, saying, “From any tree of the garden you may eat freely; ¹⁷but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die.” If man were made as a robot, there would have been no need for a commandment. God could have made man so as he would do only what God wanted him to.

Man’s love, expressed by obedience to God, is tested by the presence of the tree of
⁴_____ (vss. 16-17).

The penalty for sin (living independently of God) is ⁵_____ (vss. 16-17).

Man in his innocence knew no ⁶_____ (vs. 25).

Man experienced the presence of, the love of, and a wonderful relationship with God.

Genesis 3: 1-6 – ¹“Now the serpent was more crafty than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said to the woman, “Indeed, has God said, ‘You shall not eat from any tree of the garden?’” ²The woman said to the serpent, “From the fruit of the trees of the garden we may eat; ³but from the fruit of the tree which is in the middle of the garden, God has said, ‘You shall not eat from it or touch it, or you will die.’” ⁴The serpent said to the woman, “You surely will not die! ⁵For God knows that in the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.” ⁶When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was desirable to make one wise, she took from its fruit and ate; and she gave also to her husband with her, and he ate.”

Satan (the serpent) is the enemy of God. He was the highest ranking angel (created spiritual messengers of God) but turned evil because of his pride (Ezekiel 28:12-17; Isaiah 14:12-15). Though powerful, he is not equal to God. His main tactic is to cause us to doubt God’s character and God’s Word (vss. 4-5). Notice that man chose to willfully disobey God (vs. 6).

“What Is Man Really Like?” Part 1 conclusion:

Man was created to have a personal relationship with God but chose to go his own independent way, instead of God’s way. We were created in His image. We were created to glorify God and reflect God’s character.

So, if someone were to watch a replay of our whole life, would they be able to see an accurate picture of what God is like?

What Is Man Really Like? - Part 2

In the last section we saw what man was like before he disobeyed God:

- He was created.
- He was made to reflect God's character.
- In his innocence man knew no shame.
- He experienced God's presence in his life.

Recall that Eve was deceived by the serpent (which was Satan incarnate) but Adam willfully took of the fruit and ate. This willful act of disobedience, the breaking of God's commandment, is sin. Sin is anything within the creature that: 1) is contrary to the holy character of God; or 2) is rebellious or disobedient to His commandments. This act of disobedience cost man his perfect nature. His perfect union and fellowship with God was broken. Man no longer had his sinless, perfect nature. Man's sinful, imperfect nature was now established, and sin came to indwell him. A sinful nature therefore, is an innate character or disposition that exhibits itself through attitudes and behaviors in opposition to God and His commandments.

What is man like after he disobeyed God? The death which God had spoken of in Genesis 2:17 was a (eventual) physical death, but also an immediate spiritual death – spiritual separation from God.

Let's look at the immediate effects of man's disobedience, the long-term effects, and man's natural reaction to his own disobedience.

Immediate effects of sin

Genesis 3:7 – *"Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loin coverings."*

The immediate effect of disobedience is that man felt ¹ _____, and attempted to cover up what happened.

Genesis 3:8-10 – ⁸*They heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden.* ⁹*Then the LORD God called to the man, and said to him, "Where are you?"* ¹⁰*He said, "I heard the sound of You in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid myself."*

Man was no longer enjoying his relationship with God (His presence in their lives), but rather trying to ² _____ from God.

Genesis 3:11-13 – ¹¹*And He said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?"* ¹²*The man said, "The woman whom You gave to be with me, she gave me from the tree, and I ate."* ¹³*Then the LORD God said to the woman, "What is this you have done?" And the woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate."*

Man tries to justify his sin by passing the blame ("the ³ _____ made me do it" syndrome).

Question – Was it the eating of the fruit itself that caused all this? Or, was it man's independent attitude?

Man disobeyed God in his heart before he actually took the first bite. He chose to be disobedient. Eating the fruit was simply the outward reflection of an attitude already in his heart.

Long-term effects of sin

Genesis 3:14-24 (read). The effects of these verses were:

1. The serpent was cursed. This curse goes beyond the reptile and to the person of Satan.
2. The woman would experience intense pain in ⁴ _____.
3. The punishment for man was that the ground was cursed so that man has to struggle for survival (food, shelter, i.e. – the basic necessities of life, all the things that were guaranteed him in the garden before he disobeyed).
4. Each person would ⁵ _____ (just as God had promised man if he chose to go his own way).

What is meant by death? It means a separation:

- **Physically** (Genesis 3:19,22; Ezekiel 18:20) – the soul separates from the body.
- **Spiritually** (Genesis 3:22-24) – man would be separated from a relationship with God, from God's presence.

5. Man's descendants would have the same effects passed down from generation to generation.

Genesis 5:3-5 – ³When Adam had lived one hundred and thirty years, he became the father of a son in his own likeness, according to his image, and named him Seth. ⁴Then the days of Adam after he became the father of Seth were eight hundred years, and he had other sons and daughters. ⁵So all the days that Adam lived were nine hundred and thirty years, and he died."

Here we see physical death. We also see spiritual death since Seth was not in God's image but rather in man's image – meaning that all of Adam's descendants would not be born with a perfect nature, but would have the same nature or disposition of sin, selfishness, and independence from God as Adam had. It was a nature transmitted from generation to generation, from family to family. Romans 5:12 says – "Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned—."

Subsequently, we are today, as descendants from the first man, inheritors of this nature. Thus, a logical conclusion can be drawn between the "human nature" and the sinful nature. They are one and the same.

But how, you ask, can all men have a common nature derived from one individual? Let's look at it from a physiological perspective. Before I was born, I was in my father. I am the offspring of his seed. He likewise, was the offspring of his father's seed, and so on right back through time to the first man, Adam. Adam's sinful nature was passed down through the ages and all men are partakers of it (recall Romans 5:12). Romans 3:23 says – "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." These verses in Romans state that we all have a nature common to man, a sinful nature. Even one of the great men of the Bible (Paul the Apostle) said, ¹⁵"For that which I am doing, I do not understand; for I am not practicing what I would like to do, but I am doing the very thing I hate. ¹⁷So now, no longer am I the one doing it, but sin which indwells me. ¹⁸For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh; for the wishing is present in me, but doing of the good is not. ¹⁹For the good that I wish, I do not do; but I practice the very evil that I do not wish. ²⁰But if I am doing the very thing I do not wish, I am no longer the one doing it, but sin which dwells in me." (Romans 7:15, 17-20).

Each of us has a sin nature, a disposition that naturally wants to please itself first. The acts or behavior patterns resulting from our disposition are known as ⁶ _____. In other words, I am not a sinner just because I have committed certain acts of disobedience toward God. But rather, I commit acts of disobedience because I'm already a ⁷ _____. It's in my nature. I'm no longer in the

perfect image of God but rather in the image of ⁸ _____. And all of us are in the same boat. Not one of us can claim immunity from this nature (see Psalm 14:2-3; Genesis 8:21).

Need proof? Compare our behavior with Adams' after he sinned. Have you ever felt shame over something you've done wrong and tried to cover it over? Have you ever tried to hide from God (such as just ignoring Him in your life or not admitting your wrong deeds to Him)? Have you ever tried to rationalize or justify your behavior so that you don't look as bad as you really are? Does a child need to be taught to lie, or not to lie; to share, or not to share; to hurt others, or not to hurt? These are all just small examples that we are Adam's descendants, all having the same sin nature.

The penalty for sin is the same for us as well – ⁹ _____.

- **Physically** – Can you keep yourself from dying? You may be able to prolong the inevitable by good health, but eventually you will go the way of all men.
- **Spiritually** – Isaiah 59:1-2 – ¹*“Behold, the LORD’S hand is not so short that it cannot save; nor is His ear so dull that it cannot hear. ² But your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, and your sins have hidden His face from you so that He does not hear.”*

Our sinful nature leaves us totally separated from God. We have no relationship with Him at all. We do not experience His presence in our lives. As the Bible says elsewhere, we live utterly apart from God. We are His enemies. We are completely lost, having strayed from God's path. We are without God and without any hope. Pretty depressing, isn't it? This is absolutely terrible news. Think of the impact – that our very nature is an offense to God and keeps us from knowing Him in a personal way!

Man's natural reaction

Our natural reaction to all this is desperation. We wonder, “Isn't there anything that I can do?” And then we try to do something to remedy the problem, to find a cure for sin. We think that if we can just do enough good deeds in our life, perhaps at the end, our good deeds will outweigh our bad on God's scales and everything will be okay. But one thing we forget is that the standard by which we are measured is God Himself. After all, we were created to reflect His character. Let's see what the Bible says about this.

Isaiah 64:6 – *“For all of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous deeds are like a filthy garment; and all of us wither like a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, take us away.”*

Romans 3:20 – *“because by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight; for through the Law comes the knowledge of sin.”*

Genesis 3:21 – *“The LORD God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife, and clothed them.”*

This is another example of our failure to help ourselves – Adam and Eve had strung fig leaves around themselves for cover, but that wasn't good enough for God. God Himself covered their sin with garments only He could make.

“What Is Man Really Like?” Part 2 conclusion:

Man is a ¹⁰ _____ by nature, separated from God, and totally helpless apart from God's intervention.

You can see in the case of Adam and Eve that God *did* intervene and provided animal skins to cover them. God provided for Adam and Eve and they accepted His provision.

God passed His judgment on the man, woman, and the serpent (Genesis 3:14-19) and yet still revealed His love for man through His promise given in Genesis 3:15 – *“And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and*

between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise you on the head, and you shall bruise him on the heel." This points far into the future when God would intervene again and provide a bridge from death into life – a way that the broken relationship between God and man could be reestablished. This is the good news of the Bible! We will begin to explore this in the next section.

The Bridge to Life - Part 1

We've seen what God is like and we've seen what man is like. Now, we'll look at how God has taken the initiative to remedy man's condition. Man's condition? In God's eyes, man is totally sinful. Let's look at a verse that describes man in God's eyes.

Jeremiah 17:9 – *“The heart is more deceitful than all else and is desperately sick; who can understand it?”*

This verse says that even man's very nature is offensive to God. Man is lost, separated from God, and dead in his sins. That's the bad news. But the good news is that man doesn't have to stay that way because God has provided a bridge that we can cross over from death to life.

In the last section, we learned that God provided animal skins for Adam and Eve, but why? What was wrong with their fig leaves? Was it that he wanted to be sure that they were nice and warm, or was there something else behind it? Indeed, there was another reason God did this. It's called the “exchange of life” principle.

Exchange of Life Principle

Background

Adam and Eve had children and they had children until the earth was populated.

God decided that He was going to form out of all the people of the earth one group of people that would be set apart from all the rest. He would make them into a separate nation. He would do this not because they were better than anyone else, but because He had a special plan through which He would provide the “bridge to life”. And this plan included forming a separate group of people through which He would give the world His Word and ultimately, that bridge to life we're going to talk about.

In order to make a nation of people you need to start with one person. And that's what God did. He started with Abraham, Isaac (Abraham's son), and Jacob (Isaac's son, whose name God later changed to Israel).

Israel had 12 sons from which all of the tribes of Israel, or otherwise known as the Jewish people, came from. And it was this nation through which He would reveal His plan of salvation for mankind.

There was a famine in the land where Israel and his family lived, and so Israel and all his family moved down to Egypt where there was food. They lived there for awhile and grew in population so much that the Egyptians became afraid that the Jewish people would turn on them and take the land for themselves. So for this reason, the Egyptians made the nation of Israel slaves. And they were slaves for 400 years.

Moses and the Passover

During this time of slavery, God selected a man to be the leader of the Israelites and to lead them to freedom. His name was Moses. God had him confront Pharaoh (the ruler) of Egypt and say, *“Thus says the Lord, ‘Let my people go...’”* (Exodus 5:1). But Pharaoh would not let the people go so God sent a series of plagues on the Egyptians. Each plague that God sent was a parallel with the gods or idols of Egypt. God wanted to show them that he was the only true God and not these manmade idols or statues.

God sent 9 plagues and still Pharaoh would not let the people go. So God said He would send one more plague and this one would be the worst.

Exodus 11:4-7 – *“⁴Moses said, ‘Thus says the LORD, ‘About midnight I am going out into the midst of Egypt, ⁵and all the firstborn in the land of Egypt shall die, from the firstborn of the Pharaoh who sits on his throne, even to the firstborn of the slave girl who is behind the millstones; all the firstborn of the cattle as well. ⁶Moreover, there shall be a great cry in all the land of Egypt, such as there has not been before and such as shall never be*

again. ⁷ But against any of the sons of Israel a dog will not even bark, whether against man or beast, that you may understand how the LORD makes a distinction between Egypt and Israel.”

The last plague was to be death for the first-born of every household in Egypt. But God was going to provide a bridge to life for the Israelites. Here's how.

Exodus 12:1-13 (read)

These verses say that:

1. A lamb was to be ¹ _____.
2. It was to be a lamb without ² _____.
3. The blood was to be placed on the ³ _____ and the ⁴ _____ of every door.
4. God would see the blood and would ⁵ _____ that house (meaning they would not experience death). And this is exactly what happened in the story.

As a result of this last plague, the Pharaoh let the people go. They were free. God then led them back to the land that he had given them. But along the way, He had them stop so that he could give them His commandments and certain rituals that he wanted them to follow. Some of these rituals involved animal sacrifices, for example, to atone for when a person sinned.

Leviticus 4:27-31 – ²⁷Now if anyone of the common people sins unintentionally in doing any of the things which the LORD has commanded not to be done, and becomes guilty, ²⁸if his sin which he has committed is made known to him, then he shall bring for his offering a goat, a female without defect, for his sin which he has committed. ²⁹He shall lay his hand on the head of the sin offering and slay the sin offering at the place of the burnt offering. ³⁰The priest shall take some of its blood with his finger and put it on the horns of the altar of burnt offering; and all the rest of its blood he shall pour out at the base of the altar. ³¹Then he shall remove all its fat, just as the fat was removed from the sacrifice of peace offerings; and the priest shall offer it up in smoke on the altar for a soothing aroma to the LORD. Thus the priest shall make atonement for him, and he will be forgiven.”

These verses say that:

1. A person is ⁶ _____ before God when he sins even if he doesn't realize it.
2. He was to bring a female goat, lay his hand upon its head and ⁷ _____ it.
3. The priest was to take some of its ⁸ _____ and smear it on the ⁹ _____.
4. God would see the blood and be satisfied, and the man's ¹⁰ _____ would be atoned for (which means to cover) and he would be forgiven.

This procedure applied to every person in the nation and would have to be done every time a person sinned. Can you imagine doing this every time you sin? We can see how effective God's message would get across if a person did this every time he sinned and obeyed the ritual the way he was supposed to.

What was God's message in all of this? What was He trying to say?

1. The penalty for sin is ¹¹ _____. And in order for us to get back into right standing with God, our sin must be paid for. There must be a death. And what God has provided is that another living being can shed its blood and die in our place as our substitute. When this happens, our sin is atoned for (or covered) by the blood of the innocent one who died in our place. And when God sees the blood, He passes over us so that we do not experience death but life – spiritual life. A relationship with Him can be restored. Our sin can be taken care of so that we can know God in a personal way. But for this to happen there must be bloodshed, a life given in exchange for our life. (Leviticus 17:11 – “*For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you on the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood by reason of the life that makes atonement.*”)
2. This is God's plan. This is His way of providing a bridge to life and there is no other way that will do. This is why God did not accept Adam and Eve's way of covering their sin. It was because there was no blood involved. There was no life given in exchange to atone or cover their sin. So God provided animal skins which meant that an animal had to die so that they could be covered. In another instance, two priests (Nadab and Abihu – Leviticus 10:1-2) tried to bring a sacrifice of incense to God and God struck them down so that they died. Why? Because He didn't want people to get the wrong message. There is no other way to God except through the shedding of the blood of an innocent and sacrificial life.
3. This is why any of man's attempts to be good enough to be accepted by God all fall short. Whether it's good deeds, giving to charity, working at a food bank or mission, joining a church or synagogue, being baptized, or anything else – it all falls short. Why? Two reasons:
 - a. A blood sacrifice is not involved.
 - b. God is the one who has to provide the sacrifice. He was the one who provided for Adam and Eve. He was the one who provided the Passover lamb bridge for Moses and the Israelites. He was the one who provided the animal sacrifice bridge to atone for the Israelites sins.

“The Bridge to Life” Part 1 conclusion:

God's bridge to life is through the “exchange of life” principle. A life must be ¹² _____ in our place (be exchanged for us) so that our ¹³ _____ might be paid for and that we might be ¹⁴ _____ to a right relationship with God.

The priests who helped out with animal sacrifices did so day after day after day. Why? The reason is because people kept sinning and therefore they had to keep offering a sacrifice for each sin.

This begs the question then, “Why didn't God provide a sacrifice offered once for all whereby sin is paid for, for all time?”

The Bridge to Life - Part 2

In the last section, we saw how God took the initiative to restore man back from his sinful condition to once again have a personal relationship with Him. However, we saw that before that could happen, man's sin had to be taken care of. And we saw how God instituted a plan whereby this could happen. This plan is called the "exchange of life" plan or principle. The idea is that since the penalty for sin is death and man has sinned, then another living being can die in man's place so that man could live and have a relationship with God. We saw that at first God's method of doing this was through animal sacrifices. Each time a person sinned, he was to bring an innocent animal, without defect, lay his hands upon its head (which was to signify that this animal was now being identified with him and his sin), kill the animal, and its blood would be smeared on the altar. The result was that the person's sin would be atoned for, at least until the next time he sinned. Then he would have to do it all over again. We ended the last section with the question, "Has God provided a sacrifice offered once for all whereby sin is paid for, for all time?" The answer is He has!

The Final Sacrifice

The animal sacrifices God had provided were to merely be a temporary system. Not only that, but they were also to serve as a picture or foreshadowing of God's ultimate and final sacrifice for sin. That sacrifice or "bridge to life" as we're calling it, was to be very special and it was a sacrifice only He could provide. Starting way back in Genesis and all throughout the Old Testament, God gave certain prophecies (foretelling of the future) concerning this final sacrifice. This final sacrifice was to come from heaven to earth in the form of a man, and was to have the title of "Messiah" or "Christ." They both mean the same thing. They mean "anointed one." In other words, this final sacrifice was to come to earth, be anointed or empowered by God's Holy Spirit, and offer Himself up as the once and for all sacrifice for sin.

God gave over 300 of these prophecies in order to let people know how to recognize the Christ when He came. There were certain qualifications or credentials that the Christ was to have in order to rightfully have that title. The good news is that there has been a person in history who has met all these qualifications. His name is Jesus. He was born in Bethlehem and lived in Nazareth. The name "Jesus" means "salvation." And that was exactly why He came...to save people from their sins.

The prophet Isaiah foretold of the coming of Christ:

Isaiah 7:14 – *"Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold a virgin will be with child and bear a son, and she will call His name Immanuel."*

Immanuel means "God is with us." This prophecy was fulfilled through Mary, the mother of Jesus:

Luke 1:31 – *"And behold, you will conceive in your womb, and bear a son, and you shall name Him Jesus."*

Luke 1:34-35 – *"And Mary said to the angel, 'How can this be, since I am a virgin?'. And the angel answered and said to her, 'The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; and for that reason the holy offspring shall be called the Son of God'."*

The reason that this final sacrifice was so special is because it was to be God Himself in the person of His Son!

It can be seen that Jesus Christ was not of the seed of Adam and therefore did not have a sinful nature. He, through His virgin birth, was God become man, one perfect man with two natures – one nature being that divine nature of God, the other nature being that of man – but man without sin:

Hebrews 4:15 – *"For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin."*

The combination of the two natures became the God-man ¹ _____.

Why did Jesus Christ, God's Son, come to earth as this God-man? The answer is found in Matthew 1:21 – *"And she will bear a Son; and you shall call His name Jesus, for it is He who will save His people from their sins."* It is mans sinful nature that causes man to sin. As stated previously – we, man, sin because we are ² _____. We are not sinners because we sin. We cannot keep from sinning because of our natures. The Bible says we are not free men, for when a man sins, he is a slave to sin:

John 8:34 – *"Jesus answered them, 'Truly, truly I say to you, everyone who commits sin is the slave of sin.'"*

We are free only to choose in how we are going to sin. Sin is what keeps man separated from God because God is holy and cannot tolerate sin in His presence. Christ came to save us from those sins brought about by our sinful nature, so that our relationship with God can be reestablished once and for all.

Jesus Christ accomplished His act of salvation for mankind by the offering up of Himself to be crucified upon a cross. Why – so that our sins may be forgiven:

Hebrews 9:22 – *"And according to the Law, one may almost say, all things are cleansed with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no forgiveness."*

1 Peter 2:24 – *"And He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed."*

1 Peter 3:18 – *"For Christ also died for sins once for all, the just for the unjust, in order that He might bring us to God, having been put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit."*

2 Corinthians 5:21 – *"He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him."*

So, through the shedding of His blood for us, we have a means whereby our sins can be ³ _____.

Can you think of a loving father or mother who, when their child is sick and suffering, would not gladly take the sickness and suffering upon themselves if they could? This is exactly what Jesus Christ did for us, because of His love for us. He took our sins (our sickness) upon Himself and bore them in His body for us. By His death, He paid the penalty for our sin. The penalty for our sin is death – eternal separation from God. Furthermore, the sinful nature we have that cannot relate to God was crucified with Christ:

Galatians 2:20 – *"I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and delivered Himself up for me."*

Is there another way to restore our relationship with God and not be subject to our sinful nature? No, the only way is through Jesus Christ:

John 14:6 – *"Jesus said to him, 'I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but through Me.'"*

But how do we know that Jesus was the Christ, the Messiah? On the next page, we will look at just a few of the credentials for the Messiah and also see how Jesus met these credentials almost 2,000 years ago.

Messianic Prophecies & Fulfillment

Subject	Old Testament Prophecy	New Testament Fulfillment
Seed of a woman	Genesis 3:15	Luke 2:7; Galatians 4:4
Ancestry from David	Jeremiah 23:5-6	Matthew 1:1
Born of a virgin	Isaiah 7:14	Luke 1:26-31
Place of birth	Micah 5:2	Matthew 2:1
Declared the Son of God	Psalms 2:7	Matthew 3:17
Miraculous works	Isaiah 35:5-6	Matthew 15:30-31
Triumphal entry	Zechariah 9:9	Mark 11:7-11
Reception	Isaiah 53:1-3	John 12:37-38
Betrayed by a close friend	Psalms 41:9	Luke 22:47-48
Betrayed for thirty pieces of silver	Zechariah 11:12	Matthew 26:15
Silent before accusers	Isaiah 53:7	Matthew 26:62-63; 27:12-14
Scourged; spat on and struck	Isaiah 53:5; Isaiah 50:6	Matthew 27:26; Matthew 26:67
Crucified (pierced)	Psalms 22:14-16; Zechariah 12:10	John 19:18, 34
Mocked	Psalms 22:7-8	Matthew 27:39-43
Dies	Isaiah 53:12	John 19:30
Dies with wicked, buried with rich	Isaiah 53:9	Matthew 27:38, 57-60
Resurrects	Isaiah 53:10; Psalms 16:10	Mark 16:6-7
Two comings	Zechariah 12:10	Matthew 24:29-30

“The Bridge to Life” Part 2 conclusion:

Jesus of Nazareth fulfilled all of the qualifications for being God’s anointed Savior, Sacrifice, and Bridge to Life.

So, if Jesus was God’s provision for our sins, what exactly does His death mean, and what then, should be our response?

The Bridge to Life - Part 3

In the last section, we saw how Jesus of Nazareth fulfilled all the prophecies about the promised Savior, Messiah, and Bridge to Life, and how He was the final sacrifice for sin. Jesus' plan of salvation, however, does not stop there. Certainly, by His death, He has provided a means whereby our sins can be forgiven. But by His grace and love, He has offered man far more. He has offered to us a new nature, His nature, by freely giving to us His very life. Well, you say, how can Christ offer man His life when He gave it up by dying for us? The answer is alarmingly simple. He's not dead! In this section, we will look even closer into what exactly His death and resurrection means and what man's response should be.

Death of Jesus of Nazareth

Hebrews 10:1-14 – “For the Law, since it has only a shadow of the good things to come and not the very form of things, can never, by the same sacrifices which they offer continually year by year, make perfect those who draw near.² Otherwise, would they not have ceased to be offered, because the worshipers, having once been cleansed, would no longer have had consciousness of sins?³ But in those sacrifices there is a reminder of sins year by year.⁴ For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.⁵ Therefore, when He comes into the world, He says, “SACRIFICE AND OFFERING YOU HAVE NOT DESIRED, BUT A BODY YOU HAVE PREPARED FOR ME;⁶ IN WHOLE BURNT OFFERINGS AND SACRIFICES FOR SIN YOU HAVE TAKEN NO PLEASURE.⁷ “THEN I SAID, ‘BEHOLD, I HAVE COME (IN THE SCROLL OF THE BOOK IT IS WRITTEN OF ME) TO DO YOUR WILL, O GOD.’”⁸ After saying above, “SACRIFICES AND OFFERINGS AND WHOLE BURNT OFFERINGS AND SACRIFICES FOR SIN YOU HAVE NOT DESIRED, NOR HAVE YOU TAKEN PLEASURE in them” (which are offered according to the Law),⁹ then He said, “BEHOLD, I HAVE COME TO DO YOUR WILL.” He takes away the first in order to establish the second.¹⁰ By this will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.¹¹ Every priest stands daily ministering and offering time after time the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins;¹² but He, having offered one sacrifice for sins for all time, SAT DOWN AT THE RIGHT HAND OF GOD,¹³ waiting from that time onward UNTIL HIS ENEMIES BE MADE A FOOTSTOOL FOR HIS FEET.¹⁴ For by one offering He has perfected for all time those who are sanctified.”

What are the major points of these verses?

1. Verse 1 – the old system of animal sacrifices was just a foreshadowing of what Jesus would do.
2. Verses 1-4 – the animal sacrifices were incapable of taking sins away permanently. They could only temporarily cover sins.
3. Verses 5-9 – Jesus willingly made Himself available as the final sacrificial lamb.
4. Verses 10-14 – only one (the final) sacrifice (for sins) resulting in forgiveness and perfect standing with God forever, made available to all. (The priests had to stand showing a continuous ministry, while Jesus sat down, showing His ministry is finished.)
 - a. Verses 13-14 – Jesus' sacrifice is not only better, it is the best.
 - b. Verse 14 – Jesus was without sin. But how could this be? Jesus was not only God come down in the flesh, but He was also a man, a human being. How could He not have a sin nature like the rest of us who make a habit of sinning?
 - i. The answer is that Jesus was born of a ¹ _____. Apparently, though women carry the sin nature, they do not transmit it. Apparently the men are the ones that actually pass it on. Therefore, Jesus was born of a virgin through the Holy Spirit, making it possible for Him to be a man and yet insuring that He would be without a sin nature. (See [Luke 1:26-35](#)).
 - ii. This is also why all the sacrificial animals had to be without defect because they were symbolic of Jesus who was ² _____ sin.

Why did Jesus have to be sinless?

1. Remember the wages or penalty of sin is ³ _____. Death not only physically, but ⁴ _____ as well. A separation between us and God.
2. The death of Jesus was significant not just because he died physically, but also because He died spiritually.
 - a. Can a dead person die? No, because he is already dead. Before someone can die they have to be alive first.
 - b. The Bible says that because all of us have a sin nature and therefore we sin, all of us are dead spiritually and will one day die physically. Since that is the case, none of us could ever die to pay for sin because in God's eyes, we are already dead. It would take someone who did not have a sin nature. And that is what Jesus was and why He had to be ⁵ _____. (1 Peter 1:18-19; Hebrews 4:15; 2 Corinthians 5:21).

Resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth

We said earlier that although Jesus died on the cross for our sins, yet He did not stay dead, but rose from the grave:

1 Corinthians 15:3-6 – *"³For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, ⁴and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, ⁵and that He appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. ⁶After that He appeared to more than five hundred brethren at one time, most of whom remain until now, but some have fallen asleep,"*

So many times, theologians leave Christ dead – 'He died for our sins', they say. And indeed he did! But death did not keep its grip on Him. He arose from the dead, never to die again:

Luke 24:6-7 – *"He is not here, but He has risen. Remember how He spoke to you while He was still in Galilee, saying that the Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again."*

Romans 6:9 – *"Knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, is never to die again; death no longer is master over Him."*

God's redemptive plan for man would have been incomplete if only a means was provided for the forgiveness of our sins. What, after having been forgiven, would have kept us from being subject to our sinful nature and once again sinning? Nothing! But Christ has offered us His very life, a life that is eternal and victorious over sin. He gives to the repentant man His Holy Spirit!

Acts 2:38 – *"Peter said to them, "Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the **Holy Spirit**."*

Romans 5:5 – *"and hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the **Holy Spirit** who was given to us."*

1 Corinthians 6:19 – *"Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the **Holy Spirit** who is in you, whom you have from God...?"*

Ephesians 1:13 – *"In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation—having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the **Holy Spirit** of promise,"*

2 Timothy 1:14 – *"Guard, through the **Holy Spirit** who dwells in us, the treasure which has been entrusted to you."*

That same holiness God breathed into man when He made him in the Garden of Eden, Christ now offers to us again, through the person of His Holy Spirit! The Holy Spirit is the third person in the Godhead – the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The ⁶ _____ is the very likeness of the righteousness and attributes of God and Christ.

With Jesus Christ's very nature (Holy Spirit) living within man, mans sinful nature can be put to death and made powerless and man can be made alive (spiritually) once again:

Romans 6:6-7 – *"⁶ Knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him, in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin; ⁷ for he who has died is freed from sin".*

Romans 6:11 – *"Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus." Man's sinful nature and God's Holy Spirit cannot exist together. Christ provided a way whereby man can have his entire human, sinful nature changed.*

For those who will, Christ has offered man redemption that will get man into Heaven, but He has also offered man His Holy Spirit which gets God out of Heaven and into man! Therefore, mans destiny here on earth can be changed.

The major points of Jesus' sinless life, death and resurrection are that:

1. Jesus was foreshadowed in the Passover and the animal sacrifices.
2. Jesus superseded (or is a better way than) the old system by being a perfect and once for all sacrifice.
3. Jesus is the only bridge from death to life for man (1 Timothy 2:3-5; John 14:6).

How does one cross the bridge to life?

It isn't enough just to know about Jesus and that He is the bridge to life. Knowledge does not get us back into right standing with God. God offers us the opportunity, a free gift, to have all of our sins forgiven and to know Him in a personal way.

Romans 6:23 says, *"For the wages of sin is death, but the **free gift** of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."*

When someone offers us a gift on our birthday they offer it to us out of love. We can't say, "Thank you very much. I deserve this. I worked very hard all year long for this and it's only right that I get this." We can't say it because we know it's a gift. It is something we don't deserve. Not only that, but the gift isn't really ours until we reach out and take it, until we actually receive the gift.

In the same way, God offers us His free gift of salvation. It isn't something we can work for. It isn't something we deserve. It's a gift. And God desires that we receive His gift.

2 Peter 3:9 – *"The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance."*

But crossing the bridge to life requires faith.

John 3:16 – *"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life."*

This verse says that *"whoever believes in Him..."* Each of us could put our name in place of the word "whoever".

Hebrews 11:6 – *"And without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him."*

This verse shows the importance of ⁷ _____. Faith is another word for believing – an inner conviction in something (e.g., God's Word), or someone (e.g., Jesus). Trust is a word often considered interchangeable with faith, but it is different. Trust has a deeper meaning and has to do with relationships. Trust places a person in complete confidence or dependence upon another. In essence, trust is faith in action.

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

This verse says to “*Trust in the Lord*”. In essence, lean upon Him for life and sustenance and not upon yourself. For you to lean upon Him, you must first believe (have faith) that God exists, that He is who He says He is, and that what He says is true.

God says that His gift can only be received by faith, by putting our trust in Jesus alone to forgive us our sins and to bring us into right standing with God. When we trust in Jesus alone, it shows God that we trust Him and that we're not depending on our own power, merits, or works for salvation.

What is the very foundation of a solid earthly relationship – with friends, with co-workers, with spouses? It is the fact that you trust him/her and he/she trusts you. Without that, there is really no relationship at all. In the same way, without believing God's Word and His promise that if we trust in the death of Jesus to pay for our sins and in His resurrection to give us eternal life, then we cannot have a personal relationship with God. We cannot be in right standing with Him. We may know about God and believe that He exists, but we do not know Him.

The simple, good news of the Bible

Romans 3:21-28 – ²¹*But now apart from the Law the righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets,* ²²*even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe; for there is no distinction;* ²³*for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,* ²⁴*being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus;* ²⁵*whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith. This was to demonstrate His righteousness, because in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed;* ²⁶*for the demonstration, I say, of His righteousness at the present time, so that He would be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.* ²⁷*Where then is boasting? It is excluded. By what kind of law? Of works? No, but by a law of faith.* ²⁸*For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from works of the Law.”*

Romans 10:9-13 – ⁹*that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved;* ¹⁰*for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation.* ¹¹*For the Scripture says, “WHOEVER BELIEVES IN HIM WILL NOT BE DISAPPOINTED.”* ¹²*For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all, abounding in riches for all who call on Him;* ¹³*for “WHOEVER WILL CALL ON THE NAME OF THE LORD WILL BE SAVED.”*

When we believe God at His Word, and put our faith and trust in Jesus to take away our sins, all of them, then He promises to do just that and to give us eternal life. He will change our destiny here on earth, and our eternal destination after this life!

All men will face judgment for their sins, if they die in their sins.

Acts 17:30-31 – ³⁰*Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all everywhere should repent,* ³¹*because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed.”*

Christ's judgment will be just.

John 5:30 – *"I can do nothing on My own initiative. As I hear, I judge; and My judgment is just, because I do not seek My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me,"* Romans 6:23 says, *"For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."*

We learned earlier in this study that death takes on two forms. In actuality, death takes on three forms:

1. **Physical death** – separation of spirit and soul from the body
2. **Spiritual death** – separation from God; man is dead in his sins
3. **Eternal death** – if man dies in his sins, he will stand before God for judgment

When God judges a man for his sins, his sins will separate him from God forever. This is Hell!

Revelation 20:13-15 – *"¹³And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead which were in them; and they were judged, every one of them according to their deeds. ¹⁴Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. ¹⁵And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire."*

The alternative to Hell is Heaven. After physical death, for all those who have accepted Jesus Christ's free gift, this is where man will spend eternity with God.

"The Bridge to Life" Part 3 conclusion:

Jesus of Nazareth is the Bridge to Life, eternal life, and the way to right standing with God. When a person realizes their need to have their sins forgiven once for all, and desires to have a personal relationship with God, they can do so. How? They can admit that they are a sinner and in need of Jesus to bring them into right standing with God by simply expressing that in a prayer. There is nothing magical about the prayer and whether they say the right words or not, for God looks at the sincerity of their hearts. A prayer like the following, said in sincerity and in the quietness of their hearts, is sufficient:

"Lord God, I realize that I am a sinner and I want to have a personal relationship with you. I believe your Son Jesus died for my sins, and I accept His atonement for my sins. Thank you that He died for me and rose from the dead to give me eternal life and forgiveness of sins. I invite you now into my life to be my Lord and Savior. Amen."

When a person prays a prayer similar to this and means it sincerely, then their ⁸ _____ are forgiven and Jesus will come into their life and never leave them. They now have all their sins forgiven. They've become a child of God, and He has given them eternal ⁹ _____.

1 John 5:11-13 says, *"¹¹ And the testimony is this, that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. ¹² He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life. ¹³ These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may **know** that you have eternal life."*

Answer Key

What Is God Really Like – Part 1

1	God is light
2	Warmth; sustains life
3	Speech; works; heavens
4	The prophets
5	His Son
6	The Lord is One
7	Changes
8	Love

What Is God Really Like – Part 2

1	Spirit; truth
2	Compassionate and gracious; abounding in love
3	Faithful
4	Forgiving and good
5	In control
6	Holy
7	Righteous
8	All knowing; limitless
9	Everlasting; eternal

What Is Man Really Like – Part 1

1	Man
2	Image and likeness
3	Glory
4	Knowledge of Good and Evil
5	Death
6	Shame

What Is Man Really Like – Part 2	
1	Ashamed
2	Hide
3	Devil
4	Child birth
5	Die
6	Sin
7	Sinner
8	Man
9	Death
10	Sinner

The Bridge to Life – Part 1	
1	Killed (slaughtered)
2	Defect
3	Sides
4	Tops
5	Pass over
6	Guilty
7	Kill (slaughter)
8	Blood
9	Altar
10	Sins
11	Death
12	Sacrificed
13	Sins
14	Restored

The Bridge to Life – Part 2	
1	Jesus Christ
2	Sinners
3	Forgiven (or atoned for)

The Bridge to Life – Part 3	
1	Virgin
2	Without
3	Death
4	Spiritually
5	Sinless
6	Holy Spirit
7	Faith
8	Sins
9	Life