

BELIEF IN A GOD YOU CAN'T SEE

by Bart Larson

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My thanks to those who had the courage to challenge my belief in God. You forced me to logically express what I knew to be true in my heart. I also thank those who gave me truthful feedback and helped in the editing of this booklet, especially my wife.

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**“...the great
divide is...
not between
finders and
nonfinders,
but between
seekers and nonseekers.”**

—Peter Kreeft

INTRODUCTION

I would like to invite you on a journey that could change your life. Where are we going? What is our destination?—To find God. I know this is a tall order. You may or may not even believe in God, and that is OK for now. I would rather travel with an honest doubter than a closed-minded believer.

Before we leave, I have two favors to ask of you. The first is that you “*cut me some slack.*” Before you write me off or jump ship, will you at least read what I have to say? That is part of being open-minded.—Which leads me to my second request: will you reserve judgment on this booklet until you have finished reading all of it? Wait until we have reached our destination before you pass judgment on the trip itself. You may find this voyage mentally and emotionally grueling, but I guarantee you, once you reach port, it will have been worth the effort.

There was a man in a mental institution, named George, so the story goes, who believed he was dead. No matter what anyone would say or do they could not convince him he was alive. One day a young mental caseworker had an idea. He said, “*Tell me, George, do dead men bleed?*” George thought for a minute and said, “*No, dead men don’t bleed.*” The caseworker took a needle, pricked George’s finger, and squeezed. A small drop of blood appeared. George’s eyes grew big as he saw the blood and he said, “*Well, what do you know. Dead men do bleed!*”

Like George, no matter how much evidence I present, I cannot convince you of anything against your will—nor will I try. Therefore, if you are interested in arriving at the truth, it is crucial that you maintain an open mind. That is the one thing I cannot give you as we embark upon this journey. The fact is, the truth about God, whatever that is, will affect you *forever*. Only a fool would ignore something of such magnitude.

Let me begin by asking you a rather blunt question: “*Do you really want to know the truth about God?*”—This is not as dumb as it may sound. If you are like most people, you are starting this trip with some emotional baggage. Some have deep emotional reasons and/or hidden agendas for *not* wanting to believe in God—like the woman who said, “*I refuse to believe in a God who would allow my dad to rape me when I was a child.*” Or like the man who said, “*I don’t want to believe in God, because God would probably not approve of my sex life.*” Or, “*If I believe in God I fear it will limit my personal freedom.*” Or, “*The thought of there being a God scares me.*”

While I sympathize with these people, and my heart aches for many of them, they miss the point. Without wanting to sound harsh or cruel, if God exists, God is under no obligation to meet their, or our, expectations. The issue is one of *existence*, not *preference*.—It is an issue of *truth*. We must adjust our beliefs to what *is*, not what we would *like to be* true. Does God *really* exist? That is the issue. What God is like is a question which we can explore later.

Can you identify the baggage you are taking with you on this trip? Fear? Hurt? Anger? Pride? Prejudice? Judgmentalism? Selfishness?—I personally don’t care what baggage you’re taking with you as long as you recognize you have it. Otherwise such *baggage* is like a hidden time-bomb, capable of sinking our ship. It is hard to change or heal what you are unwilling to acknowledge.

THE JOURNEY BEGINS

The most awesome concept to ever enter the mind of man is God, and the possibility of God’s existence. Our trip begins with a simple question, “*Does God exist?*” If you already believe in God, this part of the trip should be rather enjoyable. If you don’t, what I am about to share may take you out of your comfort zone, which is probably good.—Most growth occurs outside our comfort zones.

There are several reasons why I think you should settle the issue of God, if you haven’t already done so. First, is for the sake of *truth*. Wouldn’t you hate to wake up on the other side of this life, assuming such a life exists, only to discover that you’d lived a lie and turned your back on the truth about God?

Second, is for *peace of mind*. By figuring out whether God exists, you can put your mind at ease. If you conclude there is no God, then throw caution to the wind. Party all you want. In a sense you win, for you can now be the center of your own world. You are pretty much free to live life as you want, that is until they bury you.

On the other hand, if you search for God, and you find God, then you also come out a winner, for now you are tapped into the Source and Creator of all pleasure, the Creator of life itself. Again, you win. The only way you end up losing is by being too afraid, or too proud, to settle the issue of God’s existence.

Belief in God is not a casual hit or miss proposition. What you believe, or don’t believe, about God will affect the way you see yourself, others, and all of life.—Go for it! Settle the issue once and for all. If you are used to putting time, effort, and resources into getting what you want in this life, which is but a split second compared to eternity, then why not put

some serious thought and effort into something you know is going to affect you, one way or the other, *forever*? Whether you're there to enjoy it or not, time and eternity, are before you.

To help you better understand what is at stake, let's assume we have two people; John and Mary. John is an atheist [one who believes there is *no God*]. Mary, on the other hand, is convinced God exists. Question: "*Does it make any difference who is right?*" "*Does it really matter if there is a God?*"—Take a look at life through the eyes of John and Mary and decide for yourself.

Let's begin with John. For sake of argument, **let's assume for a moment that John is right, and there is NO GOD.** According to John's beliefs, how would he say life came into existence?—Answer: he would say the whole universe and all life evolved from nothing. He would view himself as the by-product of evolution.

Would John say humans have any basic worth or value?—If we are nothing more than a bunch of chemicals accidentally stuck together, how could we have inherent value? The answer is, "*No.*" Animals, plants, people, etc. are only *things*. We're nothing more than an accident of nature.

Would there be a purpose for our existence? If John is a true atheist, he would have to answer, "*No.*" If life on earth is nothing more than, pardon the expression, something the universe barfed out by accident, how could there be a higher purpose? Life for John would be a short party, at best. Once the party is over, it's over. Do not pass "Go." Do not collect \$200. The End.

In John's opinion, would real moral rights and wrongs exist?—Probably not. According to his naturalistic, materialistic beliefs, man is merely an *advanced life form* in the animal kingdom. John would likely view society's teaching about right and wrong as cultural, or as the result of some self-preservation genes.

In any event, John would probably look upon truth as *relative* [in other words, not concrete, always subject to change].—"*What's true for you may not be true for me.*" There would be no absolute truth, no definite right or wrong. The one exception might be when it comes to science. Atheists often treat science as sacred. However, John must watch how he expresses his belief that there are no absolutes. If he says, "*There are no absolutes,*" he just made an *absolute* statement. If John says, "*There is no such thing as truth,*" he opens himself to the question, "*And you know this to be true, John?*" [All such statements are self-contradicting.]

Since John would not believe in moral absolutes of right and wrong, good or evil, he could justify doing anything he liked if he really believed there were no God. He could do drugs or chase women all he wanted. Practically speaking, rape or even murder would not be *wrong*. John could say, "*If your chemicals don't like what my chemicals do to you, tough.*"

For example, this type of thinking was/is behind much of atheistic Communism: "*What's the big deal about killing people if it is for the good of the state? They're only things.*"—In like manner, and I'm not trying to be insensitive, Hitler would not have been *wrong* if wrongs do not exist. A father who abuses or murders his child, or Satanists who ritually sacrifice a baby, are not *wrong* if there is no such thing as evil or wrong.—Correct? [What is sad to me is that there are those in our society who actually think this way. It's scary.]

In subtle, and not so subtle ways, if John were totally consistent with his atheistic beliefs [which few atheists are], that people are nothing more than *things*, such beliefs would affect the way he treats others and himself.

Latest statistics report that 100% of every generation will die sooner or later. If John is right, and there is no God, when he dies, on his tombstone they will write, "*The End!*"—John's life for time and eternity is over. For John this thought could be a real bummer. All his dreams and aspirations will end at death.

Now, let's look at life through Mary's eyes. **Let's assume, again for sake of argument, that GOD DOES EXIST.** How would Mary answer these same questions? How would she say life came into existence?—Answer: She would say that, by whatever means, God created not only her, but the entire universe. Whether it took six days [instant creation], or six billion years [called theistic, God-directed evolution], the universe would show signs of intelligence and creative design. Time is not the issue. Whether an artist takes days or years to create a masterpiece, it is still a work of art, not an accident.

Would Mary say people have real value and worth? Yes. According to her beliefs, people were creatively conceived in the heart and mind of God. Since God doesn't create junk, we are of great value. Such a belief would greatly increase her sense of confidence and self-worth. She would also, hopefully, treat people with dignity and worth, because people are in some degree created in the image of God.

Do you suppose Mary would believe she has a special reason [purpose] for living?—Yes, to know and love God, to do God's will by helping and serving others. Life on earth is but preparation for eternity. For her the best is yet to come.

From Mary's perspective, would she believe that good and evil, right and wrong exist?—Of course. If there is divine

intelligence behind the universe, then things which conform to that intelligence would be *right*, and things which violate that wisdom, would be *wrong*. She would say, “*Good is good, and evil is evil. What Hitler did was evil. Good and evil are not to be confused.*”

Like John, someday Mary is going to die. If she was right, and there is a God, then what?—On her tombstone they’ll write, “*The Beginning!*”

By looking at John and Mary, can you see how John’s world view could lead to feelings of worthlessness, hopelessness, and despair, while Mary’s view could give her a sense of hope, both in this life and the next? While such differences do not prove or disprove the notion of God, do you see how the way you think about God would dramatically affect the way you see life? It would also likely affect the way you treat others and yourself.

Imagine a piece of chalk the size of a telephone pole [50-60 feet tall], and a chalkboard hundreds of miles long. Pretend you take that huge piece of chalk and draw a thin line that goes and goes and goes—until the chalk runs out. Think of this as a time line representing eternity [although obviously with eternity the chalk line never ends]. Now, put a tiny dot at the front end of that line, and let it represent your whole life here on earth compared to eternity. First, does it matter whether God exists and who is right, John or Mary?—Sure it does. If there is no God, you might as well erase the line, for when you die the party is over. In which case, you should drink all the enjoyment you can out of this tiny dot of time, for that is all you will *ever* get.

On the other hand, if God is real, and there is an afterlife, then nothing on earth could be more important. You are literally at the beginning of *forever*; be it good, bad, or otherwise. Things such as war, AIDS, making money, marriage, having kids, national freedom, getting an education—even sex—would not begin to compare in importance to that which will affect you eternally.

It is a sobering thought, but true; this very instant you are one breath and one heartbeat away from eternity. And, depending on who is right, John or Mary, you are facing either eternal nothingness, or never-ending life of some sort.

When Bill Gates, currently the richest man in the world, dies, do you know how much money he’ll leave?—All of it. [You never see a hearse pulling a U-Haul trailer.] One thousand years from now it will not have mattered whether you drove a Porche or an old used Chevy with rusted fenders, whether you lived in a shack or a mansion, whether you were educated or uneducated, whether you were married or single, or whether you were rich or poor. What will matter one thousand years from now is whether God exists and whether there is life after death. Your life on earth is either all there is, the end of the road, or it is the first stop on an infinite journey. You have absolutely no say in the matter. All you can do is try to determine which destination is true, and adjust your life accordingly. Only when you have made your peace with God, time, and eternity will you ever know true peace of mind.

ATHEISM OR AGNOSTICISM?

Since the advent of the theory of evolution, many in our society, especially teenagers, college students, and faculty, are finding it politically correct to declare themselves as either atheists or agnostics. These two terms have their roots in the Greek language. In Greek the letter “*a*” means “*no*.” The word for *God* is “*theos*.” Therefore, an “*a-theo-ist*” [atheist] is one who says there is *no God*. The term agnostic comes from the word “*gnosis*,” from which we get the word *knowledge*. An *agnostic* is one who *does not know* whether God exists.

So, which is the most open-minded, atheism or agnosticism?—Actually, agnosticism is the most open-minded. For an atheist to confidently say there is no God seems a bit arrogant. To claim to know that in this vast universe, in this dimension, or any other dimension of reality, there is no God is a bit presumptuous. A person would almost have to be God to have such knowledge. Claiming to *know* there is no God is like two fleas on a dog in Kansas discussing the existence of kangaroos in Australia. They’re in no position to say.

It is not intellectually honest to claim to know the unknowable. To say there is no God is an unprovable statement. At least agnostics acknowledge their limitations; that, just maybe, there could be a God outside their realm of knowledge.

There are two types of agnostics: those who say, “*I don’t know, and I don’t want to know,*” and those who say, “*I don’t know, but I am open to knowing.*” Peter Kreeft, a philosopher professor at Boston College, said, “*the great divide is . . . not between finders and nonfinders, but between seekers and nonseekers.*” I agree. Are you a seeker? If you are, and God exists, then I believe that God is big enough to show you. And, because I believe God is personal, I believe God desires to show you. The question is whether you are open to being shown. No amount of believing can bring God into existence, if God does not already exist; nor can any amount of doubt destroy God if God does exist.

I do not want you to believe in God because it will make you feel better, although it will, but because belief in God

is a matter of truth. It is not about being sincere or having good feelings. Believing in Santa Claus may make you feel good. You might be sincere in your beliefs, but you would be sincerely wrong. It is hard to believe something in your *heart*, unless you first believe it to be true in your *head*. That is why doubt must often precede faith. It's OK; ask the tough questions.

The search for God might be compared to the little boy who went fishing for the first time with his dad. He had never seen a real fish, and for all he knew fish were a figment of the imagination. His dad taught him how to bait the hook, toss it in the water, and then watch for the cork to bob. After an hour or so of fishing, without so much as a bite, the boy was becoming pretty *agnostic* about fish. Then it happened. His cork bobbed and went under the water, his fishing line began to move, and he felt a tugging on the other end. All of a sudden his agnosticism about fish changed to fear. “*What’s on the other end of the line?*” “*Will it hurt me?*” “*Maybe it’s a shark!*”

The search for God is much the same. I cannot tell you what you will find on the other end of the line, but I respect anyone with enough courage to throw his or her line into the water. All I can do is help you bait your hook.

People who begin to grasp the issues of God’s existence, and how complex our universe is, will have unanswered questions.—I must confess: as a believer in God, there are days when I am overwhelmed by the whole notion of God. My mind cannot comprehend how awesome and powerful a God it would take to create our universe and other dimensions of reality. My brain short-circuits thinking about it.

On the other hand, thinking atheists must also have days when they doubt their beliefs and speculations. I cannot imagine how anyone can look at our universe with all its complexity, beauty, and apparent design, and say all of this just happened by chance—that from non-life came life, that from unthinking matter came thoughts and feelings, and that blind atoms bumping into each other could eventually produce an Einstein, a kitten, a rose, or a butterfly.

And further, how could all of this come from absolutely *nothing*? Evolution assumes that either energy and/or matter has always existed. In logic terms, this *begs the question*. Evolutionists assume an unproven part of their argument to be true, and then build their whole case upon something unproven.—Where did energy and/or matter come from for evolution to occur? To me, it seems there had to be an uncreated *First Cause* [God] to start the whole process.

If you believe in the Big Bang, who lit the fuse? [For what it’s worth, thanks to the Hubble Telescope, it seems our universe may not be expanding from a central point as we would expect if the Big Bang were true. Rather, the galaxies in our universe seem to be going in a whole bunch of different directions. This has been quite unsettling to many astronomers and physicists around the world.]

Let’s both acknowledge at the outset: **there are no easy answers. True answers? Possibly. Easy answers? No.** Moving from atheism to honest agnosticism, to me, is the first step in being open to *all* truth. Ruling out the possibility of God, without inquiry, is not even good science.

GAINING PERSPECTIVE

A few years ago I read a book entitled *The Cosmic Mind Boggling Book*, and then some time later, a second book, entitled *Galaxies*. After reading these two books, my concept of the universe changed drastically. Could such a vast and complex universe as ours come about purely by chance?—You be the judge.

To help put things in perspective, let’s take two journeys; one across our universe, and another into the realm of atoms. Fasten your seat belt and let’s begin.

On the first leg of our trip, we are going to take a journey to the sun. If there were a highway from earth to the sun, at fifty-five miles per hour, it would take us 193 years to drive there.—Now, since we’re having such a great time, let’s say we decide to take a little drive on over to Alpha Centauri. [Alpha Centauri is a triple star system with two large stars, Alpha and Beta Centauri, with a third smaller star, Proxima Centauri, orbiting the other two. Proxima Centauri is the closest star to our earth, not counting our sun.] Driving at fifty-five miles per hour, how long do you think it would take us to drive there?

To give you an idea, we could drive for 50,000 years, 100,000 years, 500,000 years, a million years, 10 million years, 20 million years—and we wouldn’t even be halfway there. Finally, 52 million years later, at fifty-five miles per hour, we would arrive at Proxima Centauri.

Light, they say, currently travels at 186,000 miles per second, which is roughly 6 trillion miles per year. In the time it would take you to say, “*one thousand one*,” which is approximately one second, light from the light bulb in the room where you’re likely reading, could have traveled around our entire earth almost seven and one-half times [if it were to go in a circle]. Traveling at this incredible speed, it takes light from Proxima Centauri almost four and one-third years to reach earth.

There are known star systems that are billions of light years away from us. If it would take us 52 million years to drive 4 1/3 light years, imagine how long it would take us to drive several billion light years.

Our sun and nine [possibly ten?] planets form the *solar system*. If we were on Pluto, the furthest known planet from the sun, our sun would look like another star.

Our solar system is part of a larger *galaxy* [a cluster of many stars] called the Milky Way, which is made up of an estimated 250 billion stars. Our sun is one of those stars, and a small one at that [a yellow dwarf star].

To put our earth in perspective with the Milky Way, imagine a one inch square with 200 microscopic dots inside it, representing 200 stars, one of which is our sun.—We have already established that it might take 52 million years to drive from one star (or dot), to another at fifty-five mph.—To grasp the size of our Milky Way, it would take 160 acres [roughly a half mile square] of those one inch squares to equal the size of the Milky Way. If the Milky Way galaxy were reduced to the size of North America [Canada, the U.S.A. and Mexico] our solar system, by comparison, would be about the size of a coffee cup. And, our Milky Way is estimated to be only one-trillionth of the known universe.

Scientists used to look through telescopes and see what they thought were other stars. Now they realize that much of what they were seeing was other galaxies. Based on the most recent information from the Hubble Telescope, scientists now estimate that there may be 50-125 billion other galaxies, made up of 100-400 billion stars each. Once some scientists directed the Hubble Telescope at what looked like a black spot in the sky, about the size of a grain of sand held at arm's length. When they enlarged the photographs of that spot, what do you think they saw?—Galaxies, galaxies, and more galaxies.

The largest star we can see with the naked eye is a star located in the southern sky in the constellation Orion. The name of the star is Betelgeuse [pronounced *beetle juice*]. It is the upper left reddish star just above Orion's belt of three stars. Betelgeuse is approximately 160 million times larger than our sun, with a diameter of approximately 250 million miles. If our earth were the size of a golf ball; by comparison, Betelgeuse would be a ball 2 miles high. If there were a tunnel through the center of that star, driving at 55 miles per hour, it would take us 1,600 years just to drive through the tunnel. [Remember it only takes 193 years to drive from here to our sun.] If Betelgeuse was where our sun is, the orbits of Mercury, Venus, Earth, Mars, and Jupiter would all be inside it.

Consider the following quote from *National Geographic* about the size of our universe [May 1974, p. 592]. "Imagine that the thickness of this page represents the distance from earth to sun [93,000,000 miles, or about eight light-minutes]. Then the distance to the nearest star [4 1/3 light years] is a 71-foot-high sheaf of paper. And the diameter of our own galaxy [100,000 light-years] is a 310-mile stack, while the edge of the known universe is not reached until the pile of paper is 31 million miles high—a third of the way to the sun!"—That pile of paper, laid on its side, would go around our earth approximately 1,240 times.

Just as I cannot even begin to fathom the vastness of our universe, neither can I comprehend atoms, the physical building blocks of the universe. The French scientist/ mathematician Pascal said that we are between the largest thing and the smallest thing we can imagine.—I agree.

How small are atoms? Whether you have had chemistry or not, put on your thinking cap again, and let's take a journey into the world of atoms.

Atoms are the smallest self-contained things in our universe. Your body, the world, anything physical, is composed of atoms. Some are lightweight, like helium, and some are heavy, like iron. Each atom has a center, called a *nucleus*. Going around the nucleus, millions of times per second, are incredibly small particles called electrons. The bigger the atom, the more electrons it has. [It used to be thought that electrons orbited the nucleus in neat little circles. Scientists now believe that electrons fly all over the place, like bees swarming around a hive.]

So, just how small are atoms?—To give you an idea, look at the period at the end of this sentence. You could put approximately 230 million HIV virus [the virus which causes AIDS] on that dot. *Each* of those 230 million tiny virus on that period would contain tens of thousands of atoms.

I have read that the simplest one-celled organism that can reproduce itself contains approximately the same number of atoms as 100 million pages of *Encyclo-pedia Britannica* contains letters of the alphabet.

Take a few seconds and look at the smallest patch of skin you can see on your hand. What you just looked at was probably a cluster of several hundred cells. Normally, you cannot see a single cell without the use of a microscope.

Scientists estimate that the average person has approximately 100 trillion cells in his/her body. To give you an idea of how big a trillion is, if you had stacks of tightly bound \$1,000 bills, a million dollars would be a stack 4 inches tall. A billion dollars would be a stack approximately 300 feet tall, and a trillion dollars would be a stack 63 miles high. 100 trillion would be a stack 6,300 miles high.

Within each cell of your body is “DNA.” It is the genetic blueprint of your body, similar to the housing blueprint a building contractor uses. DNA determines everything about you physically—your eye color, the size of your nose, etc. The DNA in your body is like a written code, just like the letters within this booklet. Our bodies read DNA. They are not like random letters of the alphabet thrown together. They are like a library of information. The question is, *who* wrote this DNA library? It is like a whole other language.

What is also amazing, is that each cell in your body contains the blueprint for your entire body. With the right technology, scientists could take the DNA from any cell of your body, and create another *you*, just like you are now. [You’ve heard the term cloning, which they have already done with sheep and other animals.] Each human cell contains a little over three billion genetic DNA codes [bits of information], and each code is made up of 4 small molecules containing six atoms each. That means there are over seventy billion atoms in each cell of your body used to make up the DNA, and that doesn’t even include the billions of other atoms used to make up the rest of the cell. Scientists estimate that an average human cell may have upwards of one trillion atoms. This means that there are probably more atoms in just once cell of your body than there are people who have ever lived on the face of planet earth.

Some estimate that if we could take all of the DNA from just one person, and unravel the spiral DNA strands, and attach them end to end, it would almost go around our solar system [sun and nine planets].

What does all of this mean? What difference does it make? A lot. Now that you know some of the complexities of our universe, and the not-so-simple atom, what are the odds that all of this could come about by chance?

Let me be very specific with where I am going with this. Atheistic evolutionists use the concepts of probability and chance to argue their case for evolution. [Probability and chance are what a guy uses when he’s thinking about asking a cute girl out for a date.—What are the odds she will say, “Yes”?]

Considering the age of our universe, and the age of our planet, doesn’t it sound reasonable to think there might be enough time for almost anything to occur by chance? Using statistics, the mathematical science of probability and chance, is this within the realm of possibility? The answer is an overwhelming, “No.” It is a virtual impossibility. Let me explain.

If I had four ping pong balls numbered 1 to 4, and I reached my hand into a basket and randomly drew out one of the balls, the odds of my drawing out the number one ball the first time would be 1 in 4. Assuming I didn’t put the #1 ball back in the basket, if I ran this experiment thousands of times, on average, the odds of my drawing all four balls out in order would occur, on average, 1 in every 24 tries [4 X 3 X 2 X 1=24].

Now, instead of four balls, what if I had 300 balls, and they too were numbered consecutively from one to 300. [Think of it as a giant lottery.—Pull all 300 balls out in sequence, and win the wealth of the entire world.] What are the odds that you or I could randomly draw all 300 balls out in the right order?

The odds of drawing the number one ball would be 1 in 300. The odds of getting all 300 balls in order would be 300 X 299 X 298 . . . [300 times]. That equals 1 X 10⁶¹⁴, or in other words, the number “1” with 614 zeros after it. As elementary as this is, remember that every time you put a zero at the end of a number, the number gets ten times larger. Add a mere five zeros to a million, and suddenly you have one hundred billion.

So, how big is a number followed by 614 zeros? Imagine you had a billion monkeys on every square inch of the earth’s surface [tiny, huh!], and each one of these billions upon billions of monkeys had a mini-typewriter, and could type at the astounding rate of one billion words per second. At the end of a billion years, do you think that even one monkey, out of these billions upon billions of monkeys, would have typed 300 letters in the right order? One would think so, but in actuality, the answer is still, “No.”

At the end of the billion years, the odds of even one of these monkeys typing the correct order of letters is still 1 X 10⁸⁰ [“1” followed by 80 zeros].—That number, 1 X 10⁸⁰, by the way, is still larger than the number of estimated atoms in the entire universe. [Recall how tiny atoms are, and imagine how many it would take to fill our universe.] The approximate distance across the known universe in inches, for example, is only 1 X 10²⁸. As incredible as it seems, if every atom in our universe represented another entire universe, and you chose one atom in one of these trillions upon trillions of universes, you would stand a far better chance of picking that one tiny atom by chance, than you would to draw out 300 balls in the right order.—Amazing, huh.

Now, let’s apply these principles to real life. Could a, so-called, simple one-celled organism have evolved by chance? The odds of the minimum number of DNA molecules, in the simplest cell that is able to reproduce itself, occurring by chance, in the right order, is not a number with a 614 zeros after it, but hundreds of thousands of zeros after it.—Before you read further, take a minute and *think* about that.

When Darwin spoke of a “*simple cell*,” he was wrong. There is no such thing as a simple cell. What he called a *simple cell* is complex beyond comprehension.

Atheists sometimes try to get around the problem of the first cell forming by chance by saying something very scholarly like this: *“I agree that at present we cannot account for how the first cell came into existence. However, the evolution of a protozoa-like cell is a matter of natural selection. And, natural selection is not a matter of mere chance. It is a matter of mutations in the DNA molecule brought about by changing environments. Such mutations are quite frequent.”*

I have no problem believing in mutations within species. I know natural selection occurs. However, let's be honest. There would have to be *a whole lot of mutating going on* for a single-cell microscopic organism to eventually mutate into a 100 trillion-celled human with a complete respiratory system, vascular system, brain, digestive system, a set of seeing eyes, etc.

As good as their arguments sound, intellectually, one cannot just *assume* the first cell came into existence by chance, and then proceed with the theory of evolution. Hear me clearly. Without the first cell, there is no theory of evolution. In 1991, John Horgan, the atheistic senior staff writer for *Scientific American*, after reviewed the status of all existing scientific theories for the origin(s) of life, said there is still no plausible way life could have begun by chance.

For the sake of argument, let's just pretend for a moment that some DNA[the genetic blueprint] did occur by chance. Do you realize that there still would be no living cell. All you would have would be the “engine,” but no body.

For life to occur there would also have to be [hang on to your hat]: “. . . carbohydrates, lipids, high energy phosphates, hormones, carotenoids, alkaloids, RNA, the correct pH, a lipid cell membrane with pores just the right diameter to allow the passage of substances in and out, an endoplasmic reticulum for protein synthesis and intracellular transportation, transfer RNA, ribosomal RNA, messenger RNA, Golgi sacs for the synthesis and packaging of glycoproteins, hundreds of mitochondria to supply the energy needs of the cell, lysosomes for housing digestive enzymes, ribosomes by the thousands for protein production, centrioles to aid cellular division, a nuclear membrane to house the chromosomes and nucleoli for producing RNA-protein complexes.” [L. Margulus: “*Microbial Evolution On The Early Earth*,” in *Chemical Evolution*, Ref. 6, P. 481].—Yeah. I knew you knew that.

Even if all of these components were present, it still would not guarantee life. All of these parts would have to come together in just the right way, in just the right proportions, at just the right time, in just the right climate [not too hot, not too cold, and not too many ultraviolet rays from the sun]. And, of course, without food the cell would die.—“*Oops. Go back to square one. Better luck next time.*”

With all of these obstacles, there is yet another major problem atheistic evolutionists face, and that is the *Law Of Entropy*. This scientific law states that all objects, if left to themselves, tend to move from a state of order to a state of disorder and decay [e.g., dead bodies decompose, cars rust, mountains wear down, clocks run down, stars burn out, the monkeys' typewriters wear out, and of course complex molecules such as RNA or DNA break down]. For atheistic evolution to work, not only would our first cell have to overcome odds approaching infinity, but it would also have to reverse the Law Of Entropy. Time, contrary to public opinion, in many ways, is the enemy of evolution.

I am not writing to debate evolution, per se, but to show that atheistic evolution is inconceivable. Even with mutations and the natural selection process, evolutionists have to admit, if they are honest, that there is no way to explain how certain living organisms in our world could have evolved by chance. For example, what organ(s) could possibly have mutated into a seeing eye or a hearing ear? How could that which was blind know to evolve an eye [or even two eyes for depth perception]? Or, how could that which was deaf know to evolve hearing? How could male and female sex organs possibly have evolved at the same time and in perfect harmony? What good would an evolved male organ be without an accompanying female womb? There are thousands of such biological mysteries that evolution cannot remotely explain by theories of chance.

Let me try to illustrate the difficulty with atheistic evolution as I see it.

Imagine a society of computers debating whether man exists. Since computers live in the realm of electrical impulses, they would never have seen a man. One computer might say, *“I reject the notion of man because such a concept interferes with my sexual freedom. If I want to interface [have sex] with Sally-Database computer down the hall, I don't want some man telling me I can't do it.”*

Another computer might say, *“Man is surely a myth for we can trace our evolution from the primordial metal fields of wire and solder, which formed the first computer chip by chance, to calculators, to personal computers, to mega computers like our Uncle Mac or Aunt Microsoft. Who needs man? The evolution of computers is so obvious!”*

One computer might respond, *“Yes, the concept of man is rather frightening. If man exists then rumors of ‘the pulled plug’ may be true after all. Further, it would mean that we are accountable to man for our performance.”*

Still another computer might say, *“To believe in man is an emotional crutch. Only computers with little ‘memory’ and*

processing abilities, who have dependent personalities, would find comfort in believing the ancient myths about man."

Stupid, you say? Computers could never evolve purely by chance, not in a billion billion years. That is my point. Computers are nothing compared to the human mind and body. If computers could never evolve by chance, how could a vastly more complex life-form, such as man, evolve by thoughtless chance? To me, there has to be a God. It takes infinitely more faith to believe in atheistic evolution than to believe in an intelligent Creator God, no matter how mind boggling it is to conceive of such a God.—**I simply don't have enough faith to be an atheist.**

There are some who think life on earth began by some extraterrestrial beings [E.T.'s] from other worlds. If that were so, which I personally don't believe, who created those life forms? All people do who believe in "E.T.'s" is shift the question of God's existence to another planet. The odds of chance evolution occurring there, I assume, would probably be about the same as here on our earth.

Allow me to make a couple closing points. Whenever we see obvious design, we always assume there was a designer. For example, if I looked up in the sky one day and the clouds spelled the words, "Eat at Joe's Pizza." I wouldn't say, "Wow, what a coincidence." No, I'd assume that Joe had probably hired a pilot to do some skywriting.

One night a woman brought her husband to the psychiatric hospital where I used to work. The man was as drunk as drunk could be. I asked him if he went to A.A. [Alcoholics Anonymous]. He said, "No, I don't believe in all that God stuff." His wife said, "You should believe in God!" He responded, "I don't believe there is a God."—At that point I couldn't resist, so I said, "I think there is an easy way to prove to you there is a God." He took the bait, so I said, "See that picture behind you? Would you believe me if I said there was an explosion at a paint factory and it blew paint everywhere and just by chance made that painting?" He said, "No." I asked, "Why not?" He said, "It couldn't happen."—I responded, "So, whenever you see design, there is usually a designer, or when you see art, there is usually an artist, right?" He said, "Yeah." Then I said, "When you look at Cindy Crawford, the supermodel, or an Arabian stallion, a rose, a New England Fall, or a butterfly, do they look like something the universe belched out by accident, or does it look like there's design?" He said, "Design."—I said, "Then there must be a Designer, and that is God." He said, "###*##, you got me!"

Some ask, "Tell me then, who made God?" Obviously, I can't answer that question, but let me share some thoughts which you may find helpful.

I believe that God has revealed [more on this later] certain truths about Himself, one of which is that He has always existed, and that He is without beginning or end. —[Some object to God being called "He," because they say it puts too much emphasis on the masculine. They believe, and rightfully so, that God must contain both male and female characteristics since God created both sexes. I use the masculine pronouns for God, not out of disrespect, but because it is culturally accepted, and because I have to use some form of pronoun.]

How can God be eternal? Ironically, it was Albert Einstein's theory of relativity which has given us a possible answer. Time is relative, not a constant.

If you have watched some of the popular science fiction movies or television shows [e.g., *Star Trek*], you are probably familiar with the term "time warp," where people are able to go forward or backward in time. [As far as we know, although time is relative; it is always forward. You can not go back in time.]

According to Einstein's theory, as an object approaches the speed of light, time slows down. Supposedly, if an object, or being, could equal or exceed the speed of light, time as we know it would cease. If there were a Being [God], who lived in the realm of light, God would not exist within time. Time would exist within God. Scientifically, an eternal God could exist.

Further, if we cannot understand God's creation, all the way from the tiny atom, to a universe estimated to be 14-16 billion light years deep, how would we be able to comprehend the God who created it? Believing in infinity, and thinking about such unanswerable questions as, "Where does the universe end?" or "What is beyond our universe?" is not much different than thinking about an infinite, eternal God. They are all beyond human understanding.

Even if there were answers, they would probably make about as much sense to us as astrophysics makes to a baby. If computers could actually think, they wouldn't have to understand man in order to believe in man. The same is true with us and God. The fact that we exist should be reason enough. We don't have to understand something in order to believe in it and enjoy it [e.g., electricity].

I believe logic and common sense demand there be a God.

WHAT IS GOD LIKE?

For the rest of this booklet, I am going to assume that God exists. For me the question is not, “*Does God exist?*” but rather, “*Since God does exist, what is God like?*” Using our minds, and looking at the universe around us, what can we learn about God?

Let me ask you a question: “*Can something come from nothing?*” The answer is, “*No.*” This is an undisputed scientific law. Does it make sense to believe that a God without intelligence could create people with intelligence? “*No.*”—Therefore, God must be intelligent, incredibly so, to create the universe around us. By sheer observation, we can also surmise that God must be powerful beyond belief.

Could a God without personality create people with personality? While that might be arguable, it stands to reason that God in all likelihood is infinitely personal, since God created love and joy which are components of personality.

Could a God without feelings create people who can feel? Could a God without sight, hearing, a sense of touch, the ability to taste, and the ability to smell, create creatures with these five senses without possessing, in one form or another, these qualities? Again, the probable answer is “*No.*” It doesn’t stand to reason that God would not possess these qualities in some fashion. In like manner, could a God who cannot communicate create a race of people who can communicate?—“*No.*”

Let me interject one caution at this point. Using this line of reasoning, some wrongly conclude that if there is evil in the world, then God must also be partially evil [which is the Hindu view of God]. I disagree for two reasons.

First, if God is all wise and all good, as I think God is, God would know all things, including how things would be if they weren’t good. For example, I have never murdered anyone, but that doesn’t mean I don’t know what murder is. That God should allow evil, as He obviously does, does not mean that He is evil. His allowing the possibility of evil is, I believe, the highest good.

Let me explain. God created us as choice-makers, with free wills so that we would not be robots. At stake was whether we would be able to freely love, versus whether we would be robotic androids [machines that look like people].

To illustrate this, what if I told you, “*I’ll take you out for lunch, and you can have whatever you want. You can have pizza, pizza, or pizza. What do you want?*”—That is no choice. God, in like manner, could have said, “*You have a choice. You can love Me . . . or you can love Me . . . or you can love Me.*”—Again, that is no choice. For real love and goodness to exist, without us merely being robots, there had to be an alternative, a real choice: evil.

As strange as it sounds, love demands a choice. The possibility of evil and suffering existing is necessary if we are to have real free will. As much as we sometimes hate it, that is the price tag for having freedom of choice.—Because God has given us free will, we can love Him, or hate Him. We can love people, or we can abuse them. We have the potential to do great good or great evil.

Are there consequences for the choices we make? Of course. There may be *hell* to pay for those who choose evil, such as Hitler did.

The second reason God could not be evil is because He wrote the rule book. By definition, God is the only one who can truly label good “*good*,” and evil “*evil*.” Whatever He says goes. Our judgments of God matter little. If He created us, who are we to sit in judgment of Him? We would be using brains He created to criticize the One who made us. That would be like a character in a book criticizing the author for the way the book was written, or a clay pot criticizing the potter for making it the way it is.

If we were born with a sense of right and wrong, as I think we were, then it is because He, too, knows right from wrong, and created us with such knowledge. For example, if I were a teacher, and I believed in *relativism*, the belief that there is no such thing as right or wrong, I could say, “*In my class all girls will receive F’s, while all guys will receive A’s.*” The females in the class would likely riot saying, “*That’s not fair.*” Automatically they would have appealed to a higher sense of fairness—of right and wrong. You’d never hear them say, “*You’re correct. There is no such thing as right and wrong. It’s OK if you flunk all females.*”—Why? Because we are moral beings. Intuitively we know right and wrong exists. We expect a fair world, because we know real fairness exists.

It is one thing to talk about there being no absolutes, but quite another to live in the real world 100% consistent with that belief. Just as we know right from wrong, God too must know right from wrong, which means that He is wise, not that He is partially evil. For an all-wise God to knowingly do evil doesn’t make sense.

Therefore, returning to my original point about what God is like, as popular as the notion is that God is some sort of impersonal “*Force*,” who set things in motion, and then stepped out of the picture, such a view does not hold up to reason. God is much more than a “*Force*.” He is infinitely personal and all-powerful. Logically speaking, I think God has to be.

If God is personal, and has the ability to communicate, the next question is whether He has communicated with mankind. There are many different religions who claim that God has spoken to them, usually through one of their prophets or founders.

One of the first steps, it would seem to me, in discovering which of the major world religions might possibly be true, is to simply ask which of the world religions believe in an all-powerful, personal, moral God as I just described?

Unless I am mistaken, only three of the major world religions believe in such a God: Judaism, Islam, and Christianity. The infinitely personal God hardly fits the description of the impersonal Brahma [the World Soul of Hinduism who is both good and evil], nor does it fit the “*Buddha Consciousness*” in which Buddhism seeks to suppress human desires as harmful.

Could Islam be the true religion because many of their views of God [Allah] seem right? Although Islam may be one of the most passionate, dedicated religions on earth, to me Islam cannot be the one true religion as it professes.—Why?—Because Islam’s founder, Muhammad, said the Bible is to be “believed,” including the teachings of Jesus. In the *Qur’an* [sometimes spelled *Koran*] Muhammad said, “*We believe in Allah, and in what has been revealed to us and what was revealed to Abraham, Ismail, Isaac, Jacob, and the Tribes, and in (the Books) given to Moses, Jesus, and the Prophets, from their Lord we make no distinction*” [Surah 3:84. See also: Surah 4:136; 5:50,68].—In a nutshell, Muhammad said we are to *believe* the writings of the Bible [the Law, the Prophets, and the New Testament]; yet in reality he denied many of the major teachings of of the Bible, both Old Testament and New Testament, doctrines which Jews and Christians have always held to be true.

For example, if you read the New Testament, you will discover that the historical crucifixion of Jesus for the sins of the world is the central theme of the New Testament. However, Muhammad denied that Jesus was crucified [Surah 4:157]. Most Muslims are taught that Judas was actually the one crucified, not Jesus.

Another contradiction between the Qur’an and the Bible is that in the New Testament Jesus is called “Son of God” [e.g., John 3:16]. Muhammad taught that Jesus was *not* the Son of God, and that anyone who believes Jesus is the *Son of God* is cursed [Surah 9:30]; and the list of contradictions goes on and on.

How could Muhammad say the teachings of Jesus are to be *believed*, and still deny most of the major doctrines of New Testament? Such obvious contradictions make Islam untrue in my thinking.

The reason I believe Muhammad was so mistaken, and obviously uninformed about the real teachings in the Bible, is that he was probably illiterate. He could not read or write. Even if he could read, there was no Arabic translation of the Bible until after he died. No wonder he distorted its content; he was going on secondhand (mis)information. [For a detailed response to Islam, read my booklet addressed to Muslims. You can download it for free at www.4seekers.com.]

Such huge contradictions also explain why most Muslims are forbidden to read the Bible, some under threats of death. If they were to read the New Testament, they would know Muhammad was wrong, because the contradictions are so obvious. Who wants to follow a misinformed, mistaken prophet?

Muslims say the New Testament became so corrupted over the centuries that it can no longer be trusted, only the Qur’an. As I will show in the next section, this is not true. The Bible, specifically the New Testament, is one of the most, if not the most, historically reliable and trustworthy document of antiquity.

Also, any religion, such as the Ba’hai faith, which teaches that the Qur’an and the Bible do not contradict each other, could not possibly be true. Someone has their wires crossed. People who believe such things may be wonderful individuals, and most are, and while they are sincere, they are sincerely mistaken.

HAS GOD SPOKEN?

What I am about to share is as hard for our minds to grasp as the existence of atoms or the vastness of our universe. Nevertheless, I believe it is true. You have traveled with me thus far. Please weigh carefully what I am about to share. I don’t ask that you agree, only that you remain open to the evidence. If you will give me a fair hearing, I think you’ll be in for some big surprises.

Simply stated, I believe that God revealed Himself to Israel, as recorded in the Hebrew Bible [Old Testament], and in these last days has revealed Himself in the person of Jesus. Should you be Jewish, the name *Jesus* is an American transliteration of the Hebrew word *Yeshua*. The story of Jesus/Yeshua is recorded in what Christians call the New Testament of the Bible. The word *Testament* means *covenant*, or *legal agreement*.

The word *Christ* is the Hebrew word for *Messiah*. Thus, when Christians say, “*Christ Jesus*,” a more accurate historical way of saying it would be to say, “*Messiah Yeshua*.” Christianity began totally as a Jewish movement which then

spread to the *goyim* (gentiles). To gain the full flavor of the New Testament as it was originally written, I encourage you to purchase a copy of *The Jewish New Testament*, translated by David Stern, a Messianic Jew. [Contact: Jewish New Testament Publications, Inc. P.O. Box 615; Clarksville, MD 21029 USA.]

I urge you, do not judge Jesus/Yeshua by the religion some people have made through the use or misuse of His name, or through some possibly bad experiences you may have had with “Christians.” As one man said, “*The thing which most drew me to Christianity was Christians, and the thing which most turned me off about Christianity was Christians.*”

As a teenager, there was a short time when I quit attending church. I had written most Christians off as either nerds or hypocrites. Thankfully, that changed when I met some Christians who weren’t nerds or hypocrites. They didn’t dress or act weird, and they demonstrated a love and peace I’d never known. I will forever be grateful to them.

In a spirit of open-mindedness I urge you to take a fresh look at the man we call Jesus/Yeshua. I will show you some concrete, tangible evidence which proves conclusively that Jesus/Yeshua is/was who he claims to be.

Some think of Christianity as “*escapism*,” or as “*pie in the sky*.” The real issue, of course, is whether it is *true*. To say, “*There is a tunnel under this prison*” may be an escapist idea, but it may also be true. So how can you determine whether Christianity is true? Actually it is not as hard as you may think. Christianity is a historical religion with historical facts which can be investigated.

There are a lot of religions and people saying what God is or is not like, and whether or not He even exists. The only one who can say for sure whether God exists, and what He is like, is God. As simple as this is, it is an important point to grasp. Only God can give the final word on Himself.

Suppose one day a man [Jesus/Yeshua] walked this earth claiming to be God, saying that he was “*THE way . . . THE truth . . . THE life*” [John 14:6, emphasis mine]. What if he claimed to be the incarnation of *Yahweh* [the Hebrew name for God, John 8:58]? Now this would be something you could easily investigate.—Any person claiming to be God would either be psychotic, with delusions of grandeur [crazy], a deceiver out to pull off one of the greatest scams of all time, or, this person might actually be God. Possibly God had chosen to write Himself into His own story and become a man.

In essence, this is what the Bible teaches concerning Jesus/Yeshua. In the New Testament, hundreds of times, Jesus/Yeshua is called by virtually every major name and attribute used to describe God in the Old Testament: “*God*” [John 1:1,14; Hebrews 1:8], “*Yahweh*” [John 8:58; cf. Exodus 3:14], “*Lord*” [Acts 10:36], “*Creator*” [Hebrews 1:1,2; John 1:10; Colossians 1:16-18], “*Savior*” [Titus 2:13], “*King of kings*” [Revelation 19:16], “*the Alpha and the Omega*” [Revelation 22:12-16], “*Holy One*” [Acts 3:14,15], “*Rock*” [I Corinthians 10:4], “*Forgiver Of Sins*” [Mark 2:1-12], “*Lord of the Sabbath*” [John 5:18; Mark 2:28], etc. [See Appendix on page 50 for additional titles of deity.]

Even though Jesus/Yeshua taught that God is the only one worthy of worship [Matthew 4:10] he, nonetheless, received worship [Matthew 28:9,17]. Even angels of God are to worship him [Hebrews 1:6]. If Jesus/Yeshua were not God, then he had no right being called God, or allowing others to treat him as God. It would be the ultimate in blasphemy and arrogance. Jesus/Yeshua, a Jew, would have known that.

To believe that Jesus/Yeshua was *just* a good teacher, assuming he really claimed to be God, would be out of the question. He would either be much more than a *good teacher* [i.e., God], or much less [i.e., a liar or lunatic]. Think of the hundreds of thousands who have died martyrs’ deaths because of his claims. If he is not God, these people died for a lie, for an idol.

C.S. Lewis—author, professor, and Christian intellectual wrote, “*A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic—on a level with the man who says he is a poached egg or else he would be the Devil of Hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God, or else a madman or something worse. You can shut him up for a fool, you can spit at him and kill him as a demon, or you can fall at his feet and call him Lord and God. But let us not come with any patronizing nonsense about his being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to.*” [Mere Christianity, MacMillan Pub., N.Y.; 1978, P.56.]

There can be no middle ground. Just as no one is ever half-pregnant [one is either pregnant or not pregnant], in like manner, Jesus/Yeshua is either God or he isn’t.—Lunatic, liar or Lord; you choose.

If you really want to know the truth about God, it is not intellectually wise to ignore the life and teachings of the only major religious leader in all of history who actually claimed to be God. He is too important a figure to pass over lightly. He did live, and he stands alone in the claims he made and the life he lived.

Jesus/Yeshua produced anger, hatred, or worship from the people of his day. To take a middle-of-the-road position concerning him is to totally fail to grasp the claims he made. His enemies clearly understood his claim to divinity. They tried to kill him for blasphemy, because he claimed *equality* and *oneness* with God [See: John 5:18; 8:58-59; 10:33, Mark

14:61-64, etc.]. All of the main writers of the New Testament, such as Paul [*Sha'ul* in Hebrew] and the apostle John [*Yochanan* in Hebrew], clearly taught the deity of Jesus [e.g., Colossians 2:9; Philippians 2:6, 7; Romans 9:5; John 1:1, 14; Hebrews 1:1, 8].

This is even more staggering when we realize that those saying these things were monotheistic Jews, people who believe in only “one God” [Deuteronomy 6:4]. They were not talking about Jesus/Yeshua being one of many *gods*, in some polytheistic, Hindu sort of way. No, they worshiped Jesus/Yeshua as the incarnation of God Almighty [e.g., Matthew 28:9, John 20:28, Hebrews 1:6, Revelation 5:8-14, Philippians 2:6-11].

Reason with me. For sake of argument, if Jesus/Yeshua is God, then he could state the truth about God [i.e., himself]. He could explain how to have a right relationship with God, because he is God. Correct?—Jesus/Yeshua could declare what is right and what is wrong. Why? Because if he is God. He wrote the rule book. Like it or not, if he was/is God then he could make such statements. If he wasn't/isn't God, then he was either crazy or a deceiver. Christianity would be false, and you should search elsewhere for God.

That is why Christianity is such an exclusive religion, and why Christians sometimes seem so narrow-minded. If Jesus/Yeshua's claims are true, then there is no other choice but to proclaim him as God. Jesus/Yeshua taught that he was the *only* way to God [e.g., John 8:24, 14:6; see also, Acts 4:12].

Christianity is not a matter of likes or dislikes, but an issue of whether Jesus/Yeshua was telling the truth. If true, his teachings are to be regarded more highly than any other religion, and with more authority than all other religious leaders in the world. It does not mean we are to be disrespectful of other religions, or that all they teach is wrong, but Christians have an obligation to tell the world about Jesus/Yeshua [Matthew 28:19-20; Acts 1:8]. If Jesus/Yeshua is the eternal God become man [Isaiah 9:6], then the world must hear about it.

EVIDENCE THAT JESUS IS WHO HE CLAIMS TO BE

Let me summarize some of the major evidence, as I see it, that Jesus/Yeshua was telling the truth. Again, you be the judge.

1. The first is Jesus/Yeshua's character. From the beginning of time, no other person has so powerfully affected life upon this earth as Jesus/Yeshua of Nazareth. His teachings are profound. [If you have never read the New Testament account for yourself, a good place to begin would be with the *Gospel of John* or the *Gospel of Luke*]. It is hard to read the account of Jesus/Yeshua's life and teachings, and maintain that he was either a liar or a lunatic [the only other two alternatives]. Either we believe his seemingly unbelievable claims [to be God], or we disbelieve his believable character.

2. The second is the historical evidence for his rising from the dead. This is crucial. Disprove the resurrection and you expose the New Testament as a false document, with Christians falsely worshipping a dead Savior. Christians, in such a case, would be idolaters, worshipping that which is not God.

To disprove the resurrection one would have to explain what happened to Jesus/Yeshua's mutilated body. For example, why didn't the enemies of Jesus/Yeshua just produce his corpse if he never arose? How did the tomb, which was guarded by Roman soldiers, get empty? Does it make sense that Jesus/Yeshua's disciples would steal the body of Jesus, when every Roman soldier knew that if a prisoner [in this case a corpse] escaped under his watch, it would be his life for the prisoners? Why wasn't there a fight, and why weren't some disciples killed? If the soldiers were asleep while on guard [which was also a crime punishable by death by Roman law], how could the disciples have rolled away a stone, weighing over one ton, without waking the soldiers?

Another theory says that Jesus/Yeshua, having been crucified by the Romans, swooned in a state of near death, suddenly revived, rolled away a stone weighing 1-2 tons, scared away the Roman soldiers, and told his disciples, “*Hey guys. Look, it's me. I've conquered death!*”—No way. It takes more faith to believe some of the theories, which try to explain away the resurrection, than to believe that Jesus/Yeshua did arise from the dead as he foretold. And what about the disciples, and over 500 other people, who claimed to have seen him physically alive following his crucifixion? What about Thomas who was told to put his finger into the nail prints in Jesus/Yeshua's hands? What made the disciples, who were cowards before his death, suddenly change and begin preaching a message, under the threat of death, which eventually turned the whole Roman world upside down?—For further reading I highly recommend Josh McDowell's book *The Resurrection Factor*.

3. The third major piece of evidence is the documented accounts of Jesus/Yeshua's miracles from both Christian and non-Christian sources [e.g., the writings of *Josephus*.] If Jesus/Yeshua is God, then for him to heal someone, or calm a stormy sea, would be no big deal, but merely a small repeat of what he did when he created the world. As mentioned,

the New Testament teaches that Christ, as God, is creator [John 1:3,10; Colossians 1:15-18; Hebrews 1:1-2]. One reason Christianity spread so rapidly was because of the miracles Jesus/Yeshua and his followers performed. If you were born blind, and you could suddenly see because Jesus/Yeshua touched you, you would probably believe too [e.g., *John*, chapter 9].

4. Fourth is the trustworthiness of the eyewitnesses themselves. If you can't trust them, you might as well throw out the first three pieces of evidence. Of the original twelve disciples, not counting Judas who betrayed Jesus/Yeshua [as foretold in Psalm 41:9], church history tells us that all but John were killed for their belief and bold profession that Jesus/Yeshua had conquered death, that they had seen him alive after the crucifixion, and that he was the one hope for mankind. Either we believe their testimonies, or we have to accept the fact that the disciples made up the whole story. They knew it was a lie, and conspired to deceive the world.

There is only one problem with this theory. They were willing to die for it.—Would you die for a lie, especially if it involved saying that some man had risen from the dead, when you really knew his body was decomposing somewhere? I don't think you would, and neither would I. Further, they passed on to the world its highest moral and ethical teachings. Would these teachings have knowingly been founded on a lie? No, it doesn't make sense. The only logical explanation is that they saw Jesus/Yeshua alive three days after his crucifixion, death and burial. This is the central theme of Christianity. [See I Corinthians 15:3-8.]

Also, in the gospel accounts, the disciples don't falsely cast themselves in a favorable light, as one would expect if they were making up the story. They recorded their own bickerings, Peter's denial, their cowardice, etc. Yet, these Jewish followers of Jesus/Yeshua, who only believe in one God [the one religion in all the world least likely to entertain such beliefs about God becoming man], spoke of the glory and sinlessness of Jesus/Yeshua, and called him "Lord" and "God" [e.g., John 1:1,14; 20:28; Acts 20:28; Romans 9:5; etc.]. They even went so far as to worship him [Matthew 28:9,17], an act reserved only for God in Jewish teaching [Deuteronomy 6:13-15; Matthew 4:10].

And remember, these followers of Christ/Messiah had lived with him, day in and day out, for three years, and yet they were willing to die for their belief that he was sinless and "God."—Could anyone live with you for three years, or even three days, and think you are God?

5. Fifth is the reliability of the Bible as a historical document. There are over 24,600 partial or complete manuscripts of the New Testament in either Greek or Latin. The second best documented manuscript of antiquity is *The Iliad and The Odyssey* by Homer. It has around 600 manuscripts. Most ancient documents have fewer than 10 original copies still in existence, yet they are still considered "A-1" historical documents by historians. For example, there are only 7 existing copies of the works of Plato, and 5 of Aristotle's works.

Even if all of the New Testament manuscripts were destroyed, we could still reconstruct all of the New Testament, with the exception of about eleven verses, from the writings of the early church fathers before the year 325 A.D. Even non-Christian historians have to admit that by all scientific, archaeological, and historical standards applied to any ancient manuscript, the New Testament we have today is over 99.9 percent reliable. Not one word in a 1,000 is in question, and no major doctrine is in doubt.

Concerning the Hebrew Bible, most Jewish and Christian scholars had been using the Masoretic Hebrew text dated around 1,000 A.D. In 1947, a young shepherd boy discovered what we now call *The Dead Sea Scrolls* in the caves of Qumran [Israel] near the Dead Sea. Major portions of the entire Old Testament were found. They are easily dated around, or before, the time of Christ [100 B.C.-70 A.D.]. The *Dead Sea Scroll* copy of the book of Isaiah, for example, was so identical to the Masoretic Text that only eight minor discrepancies were found.

Add to this the reverence and painstaking methods that Jewish scribes used to copy, check, and double check their handwritten copies of the Hebrew Bible, including using a mathematical numbering system to see that things "added up," and you see why the entire Bible is the most well-preserved piece of literature from ancient times. Anyone can dispute its message, not so its historicity.

The Christian Bible as a whole is a miraculous piece of literature. Its 66 books [39 Old and 27 in the New] were written over a period of approximately 1,600 years, by 40 authors, on three different continents [Asia, Europe and Africa]. It was written in three different languages [Hebrew, Chaldean and Greek], with many literary styles (poetry, historical narrative, parables, proverbs, allegory), under all types of conditions [on the battlefield, in times of peace, in prosperity, in poverty, in captivity, at sea, in palaces, in the desert], by all sorts of people [fishermen, shepherds, kings, a physician, a rabbi, a tax collector, scribes, priests], and on about every topic imaginable [God, salvation, sex, money, marriage, family, war, politics, religion, relationships, leadership, business, etc.]. Yet, considering all this, the Bible reads, not as a fragmented mess, but as a unified whole. The Bible is truly amazing.

The next question, of course, is whether modern translations of the Bible are accurate translations of the originals.

There are many different Bible translations on the market, which often confuses those not familiar with the Bible. Some mistakenly assume that because there are many different Bible translations, they must be saying contradictory things. Except for one or two Bible translations by cult groups where they have altered a few key verses to fit their theology, this is not true. For example, most Bible translations are translated from one of two basic New Testament Greek texts, considered to be most reliable by Biblical scholars, and one basic Old Testament Hebrew text. Thus, while translations vary in style, they are all saying the same basic thing. To say, “*Howdy*,” “*Hello*,” or “*Hi*,” are all accurate ways of saying the same thing. The content is the same, but the wording varies. The same principle is true of Bible translations.

It is my personal belief that the original writings were “*inspired by God*,” perfect in every way [II Timothy 3:16-17]. Modern translations are not directly inspired by God, but almost all are accurate copies of those which were inspired.

6. Sixth is the testimony of believers. Whatever one says, there are many people, like myself, of every age, nationality, social class, or century, who say they have experienced the living Christ. The accounts of restored lives, answers to prayer, healed bodies, and other evidences are hard, if not impossible, to explain unless Christ/Messiah is alive. The New Testament bears witness to a living, resurrected Lord who is alive and well, and able to change lives.

7. The last major piece of evidence is prophecy. Prophecy is God’s ability to see history *before* it happens, and to record it hundreds, or even thousands, of years in advance. One book states: “. . . *new discoveries have confirmed* [the Bible] *as the only book on planet Earth that bears a message provably orchestrated from outside our space-time.*” [*Alien Encounters* by Missler and Eastman; Koinonia House, Coeur d’Alene, Idaho, 1997, P. 216.]

I understand that there are 300, or more, specific prophecies in the Bible foretelling major events in the life of Christ. Humanly speaking, most of these prophecies were outside Jesus/Yeshua’s ability to control or manipulate. For example, out of the tens of thousands of cities and villages in our world, the Old Testament predicted that the Jewish *Messiah* would be born in the tiny town of Bethlehem, a town that may have had a population of only around 1,000 people [Micah 5:2]. It was foretold that he would die having his hands and feet pierced [Psalm 22:16; Zechariah 12:10]. Isaiah, chapter 53, describes major scenes of the crucifixion and burial of Jesus with total accuracy. The Bible also prophesied that Jesus/Yeshua would be raised back to life following his death [Psalm 16:10; cf., Acts 2:22-36].

In fact, the Bible is so accurate in its predictions, that almost 600 years before Christ was born, in Daniel 9:24-27, Daniel prophesied the *exact* week Christ/Messiah would die. He said the Jewish Messiah would die 483 years after *the command to restore and rebuild Jerusalem*. Using a Jewish calendar, which operated on a calendar year of 360 days, and starting at the exact day the Persian king Artaxerxes issued this decree [March 14, 445 B.C.], and counting forward 483 years, you not only arrive at the week Jesus/Yeshua was crucified, but you arrive at April 6th, 32 A.D., 173,880 days following Artaxerxes’ decree. What is so significant about this day? It is what Christians call *Palm Sunday*, the only day that Jesus/Yeshua publically presented himself as King to the whole nation of Israel. [See Zechariah 9:9.]—Five days later they rejected him as their king and crucified him.—To better understand Daniel’s prophecy, get a copy of the small book: *Daniel’s Prophecy Of The Seventy Weeks*, by McClain; Zondervan Pub., 1970.

According to this passage, the Christ/Messiah had to be *cut off* [killed] before the destruction of the temple, which we know occurred in 70 A.D. What Jewish religious figure, claiming to be the Messiah, was born in Bethlehem, died having his hands and feet pierced, exactly 483 years from when Artaxerxes gave his decree, and all before the Jewish temple was destroyed in 70 A.D.?—There is only one historical person who qualifies: Jesus/Yeshua.

How could the Bible predict such astounding events, hundreds of years in advance, if the Bible weren’t true and if Christ weren’t who he claimed to be? Out of the billions of people who have lived on earth, it is a virtual mathematical impossibility that, by chance, any one man could fulfill these exact prophecies made over a span of several hundred years, yet Jesus/Yeshua did.—It was God’s way to be sure we wouldn’t mistake his coming.—Would you care to predict 700 years in the future the name of a tiny town in which the world’s most influential religious leader of all time would be born? Could you also predict 600 years in advance the exact year and week this great religious person would die, as well as the details of his death? The Bible did. These are *facts* which cannot rationally be ignored.

Some say that the writers of the Bible rewrote past events to make them sound like they were yet to happen. Such a theory is easily disproved. With the discovery of the *Dead Sea Scrolls*, we can now prove that all the prophecies about Jesus/Yeshua were written *before* they actually occurred. For example, in Jerusalem, at a museum called the *Shrine of the Book*, there is a complete copy of the book of Isaiah from the Dead Sea Scrolls, including chapter 53, which describes how and why the Jewish Messiah must die for the sins of the world. [See: Isaiah 53:4-12.]

Concerning Daniel’s prophecy in 9:24-27, there is no way this passage could have been altered or rewritten following the death of Jesus. How do I know? Because the *Septuagint* [the Greek translation of the Old Testament] was written

in 270 B.C., over 200 years before Christ/Messiah was born, and the Septuagint records this same passage from the book of Daniel, word for word.

If you want more information and proof regarding prophecy, I recommend you read Josh McDowell's book, *Evidence That Demands A Verdict, Volume I*, as well as *Baker's Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics*, by Norman Geisler. [The term *apologetics* means the rational study and defense of the Christian faith.]

While many prophecies have been fulfilled, there are many prophecies yet to be fulfilled, especially concerning Jesus/Yeshua's second return to earth. According to the Bible, God will not let sin and evil go on forever. There is a day coming when Christ/Messiah is going to return and set up his kingdom, headquartered in Jerusalem. As C.S. Lewis said, "*When the Author walks onto the stage, the play is over.*" [From *Mere Christianity*, MacMillan Pub.]

Concerning Jesus' second coming to Earth, he said that no one would know the exact day or hour of his return, but that we would know his return was getting close when we began to see certain signs [Matthew 24:33].

Let me highlight a few prophecies which make me believe that Christ's return is very near. These predictions, made 2,000-3,000 years ago, read as though they are off the front page of today's newspaper.

If you went to a theater to see a play you had already seen before, and you happened to arrive late, you could tell, just by looking at the props on stage, what was coming next. The same is true about the Lord's return. The Bible is very clear concerning the props which must be in place before Christ returns.

a. Virtually all prophecy centers around Israel, because God has not forgotten His promises to the Jewish people. [There are also some wonderful prophecies for non-Jews.] The Bible predicted that Israel would become a nation again [Daniel 9:27; Ezekiel 37:1-14]. After almost 2,500 years, Israel became a nation in 1948. Let me share a quote from Dr. Paul Meier concerning Israel's rebirth:

"In the Torah, Moses wrote [Leviticus 26:18 and elsewhere] that in the future, whenever Israel sins greatly as a nation God will allow calamity to come their way. He will however, give them time to repent. If they, as a nation, do not repent after their warning period, then the remainder of their punishment will be multiplied by seven.

Over 600 years before the birth of Jesus, God used Ezekiel, a contemporary of Daniel, to show Israel her sin. In Ezekiel 4:3-6, God told the prophet to lie on his side for 430 days to signify the 430 years Israel would spend in exile for her sins. Another contemporary of Daniel's and Ezekiel's, the prophet Jeremiah, predicted that the first 70 years of that 430 years would be a Babylonian exile [Jeremiah 25:11]. That was Israel's warning period.

Sure enough, as predicted, Nebuchadnezzar came along and transported the Jews from Jerusalem to Babylon in 606 B.C. Then 70 years later; Cyrus the Great of Persia [possibly Queen Esther's son] conquered Babylon in 536 B.C. and said he would pay for the millions of Jews to go back to Jerusalem. But the Jews refused. Only 50,000 devout Jews went back. The rest didn't want to interrupt their businesses in Babylon [now Iraq].

This obviously made God angry. So take 430 years of exile, subtract 70 years of warning, and multiply the remaining 360 years times 7, as Moses instructed in the Torah. You will get 2,520 prophetic years of 360 days each = 907,200 days from the day Cyrus made his decree to return to Jerusalem, which comes out to May 14, 1948, the day Israel became a nation."

Coincidence? Has God forgotten his people? No. He was merely carrying out the prescribed judgment on them, brought about when they chose to disobey. [Do you ever get the idea that God takes our choices seriously? I do.]

According to Matthew 24:34, Jesus/Yeshua said *this generation* would not pass away until all these things were fulfilled. Obviously, he wasn't speaking of his own generation 2,000 years ago. So, what generation did he mean? Some believe it is the generation alive when Israel became a nation? Most consider a generation 40-80 years. If this view is correct, Christ will likely return before the year 2028, possibly sooner. The second view is that it will be the *generation* alive when all of these prophetic signs begin to occur. Either way, as I view things, the second return of Christ/Messiah must be getting close.

b. Another event the Bible predicted is that there will be a coming together of several nations recreating the old Roman Empire [Daniel 7:21-25; Revelation 17:12]. It looks as though the European Community, formed in 1992, might well be the fulfillment of this prophecy.

c. As mentioned, the Bible has a great deal to say about a seven year period on the earth known as the Great Tribulation [Daniel 9:26-27; Matthew 24; Revelation 4-19; Jeremiah 30:7; etc.]. It is also called the 70th week of Daniel [Daniel 9:24-27]. It is a time when *all hell will break loose* on earth. Revelation 8:7-11 describes some of what will happen during this time. Among other things, it says that a third of the earth will be destroyed by fire, and a third of the world's waters will turn to *wormwood* [poisonous]. Did you know that the word *wormwood*, in Russian, is the word *Chernobyl*. Chernobyl, as you recall, was the nuclear power plant that underwent a meltdown and spread radioactivity over parts

of Europe and Russia.

Some believe the waters turning to wormwood could be caused by an asteroid hitting one of earth's oceans [which would cause earthquakes and huge tidal waves, which could lead to some nuclear power plant meltdowns], or else it could be the result of nuclear war. For example, after the U.S. dropped the first atomic bomb on Hiroshima in World War II, thousands of people died, not only from the bomb, but also from drinking water contaminated by radioactive fallout.

d. The Bible warns that an army out of the East will come toward Israel some day with an army of 200 million men. The Bible says the Euphrates River will dry up before them. Today, Red China, India, or a confederation of Arab nations, could each muster an army 200 million. It is also interesting to note that the Euphrates River now has a dam across it in Turkey. In fact, the Euphrates River ceased flowing for one month as the reservoir behind this dam filled up. It would be easy to stop its flow of water to make way for this army [Revelation 9:13-21]. And remember, these prophecies were written when the entire earth's population was not much larger than 200 million, and huge dams did not exist.

e. The Bible predicts that there will come a man, called the Anti-Christ, who will proclaim himself to be God, and he will rule the world during much of the seven years of Tribulation. In Revelation 13, it says he will make everyone take a *sign* on the hand or forehead [the number "666"] called the *Mark Of The Beast*. People who do not have it will not be able to buy or sell. With computer technology, computer chips [such as the army implants in soldiers to track them by satellite in case they are captured], visible and invisible inks, and laser scanners [like you see at grocery stores] the world is primed for *Big Brother* to track every man, woman, and child on the planet.

At the time of this writing, with the instability of the world economy, it is possible that there could be a worldwide economic collapse, which might bring about such a monetary system. There are signs all around us that we are moving toward a "*New World Order*," a one-world government. Such talk is common within the United Nations and among some NATO pact countries.

Many in the occult and New Age Movement are also predicting a coming world leader [the Anti-Christ] with super-human powers who will usher in the *Age of Aquarius*. They believe he is already alive, and that when the world's political climate is right, he will declare himself as savior of the world. Some think it may take a third world war to set the stage for his takeover of the world.

f. During the Tribulation, there will be plagues and diseases which will wipe out a fourth of the world's population [Revelation 6:7-8]. With AIDS, the ebola virus, germ warfare, SARS, and other diseases, this is *already* a possibility.

g. In Matthew 24:6-8, Jesus/Yeshua spoke of an increase in *wars, famines and earthquakes*. We have already had two world wars, and a third could be soon.

Major earthquakes keep happening. Whether there are more earthquakes, or just better data gathering techniques and news coverage, we hear much more about earthquakes today than a few decades ago.

Besides wars and earthquakes, famines have been increasing worldwide. The world food bank storage is at an all-time low [down to 49 days the last I heard], and one in every six people on planet Earth suffers acute, chronic hunger. Over population is becoming a significant problem as the number of people living on our planet recently passed the six billion mark.

h. The Bible predicts that the Jewish temple, or tabernacle, will be rebuilt in Jerusalem [implied in Daniel 9:27 and Matthew 24:15]. I understand that Israel already has a temple designed. A tabernacle [tent] such as David used might also qualify [Acts 15:16]. In Jerusalem, Orthodox Jewish priests are already being trained on how to perform temple sacrifices as prescribed by Jewish Law.

i. In Matthew 24:22, Jesus/Yeshua said that unless he returned to earth, there would be *no life* left on this planet. He spoke this when the Roman two-edged sword was about the most powerful weapon on earth. Now, think of the nuclear, germ, and chemical weaponry that could be unleashed, and ask yourself, "*How much longer can our world survive?*" We *already* have the capability of destroying *all life* on this planet in a matter of minutes. One major multiple-warhead nuclear bomb has more explosive power than all the bombs, weaponry, and munitions used by all nations in World Wars I & II combined. Supposedly, if you dropped a fork from your kitchen counter, at the same time a major nuclear bomb exploded a few miles away, you would be vaporized before the fork hit the floor.

j. Revelations 11:7-11 says two prophets of God will be killed during the reign of anti-Christ, and people all around the world will view their bodies. People used to make fun of such a notion—until satellite TV, which now makes it possible.

k. Revelation 16:21 talks about hail balls weighing up to 100 pounds. Impossible you say? That's what scientists thought until the first atomic bomb was exploded forcing moist air high into the atmosphere creating hail balls large enough to dent the decks of Navy test ships near the explosion site.

l. The Bible predicts major breakdowns in the family and in moral values prior to Christ/Messiah's return [II Timothy 3:1-5]. This is happening. Look at the rise in abortions [over 40 million in the U.S. in 30 years], crime, unwed mothers, abuse, violence, suicides, rapes, drugs, gangs, school shootings, etc.

m. The Bible predicts that there is one city which will set all of these end-time events in motion. The city?—Jerusalem. [See: Zechariah 12:1-10; 4:1-9; Revelation 11:2]. With tensions so high in the Middle East between Jews and other Arab states, the PLO, Al Qaeda, etc. it is not hard to see how a battle over Jerusalem and the temple mount area could bring Russia, China, the Arab world, Europe, India and Pakistan, the United States, and other countries into global conflict because some are allied with the Arabs, and others with Israel.

There are *many* more mind-boggling prophecies I could list, but I wanted you to see why I believe we may be living in the last days before Christ/Messiah returns. As you read Biblical prophecy, especially the book of Revelation, it is so much easier to believe and understand now than when it was written almost 2,000 years ago. Some of my guesses on how these individual prophecies may be fulfilled may be wrong. Only God knows, but many prophecies, such as the rebirth of Israel, and the world being on the brink of annihilation, are beyond dispute.

I Thessalonians 4:16-17 says, "*For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever.*" Jesus/Yeshua is coming first for his church. [Cf., I Corinthians 15:51-55; Revelation 3:10]. Then, according to scripture, he is coming to judge and do battle with the forces of evil. Read Zechariah 14:1-9 in the Old Testament as it describes the physical coming of the *LORD* [Yahweh] to Jerusalem to do battle and set up his kingdom, and compare that passage with Revelation 19:11-21 and the physical return of Jesus/Yeshua with the armies of Heaven, and suddenly it all starts to make sense. There are no contradictions. Passages which Jewish teachers for centuries allegorized and spiritualized will actually come true, literally, when Jesus/Yeshua their long-awaited Messiah returns to establish his kingdom. Then, it says, they will look upon him who was *pierced* [e.g., as Jesus/Yeshua was pierced on the cross] and mourn for him as one mourns for an only son [Zechariah 12:10]

Personally, I know of no prophecy that says the Lord couldn't return for his church today. The question is, "*Are you be ready?*"

STEPS TO KNOWING GOD

Most who call themselves Christians, I think, will agree with what I am about to say. This section is extremely important. I don't ask that you automatically believe the facts I present. If you are serious about God, then do your homework. Take the time to look up the Bible verses I cite. Ask God to confirm in your heart whether what I say is true. Seek God as if your soul depended on it; it just might.

I intentionally list references from the Old Testament [Hebrew Bible], because I want you to see that these same New Testament truths are/were clearly taught or prophesied in the Old Testament. The Bible is a unified whole, with Jesus/Yeshua being the unifying one who ties them together.

The following four spiritual laws are clearly taught in the New Testament.

Spiritual Law #1: God is a God of love and holiness. God created this world perfect in the beginning. And, he loves us and wants us to be in fellowship with him. When we are we discover the joy and peace of knowing God and of having him lead and guide our lives [I John 4:16; John 3:16; 10:10, Ephesians 2:10]. What God wants for you and me is awesome beyond belief [Ephesians 3:14-21].

Spiritual Law #2: Man has blown it and is spiritually separated from God.—So, what went wrong? Why aren't more people experiencing what God intended? It is because our sin separates us from a holy God [Isaiah 59:2; Romans 6:23]. And, as such, we are under God's righteous wrath and judgment [Romans 1:18; 5:9; Ephesians 2:1-4]. Sin is active or passive rebellion against God. It is not listening to God, but "*doing our own thing.*" Because God is "*holy,*" totally without sin or wrongdoing, we cannot just bop into God's presence [Isaiah 6:1-5, I John 1:5]. Just as you wouldn't be allowed to walk on someone's expensive white carpet if you had oily, muddy shoes, neither will God tolerate sin in Heaven. If we went to Heaven without a basic change in who we are, we would corrupt and pollute Heaven, just as we have the earth.

We all fall short of God's standard of perfection. If we lined up in front of the Grand Canyon, and tried to jump across it, some might jump further than others; but the point is, we would all fall short. [Ecclesiastes 7:20; Romans 3:23]. Because Adam and Eve chose to sin, the Bible teaches that this sin nature got passed on to all mankind; the

same way a leopard inherits its spots from its parents [Genesis 3; Psalm 51:5; Romans 5:12-21].

According to the Bible, sin is more than murder, stealing, or adultery. From God's perspective sin is such things as boasting in our own achievements. Sex outside of marriage is sin. Lying, gossip, slander, cheating, cowardice, yielding to fear, not trusting God, coveting what others possess, not acting in faith, being disrespectful, putting worldly success or money before God, unforgiveness, lack of prayer, not keeping our promises, looking lustfully at someone, swearing, not acting in love, and a bunch of other things, are sin [Exodus 20; James 4:16; Galatians 5:19-21; Revelation 21:8; Romans 1:18-32; 14:23; Matthew 5,6; etc.].

According to the Bible, we all stand guilty before God, no matter whether we have sinned a little or a lot [James 2:10].—It is like the man who said, *“But, Judge, look at all the people I didn't kill.”*—The point? None of us deserves to go to Heaven. We have all sinned against an eternal God and committed eternal sins.—Stating it bluntly, unless God forgives us, by God's standard we're deserving of Hell. As judge, God cannot just sweep our sins under the carpet.

Spiritual Law #3: We need a Savior. I once spoke with a woman who said she felt she wasn't good enough to go to Heaven. I said, *“You're not. That's why we need a Savior.”* I then told her the story of the brother and sister who had gotten their school pictures. The sister complained about how poorly she looked. She said, *“These pictures don't do me justice.”* Her brother responded, *“You don't want justice, you want mercy!”*—How true of us, and our need for mercy and forgiveness.

According to scripture, Jesus/Yeshua is the only way to God. He died to pay the penalty for our sin. By his death, Jesus/Yeshua bridged the gap between a holy God and sinful man. Either we go to God by way of Jesus/Yeshua, or we do not get to God at all [II Thessalonians 1:8-9; John 3:16; Romans 5:8, Acts 20:28; I Timothy 2:5].

The story is told of a woman who received a phone call from the emergency room of a hospital late one night stating that her dad might be dying. She hastily threw on some clothes, and began frantically driving the 200 miles to where her father was. As she was going through one small town, she looked in her rear view mirror, and there was a police car chasing her. Because she was going so fast, the officer didn't merely give her a ticket, he arrested her. The next day she appeared before the county judge. As he looked at the officer's report, he said, *“Ma'am, what were you thinking? Do you realize you were going almost 90 miles per hour in a 35 mile an hour speed zone!? Your fine is either \$300 or three days in jail.”*

The young woman said, *“Oh no, your honor, you don't understand. My father is dying. I can't spend three days in jail, and I'm sorry, but I left in such a hurry that I left my purse on the kitchen counter. I have no money.”* The judge said, *“I'm sorry too, young lady, because the law says you must pay \$300 or spend three days in jail!”*

Well, the woman was crushed and she began to weep. For some reason it touched the old judge's heart. To the surprise of everyone in the court, he stood up, stepped down from the bench, walked over, took off his robe, put on his sports coat, walked around in front of the bench beside her, pulled out his checkbook, wrote a check for \$300, and laid it on the bench. Then he walked back around, took off his sports coat, put his robe back on, and resumed his seat. He said, *“Young lady, the law says you must pay \$300 or spend three days in jail, but I see that someone has paid the fine for you. Case dismissed!”*

In essence, that is what God did for us. The Bible says that the penalty for sin is death [Romans 6:23]. When we stood condemned, without hope, God took off his robe of deity, put on a robe of humanity, became a man in the person of Jesus/Yeshua, and died to pay a fine we could never pay [Romans 5:6]. According to scripture, Jesus/Yeshua is both God and man. He has two natures: one human, the other divine [Philippians 2:6,7; Romans 1:3,4. Also, see Appendix on page 50]. If we accept his offer of forgiveness, when we stand before God as Judge, we will be standing before the One who loved us and paid the fine for us: *“Case dismissed!”*

Spiritual Law #4: We must personally respond to Jesus/Yeshua. Knowing the first three laws is not enough. It takes a response on our part. While we cannot earn salvation, it is nonetheless a *gift* which must be received [Isaiah 64:6; Ephesians 2:8-9]. John 1:12 says, *“Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.”*—How do we receive the gift of salvation?

First, we are asked to *believe* several wonderful truths: (1) that Jesus/Yeshua loves us, (2) that he died for our sins [past, present and future], and (3) that he arose from the dead [John 3:16; Romans 5:8; 10:9; I Corinthians 15:3-5].

Since it is our sins which have been keeping us from God, we must be willing to turn from our sin [Mark 1:14,15]. The Bible calls this *repentance*, which simply means to *turn around*.—For example, if you are on a one way street going away from God, you need to turn around and begin moving toward God. Or, putting it another way, it means being willing to get out of the driver's seat, and inviting Jesus to take over the control of your life. He can turn your life around, and get you going in the right direction.

The tale is told of a man who tightrope walked across Niagara Falls with a 200 pound sack of sand on his back. Upon

successfully completing his feat he turned to a spectator and asked, “*Do you believe I could do that again?*” The person said “*Sure!*” The tightrope walker tossed down the sand and said, “*Then climb on my back.*”—Real believing is more than giving mental assent to the claims of Christ. God asks you to *climb on board*, and commit yourself to him. It is more than believing something to be true in your head. It is a commitment of the heart.

If you confess your sins to God, and ask him to forgive you, the Bible promises you will be forgiven. No matter how big, or how awful, your sins are, God is more than willing to forgive you [Isaiah 1:18; I John 1:9]. And, more incredible still is the fact that these sins will *never* be held against you [Romans 4:7,8; 8:1]. How do you know God will forgive you? Because he promises it.

Since we are weak and rather powerless when it comes to sin, God places his Holy Spirit [*Ruach HaKodesh* in Hebrew] in each person who receives Christ/Messiah in order to help them keep from sinning. In other words, if you allow him, the Holy Spirit will empower you to live a godly life full of meaning and purpose [Acts 1:8; Ephesians 1:7-14, Galatians 2:20; I Corinthians 10:13; Philippians 4:13]. With God’s Spirit living in and through you, you can also begin to experience God’s peace and joy [John 14:27; Galatians 2:20, 5:22; Romans 7:14-8:11].

And last, but not least, if you receive Christ/Messiah into your life, you become a child of God, part of God’s family.—Let me share a simple illustration. Would you go to a stranger’s funeral and ask the family of the deceased for a share of the inheritance? You could tell them, “*I’m a good person, and I do nice things for others.*”—Would that impress them? No. They’d say, “*I’m sorry, but the inheritance is for family members only. We don’t even know you.*”

Well, the same is true with God. You must be adopted into God’s family if you expect to *inherit* what is God’s. His inheritance is for his children, for those who *know* him. That is why Jesus/Yeshua said unless a person is *born again*, he or she will never see the Kingdom of Heaven [John 3:3-18]. The moment you *believe* and place your faith in Christ, you are legally adopted into God’s family. You inherit eternal life, and glory beyond your wildest imagination awaits you [I Corinthians 2:9; 3:21-23; Ephesians 1:3; Romans 8:31,32; John 14:1,2; Revelation 21:1-4].

When you die, you can be assured that you will go to Heaven. The Bible says, “*And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life. I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may KNOW you have eternal life.*” [I John 5:11-13, emphasis mine]—How can you *know* you have eternal life? Does it depend on feelings, or upon circumstances? No. It depends on God’s promise. God promises that if you *believe* in Christ/Messiah, you can *know* you have eternal life.

Scripture also says that if you ask *anything* according to God’s will, God will hear and answer you [I John 5:14].—So, is it God’s will that you *believe* in Jesus/Yeshua and *receive* him? Yes [II Peter 3:9]. Therefore, if you sincerely pray to God, and invite Jesus/Yeshua into your heart, you can do so with confidence *knowing* that God will hear and answer your prayer. This is where *faith* comes in: believing that what God promises you is true.

I entered into a relationship with Jesus/Yeshua when I was 14 years old. At a youth meeting I prayed and invited Christ/Messiah to come into my life and forgive me of my sins.—And he did. To my amazement, it worked. God’s peace flooded through me. Old feelings of guilt were gone. As I read the Bible, it finally began to make sense. God became very real to me. I also began seeing God answer specific prayers, which surprised and delighted me no end. While being a Christian has been incredibly hard at times, such as when many of my friends rejected me because of my faith, I wouldn’t trade the joy of knowing Christ for anything in the world.

ATIME OF DECISION

Christianity isn’t merely a religion; it is a love-relationship with God. God is the lover of your soul, and he has proposed to you. Will you say, “I do.”

If you have felt the Spirit of God speaking to you, and you have become convinced in your heart and mind that what I have written is true, then you must decide what you will do with Jesus/Yeshua.

No matter how much evidence I give, the final step is still one of faith, even though there is solid evidence upon which to base that faith. For example, I can’t *prove* that George Washington lived, but I can show overwhelming evidence that he did. By *faith*, I believe George Washington lived, and by *faith*, I believe Christianity is true, based on evidence, and the fact that it works. Jesus/Yeshua changed my life. I am not the person I used to be.

A simple way for you to test the truthfulness of what I’ve said is for you to actively, honestly, seek God on His terms [as best you understand], with a willingness to follow the truth, whatever that is. Not to honestly seek God with all of your heart, is to gamble with your soul. Choosing not to decide is a decision. To do nothing is the same as saying “No.”

To start with, you may want to pray something like this: “*Dear Lord God, if you’re there, and what this booklet says*

is true about Jesus/Yeshua, then I want to know. Please show me the truth.”—Praying this prayer will not make you a Christian, but it is an honest first step in turning to God.

Secondly, read.—Read the Bible. Don't just rely on what you have heard. Study it for yourself. Look up the Bible verses I've cited. *Think* with your mind; *listen* with your heart. Allow God to speak to you.—Read some of the books I have made reference to in this booklet. There are well thought-out answers to virtually any question you can ask.

Some day you will stand before God, either forgiven or unforgiven. Hell is one of those horrible doctrines most Christians, myself included, don't like to discuss. However, Jesus/Yeshua talked about Hell far more than any other Bible writer. Not to choose God, and accept his offer of forgiveness, is to choose a life of eternal separation from him [Daniel 12:2; Revelation 20:11-15; II Thessalonians 1:8-9; Matthew 13:40-43]. God is serious when it comes to sin. God hates and judges sin. If you refuse his forgiveness, and if you hang on to your sin, you will die with your sin, like a person refusing to get off the Titanic. If there were any other way, Jesus/Yeshua would not have had to die. There is no other payment for sin acceptable to God other than the death of Jesus on the cross. Scripture says, *“Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved”* [Acts 4:12].

This may be a hard decision for you. Much is at stake. If you receive Jesus/Yeshua as Lord, it will cost you. It has cost me. You may be misunderstood. Friends and family members may reject you.—Welcome to the club. Jesus/Yeshua was also misunderstood and rejected. He was willing to die for you. The question is, *“Are you willing to live for him?”*

If, per chance, you have a history of abuse, you most likely have major trust issues. The thought of committing yourself to anyone, even God, may scare you. All I can tell you is that God can be trusted. He is not an abusive parent. As a first step you may need to simply pray, *“Lord, help me get past this fear. Give me the courage to respond to what is true.”*

No one has a deciding vote in this decision but you. God votes for you. Satan, who is also very real, votes against you. I pray that you will cast your deciding vote before it is too late. As I understand scripture, there are no second chances in another life [Hebrews 9:27]. There is no reincarnation. Jesus/Yeshua stands at the door of your heart knocking. Will you open the door and let him in [Revelation 3:20]?

The story is told of an elderly man, a widower, who had an only son. Over the years he had amassed several hundred thousand dollars in valuable paintings. It was his desire, up his death, to leave his inheritance to his only son. However, Vietnam came along, his son got drafted, and in the course of the war his son was killed. Upon hearing of his son's death, the old gentleman sank into a deep depression which lasted almost two years.

Then, one day, there was a knock at his front door. When he opened the door, there stood a rather young hippie looking fellow with a beard and long hair. The young man said, *“Sir, you don't know me, but I served in Vietnam with your son. In fact, if it weren't for your son, I wouldn't be here today because he gave his life to save my life. Now I know you collect artwork, and while I am not great artist, I painted a portrait of your son when I was in Vietnam and I would like you to have it.”*

Well, sure enough, it wasn't great artwork, but it really did capture the likeness of the son. The father loved the painting, so much so that he took down one of his very valuable paintings above his fireplace and hung the picture of his son there. Often at night he'd have a fire going, some soft music playing, and as he'd stare at the painting and his heart would be warmed.

As the years went by eventually the old art collector died, and because there was no one to leave his inheritance to, art dealers from all around the world came to bid on his very valuable paintings which were to be auctioned off.

As the auctioneer began the auction, he said, *“It was in the father's will that the first painting to be auctioned off be the picture of his son.”* As you can imagine, no one wanted it because it wasn't great artwork, and so there was silence. Eventually, the old gardener spoke up. He said, *“Ya know, I worked for that family for many years and there son was like a son to me. Now, I'm not a wealthy man, but I will gladly bid \$35.00.”*

And, again, there was silence. Eventually the auctioneer said, *“Going . . . going . . . Gone!”* Then he said, *“The auction is now over.”* There was a loud gasp and a stunned silence. Then the auctioneer spoke, *“It was in the father's will, ‘Whoever receives my son, receives it all.’”*

If you are willing to receive Jesus/Yeshua into your life, you receive it all. John 1:12 says, *“To as many as received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.”* All things become yours because you belong to God [Romans 8:31,32; I Corinthians 3:21-23].

If you become convinced that what I have said is true, and if you are ready to open the door of your heart to him, then find a quiet place and invite him in. Don't procrastinate. What greater joy could you have than to know your sins are forgiven, that you have been given eternal life, and that you are prepared to meet your Lord. I believe his return is very soon [Zechariah 14:1-9; I John 3:1-3].

May I suggest the following prayer, or one like it: “*Dear Jesus/Yeshua, I thank you for loving me. I am sorry for my pride, and stubbornness, and all the ways that I have sinned against you. I believe you died on the cross for my sin. As best as I know how, right now, I invite you to come into my life. Please forgive me, and cleanse me from all my sin. Heal my heart where it has been wounded. Deliver me from all evil and make me the person you want me to be. Calm my fears and help me to know your love. Thank you for hearing my prayer. Amen.*”

These words are not magical. The important thing is that you mean them. Once you have invited Jesus/Yeshua to be a part of your life, I encourage you to find a loving church where the Bible is both honored and taught. Make public your commitment to Christ/Messiah by getting baptized as he instructed [Matthew 28:19,20; Acts 10:47, 48a]. Visit several churches before you pick a church. Pray about it, and listen to your heart. God can lead you. It is sort of like trying on a new pair of shoes. You don’t necessarily want to buy the first pair you try on.

Continue to pray, read scripture, and allow God to speak to you. If you’re a student in high school, check out such groups as Campus Life, Young Life, Fellowship of Christian Athletes, K-Life, etc. If you are in college, there are some wonderful college ministries such as Campus Crusade For Christ, the Navigators, Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship, etc. Groups such as these are a great way to begin to grow and to find support throughout the week. Even if you are not a student, call one of these groups and ask them to suggest some good churches in your area.

The story is told of a native witch doctor who had done much evil in his life, causing much needless suffering through his witchcraft. As a result of the love and work of some Christian missionaries, he yielded his heart to Jesus/Yeshua. Later, he called a tribal meeting to share with his village the transformation that had occurred in his life. He said that before he came to know Christ/Messiah, it was as though there was an evil dog in him that made him do cruel, hateful things. When he repented, and asked Christ/Messiah into his life, he said it was as though a powerful dog of love and peace came to live in him.

As he spoke, a small lad sitting at his feet grew more and more absorbed with what he was saying. When the lad couldn’t take the suspense any longer, he blurted out, “*Did the bad dog leave?*” The former witch doctor paused and said, “*No, son, he still hangs around.*” The boy asked “*How do the two dogs get along?*” The old man replied, “*They fight all the time.*” The little boy, with great concern in his voice said, “*Well, which one wins?*” The old man, with a smile and a twinkle in his eyes said, “*The one I feed the most!*”—How true.

I also urge you to read such authors as Max Lucado, John Eldredge, Charles Swindoll [<http://www.insight.org>], Lee Strobel, Billy Graham, and Josh McDowell [<http://www.ccci.org/josh>]. If you like a bit heavier reading, try C.S. Lewis [e.g., *Mere Christianity*, *The Weight Of Glory*, *The Screwtape Letters*], or Peter Kreeft [e.g., *Making Sense Out Of Suffering*]. I encourage you to support your local Christian bookstore by purchasing your books through them, but if there are none in your area, you may order books directly over the internet. There are many wonderful Christian organizations. I suggest you contact any of the following for their assistance and literature. You can most likely get their addresses from a Christian bookstore, or you may access them over the internet. For addresses of other Christian organizations and resources, log onto <http://www.gospelcom.net/>. Also check out:

Billy Graham Evangelistic Association: <http://www.graham-assn.org>

Campus Crusade For Christ: <http://www.ccci.org>

Fellowship Of Christian Athletes: <http://www.gospelcom.net/fca>

Great Commission Ministries: <http://www.greatcommission.org>

Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship: <http://www.ivpress.com>

The Navigators: <http://www.gospelcom.net/navs>

Youth For Christ: <http://www.gospelcom.net/yfc>

Now that our journey has almost reached its end, I hope you have found the trip rewarding. My hope and prayer is that not only have you come to believe in God’s existence, but that you have also encountered God through the Lord Jesus/Yeshua. If you now have Christ/Messiah living inside you then the best trip of all awaits you: Heaven. Let me conclude with these few thoughts about Heaven.

In one of the most moving books I’ve ever read, “*The Journey of Desire*,” John Eldredge points out that *it is impossible to hope for that which we do not desire*. In discussing Heaven you may ask, “*How can I desire a place I’ve never seen or been?*”—Let me try to answer this questions, if I may. I truly believe that if you learn to *desire* Heaven, then you will *hope* for Heaven, and it will change the course of your life, and help keep your faith alive and growing. [Read Romans 8:18-25 and II Corinthians 4:16-18.]

To start with, try to recall the most beautiful place you’ve ever seen or been. For me it was the summer of 1978. I’d just driven across western Kansas and eastern Colorado in rain. As I approached Denver, the storm passed, and there

before me were the snow-capped Colorado Rockies. It was near sunset and the air had that fresh luminous quality. The sky was filled with about every shade of purple, lavender, pink, peach, and orange colors you can imagine, capped with a bright red sun just above the mountain peaks. And to top it off, behind me, where the storm had just passed, was a brilliant rainbow arching its way across the sky. As I recall, there were even some geese flying south. It was so incredible that I pulled off the highway and stared. My heart was overflowing with joy and thanksgiving. But, do you know what? Within about twenty minutes it was gone and I felt so sad.—“*Oh, if it could have just lasted! If only I could have entered into the beauty and stayed.*”

Or again, have you ever been to a music concert that is your type of music, whatever that might be, and for a couple of hours it seems as though you are suspended in time? But then what happens? The lights come on, the curtain drops, and it is over. If you're like me, a wave of sadness hits.—“*Oh, if only it could have lasted longer!*”

Or, do you recall your first feelings of romantic love, possibly in junior or senior high school, and how wonderfully exciting it was? Question: what happens if you marry that person? Do you still love the person? Hopefully so, but do you still have those wonderful romantic feelings?—Probably not. Reality sets in. While you may still deeply love whomever you're with [if you are with someone], you may discover that he/she snores, and that some of his/her habits drive you up a wall.

Or, have you ever seen someone's face and been drawn to it like a magnet? You feel you could stare into the beauty of that face, into the beauty of those eyes of love and acceptance, forever. And then what happens? The person gets up and leaves, or he/she passes you by, and it is like a knife pierces your soul.

Please think with me. What would it be if you could live some place where the beauty never fades, where the music never has to end, where the feelings of passionate love, excitement, and adventure never diminish, and where for all eternity you could stare into the face of perfect love, into the face of God?—Well, you have just described your *desire* for Heaven.

You see, ever since you were born, God has planted the longings for Heaven in your heart. The aching, the deep longings, those feelings of desire, the passions, the thirst for adventure and acceptance, your yearning after something you can't quite put into words; they all point in one direction, and that is toward God and Heaven.—Now you know.

From the day you were born until now you have longed for Heaven. *God has planted eternity in the hearts of men*, says Solomon, and we won't be content until we are home in Heaven. To use John Eldredge's analogy, we are like an ocean seal lost from the sea, living by a small muddy pond. Our hearts won't be satisfied until we're where we were created to be, and that is Heaven.

Like the warm aromas coming from your mother or grandmother's kitchen when you were a child, we only get tantalizing foretastes of Heaven now. Beauty and the glory of nature, as C.S. Lewis writes, are “*only the first sketch.*” Lewis also wrote, “*Joy is the serious business of Heaven.*” Paul reminds us: “*No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him.*” [I Corinthians 2:9]

To me, the existence of God and the reality of Heaven are *self-evident* truths. Listen to your heart, and your heart will tell you that these longings are true. If you know Christ, then your life on this earth is but the first chapter of a never-ending story, where each chapter is better than the one before. With all your heart live for Christ today, for how you live your life here on earth will echo for eternity. Allow him to write the remaining chapters of your life.

May his grace and peace be yours.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

This booklet is one of several booklets in a series defending the Christian faith. You may read or download any of the unformatted manuscripts, including this booklet, off the internet at: <http://www.4seekers.com>. There are also many smaller tracts which may also be downloaded.—Enjoy!

So you know a little about me, I am an evangelical Christian. I became a Christian through Youth For Christ in high school, and was very involved with Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship as a student in college. I have worked extensively with troubled teens in psychiatric hospitals and detention centers [where much of this material was developed], and coauthored one book with Josh McDowell [Campus Crusade For Christ] on the deity of Christ. I have always attended churches which are evangelical and inter-denominational in spirit [e.g. Evangelical Covenant Church, Evangelical Free Church, Great Commission Ministries, etc.].

I hope this booklet helps you discover and walk in the awesome truth that, not only does God exist, but that you are incredibly loved by God, the Creator and Sustainer of this universe in whom we live, and move, and have our being.

With deepest respect,
Bart Larson

“I know no promise that He [God] will accept a deliberate compromise. For He has, in the last resort, nothing to give us but Himself . . . For He claims all, because He is love and must bless. He cannot bless us unless He has us. When we try to keep within us an area that is our own, we try to keep an area of death. Therefore, in love, He claims all. There’s no bargaining with Him . . . ‘If you have not chosen the Kingdom of God, it will make in the end no difference what you have chosen instead.’ Those are hard words to take. Will it really make no difference whether it was women or patriotism, cocaine or art, whisky or a seat in the Cabinet, money or science? Well, surely no difference that matters. We shall have missed the end for which we are formed, and rejected the only thing that satisfies. Does it matter to a man dying in a desert by which choice of route he missed the only well?”

—C.S. Lewis [From the book, *“The Weight Of Glory.”*]