

A U T U M N 2 0 0 4 I S S U E

SOLA SCRIPTURA

AFFIRMING THE AUTHENTICITY, ACCURACY, AND AUTHORITY OF THE BIBLE

THE GRAND ILLUSION

BEHIND
THE DAVINCI
CODE



THE DECEPTION OF ANOTHER GOSPEL

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SOLA SCRIPTURA

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The pages of Sola Scriptura are designed to be evangelistic and pastoral in nature: evangelistic in that the magazine is dedicated to proclaiming and defending the historic gospel of Jesus Christ; pastoral in that the magazine is committed to equipping and encouraging believers through sound biblical teaching.

"All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness..." (2 Timothy 3:16)

"In pointing out these things to the brethren, you will be a good servant of Christ Jesus, constantly nourished on the words of the faith and of the sound doctrine which you have been following." (1 Timothy 4:6)

"Beloved, while I was making every effort to write you about our common salvation, I felt the necessity to write to you appealing that you contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints." (Jude 3)

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Carved in Stone

Scott Pierre, Executive Director

An epitaph, as Webster's explains, is "an inscription on or at a tomb or a grave in memory of the one buried there." It is meant to *epitomize* the deceased and therefore highlights (if not exaggerates) the strong points of the life now remembered in word only. Some are so long the tombstone rises 5 and 6 feet above the ground just to contain the script, and others are a mere sweet and tender phrase. Throughout my life, I have read about the noble career of the local doctor, the sacrifice of the brave soldier, and the humble piety of the beloved mother upon the weather-aged stones in the grave yard... line upon line their lives were a testimony to something they left behind to the people who loved them. Unfortunately, not all the people who loved them have the best taste in choosing what to say. Take for example the tombstone in New Mexico that reads, "Here lies Johnny Yeast. Pardon me for not rising," or this one in Nevada, "Here lies Butch, we planted him raw. He was quick on the trigger, but slow on the draw." Either way, it seems that lengthy and elaborate epitaphs, as well as clever or sentimental phrases, so fashionable in centuries past are few and far between these days, making those old cemeteries so interesting to roam through. Recently, while vacationing in the mountains of West Virginia, my family and I stumbled upon a cemetery where most of the tombstones dated in the late 1700s. As I strolled from one ancient headstone to another, reading a line here and a paragraph there, my mind couldn't help but wander. What did this person look like? What were his hopes and dreams? Did he know Jesus? I wonder if I'll meet him in eternity one day. Did he have a family? How did he die? What was said at his funeral? One of the stones we saw was that of a boy who died at the early age of fourteen. His parents, I'm assuming, had these words engraved in the stone:

"Many hopes and dreams lie buried here"

Looking over at my own young children, I was overwhelmed with the thought of having to bury

my own child, and I wondered how the lives of this boy's parents were changed after the death of their son.

I then began to think about what my own tombstone might say. What is it about my life that my wife or my children will choose to remember? In other words, what do I want to be doing today that will be worthy of inscription tomorrow? Paul, in Ephesians 5, challenges us with these words, "Be imitators of God, as beloved children; and walk in love, just as Christ also loved you, and gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma." As beloved children. Children love to play games, and no game is learned earlier or played longer than the copycat game. They do it all the time. They're doing it when they learn to talk. They do it in the car to annoy their siblings. They do it in the back yard when they lower the rim on the basket so they can dunk like their NBA heroes. They do it when they show up freshman year in high school wearing the same jeans as their buddy... on purpose. It doesn't take long to see the many characteristics of our own personalities lived out in our kid's lives as they imitate us. In a similar way, Scripture teaches us that we are to be like *children* again and imitate God. As a child of God, we have been granted the mind of Christ, which is the only way we are able to accomplish Paul's exhortation and imitate our Savior. So, after some consideration, I

**What do I want
to be doing today
that will be worthy
of inscription
tomorrow?**



decided that if I could only have one thing written as my epitaph, my desire would be to have these words:

Here lies a faithful husband and father who daily sought to imitate his Savior, the King of Kings, and Lord of Lords, Jesus Christ.

His confidence is that one day he will be raised from this ground to be with His Savior forever.

Praise God for His amazing grace.

Oh, to be one who imitates the love of my Lord toward my spouse, my children, my friends, my colleagues, and the strangers that I meet. I trust that you have similar desires and by God's grace we might accomplish these desires in His time.

In this issue our cover article by Dan Hayden will teach you about the dangers of religions that are popularized in media these days, but are a dangerous throwback to earlier false doctrines. James MacDonald discusses five ways to have more effective and life-changing Bible study. A guest author, Dr. George Fredericks, does a review of the most popular Bible software programs so that you can choose your study resources wisely. Be sure and read our other columns and features, all designed to increase your understanding and faith in God's Word.

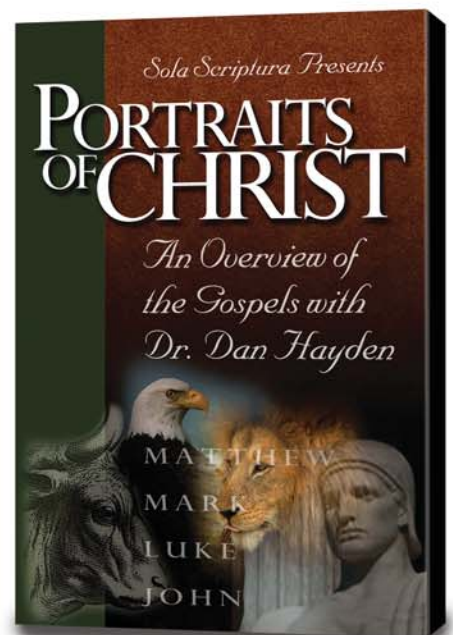
The most profound tombstone in that little Southern cemetery, and the one I will remember the longest, wasn't the largest or the one with the most words. It was, in fact, a modest (and a little cockaded) cross placed in the remote corner of the lot. We had to bend over and squint to read the six well worn words that strung over the cross-beam and said it all: *"Simply to the cross I cling."* May God help us to be a people who cling tightly to the cross of Christ and that we would imitate His great love to all that we come into contact with. May God bless you as you live what will one day be the epitaph of your life. ■

Why are there four gospels?

Take your small group on an eye-opening journey through **Portraits of Christ**. In six 30-minute sessions, Dan Hayden masterfully answers many of the most difficult questions about the four Gospels. Challenge and change your group's preconceptions of Jesus! Comes with DVD, a study booklet, and PDF version for printing. No other guides or workbooks needed! Available for \$18.95. Call 1-800-844-9930 or visit our website at www.solagroup.org.


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DVD
VIDEO



THE GRAND ILLUSION

THE DECEPTION
OF ANOTHER
GOSPEL

The sensational illusionist

Howard Thurston once boasted that he could walk an elephant across the stage and no one would notice. Later, Doug Henning actually performed that feat to the amazement of his audience. And, who can forget the magic of David Copperfield, who made a jumbo jet disappear on national TV? Illusion can be fun. We are intrigued by the deception and we love to be fooled when it doesn't matter.

By its very nature illusion tampers with our perception of reality. What we think we see is not what is actually there. Now, that is fine when we're being entertained, but it's not okay when it interferes with life. Deception is a terrible thing when it leads us away from the truth. A life based on a lie is like a house built on the sand. In the end it cannot survive. A new Christianity based on a new gospel is today's new illusion. Actually, it is an old show with a modern twist that is receiving rave reviews. Opening in 1985 as "The Jesus Seminar," this revival of ancient Gnosticism as the true Christianity immediately caught the attention

BY DAN HAYDEN

THE GRAND ILLUSION ::: THE DECEPTION OF ANOTHER GOSPEL

of major news periodicals such as *Time Magazine*, *Newsweek*, and *US News & World Report*. The Discovery Channel gave it prime time coverage, and Peter Jennings of ABC News thought it was significant enough to qualify as a TV special. The world had discovered a new Jesus who was more human than the biblical Jesus, and people were delighted.

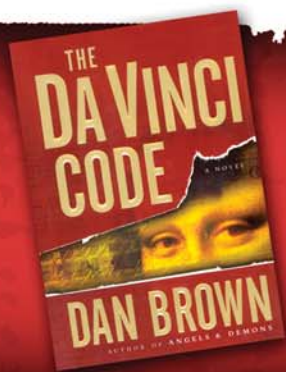
Recently, however, there has been a meteoric rise in popularity for the revisionist ideas of The Jesus Seminar. Dan Brown's

become the new reality. The audience is wowed by the illusion, and millions of people are loving the show.

What Is Gnosticism?

"Gnosis" is a Greek word for knowledge, and Gnostics were those who believed that ultimate union with God was achieved through special knowledge and transcendent spiritual experiences. Epiphanius (AD 310-403) was the first to use the term "practicing Gnostics" giving us the name

emerged as a separate and competitive force to the apostolic teaching. Followers of this system claimed to have special insights gleaned from secret encounters with God that elevated them over the historic church. Epiphanius and Iranaeus wrote against them in strong, polemic language and branded their teachings as heresy. This was not your mainstream Christianity, nor was it the original Gospel of Jesus. It was an aberrant cult that reinterpreted the message of Christ by transforming it into the likeness



THE DA VINCI CODE IS FORGING AN INDELIBLE IMPRESSION ON OUR POST-MODERN CULTURE WITH THE SAME Gnostic IDEAS ABOUT JESUS.

novel, *The Da Vinci Code*, is forging an indelible impression on our post-modern culture with the same Gnostic ideas about Jesus. With six million copies sold (and still counting), *The Da Vinci Code* with its new gospel has turned The Jesus Seminar into popular conversation. According to Paul Maier, "The book is being translated into 40 languages and will be made into a film by Columbia Pictures."¹

Modern Gnosticism is having a field day in the public forum, publicly slandering the church and historic Christianity as deliberate frauds who have squelched the truth about Jesus for centuries. Jesus is not God after all, they say, and the Bible is a contrived fabrication to hide the "genuine Gospel." Christianity has terrorized the world with its exclusive message of a divine Savior long enough. Now everyone can relax and enjoy life.

It's an "abracadabra" performance in which things that have no substance are lifted out of the shadows of history to

for this teaching.² Iranaeus (AD 120-202) earlier described them as those who "overthrow the faith of many, by drawing them away, under a pretense of [superior] knowledge..."³

The roots of Gnosticism sprouted in the early years of the church. Influenced by Plato and the ancient mystery religions, certain quasi-Christian groups claimed to have an inside track on spirituality as a result of secret knowledge obtained from transcendent sources. The apostle Paul warned Timothy about "the opposing arguments of what is falsely called 'knowledge'—which some have professed and thus gone astray from the faith" (1 Timothy 6:20-21). The temptation to elitism through secretive knowledge that went beyond the teachings of the apostles was already present in the formative years of the church.

Yet, fully developed Gnosticism did not come into its own until the second and third centuries after Christ. A well-defined system of esoteric Christianity eventually

of a mystery religion in the name of Christianity.

So Gnosticism is not a new thing. What is new is the contemporary fascination of many with the writings of Gnosticism in their attempt to redefine Christianity as a man-centered religion. Humans are their own gods and the way to a utopian existence is to follow the path of enlightenment. This is Gnosticism, and it is the new Christianity that is posing as the true faith rediscovered.

What About Those Hidden Books?

The catalyst for this resurgence of interest in Gnostic thinking was a spectacular archaeological find at Nag Hammadi, Egypt in 1945. An Arab boy by the name of Muhammad Ali found a clay jar which, when broken, revealed an ancient Coptic (Egyptian) manuscript. Later discoveries in the same region produced numerous other manuscripts that have since become known as the Nag Hammadi Library of the Gnostic

Scriptures. Until that time the Gnostic writings had been known only as they were referenced in the writings of others. Suddenly the treasures of the Gnostic community were discovered and Gnosticism was back—complete with its own Bible.

It has taken several decades to decipher and translate the Coptic scrolls of the Nag Hammadi Library. An English edition of these writings was published in 1977 and French and German translations have been published as well. This project was the

believe pretty much whatever we wish to believe.⁴

Five of the titles of the Gnostic scriptures are represented as Gospels: the Gospel of Truth, the Gospel of Thomas, the Gospel of Philip, the Gospel of the Egyptians, and the Gospel of Mary. As with the New Testament Scriptures, however, there are also other types of literature in the Gnostic writings; the Acts of Peter and the Twelve Apostles, the Apocalypse of Paul, the

ings—the product of an emerging cult. Dr. Darrell Bock makes this crucial observation concerning these writings:

Their dates range from the second to the third century AD, although a few works are alleged to be older or at least to reflect older views. This could be the case for some bits of this material, but not for most of it. The bulk of this material is a few generations removed from the foun-

CHRISTIANITY WAS ANYTHING BUT POPULAR IN THE EARLY CENTURIES, AND HISTORIANS HAVE CLEARLY DEMONSTRATED THAT GNOSTICISM WAS NOT THE ORIGINAL CHRISTIANITY.

impetus for the Jesus Seminar launched by Robert W. Funk in 1985, and it is the foundation for the alternative Christianity espoused by Dan Brown in *The Da Vinci Code*. There is now a new Bible that reveals to us a new Jesus and a new Christianity—and it's all the rage.

Erwin Lutzer describes the impact of the newly discovered writings of the Gnostic Scriptures:

Some people like this alternate Bible better than the one we're acquainted with; they like what it teaches about God, Christ, mankind, and women. This Bible gives us permission to make God into whatever we want him (or her) to be. This Bible accepts the divine feminine and personal esoteric knowledge. At last we are free from restricting doctrines such as the Virgin Birth, the unique deity of Christ, and his resurrection. This new Bible is broad enough to embrace our culture and lets us

Exegesis of the Soul, and so forth.

In other words, the Gnostics evidently knew that it was important for them to create a separate collection of scriptures that reflected their own ideas since the New Testament books could not be used for their purpose. Everything in the Bible was contrary to what they were teaching, clearly highlighting the fact that Gnosticism is not another version of primitive Christianity but, rather, a totally different religious system. Gnosticism is simply a cross-dresser that has borrowed the clothes of Christianity. Like an illusion, it is not what it appears to be.

Robert Funk and Dan Brown are assuming that Gnosticism is the original Christianity that was later smothered by the more popular version of the church. Yet, Christianity was anything but popular in the early centuries, and historians have clearly demonstrated that Gnosticism was not the original Christianity. There is no question that the Gnostic writings were written later than the New Testament writ-

dations of the Christian faith, a vital point to remember when assessing the contents.⁵

So, here's the bottom line. Gnosticism is not Christianity and the Jesus of Gnosticism is not the Jesus of the Bible. It is not the true version of the Gospel. Far from it. It is a corruption of the message of Jesus masquerading as the genuine thing—a magic show where illusion is presented as reality. The fact that it is popular would make Houdini proud. ■

ENDNOTES

1. Hank Hanegraaff and Paul L. Maier, *The Da Vinci Code: Fact or Fiction?* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House, 2004), p. 6.
2. Darrell L. Bock, *Breaking the Da Vinci Code* (Nashville, TN: Nelson Books, 2004), p. 63.
3. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, *Ante-Nicene Fathers, Vol. 1* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1995), p. 315.
4. Erwin W. Lutzer, *The Da Vinci Deception* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House, 2004), pp. 19-20.
5. Bock, *Breaking the Da Vinci Code*, p. 64.

Menu

Genesis

Perfect beginning to any meal, Chef's unique creation of Adam and Eve compliment a helping of flora and fauna.

Exodus

Signature entree containing the Lord's Law, seasoned with glorious deliverance. Served with a helping of manna.

Leviticus

Helping of grains and meat, seasoned by unleavened cakes and butter mixed with oil.

Numbers

Helping of twelve tribes seasoned by fine Canaanite wines brought back by five spies.

Eat It

FIVE WAYS TO

YOUR WORDS WERE FOUND AND I ATE THEM,
AND YOUR WORDS BECAME FOR ME A JOY AND THE DELIGHT OF MY HEART;
FOR I HAVE BEEN CALLED BY YOUR NAME, O LORD GOD OF ISRAEL.

Growing up, I loved to watch game shows. My favorite was the one where the winner gets to go on a one-minute shopping spree in a grocery store and fill as many carts as possible in the allotted time. Kids love food, and my friends and I used to debate about what we would grab in sixty seconds. I used to love watching the people all fired up, getting all they could while the getting was good.

Since then I've learned that what food is to our bodies, Scripture is to our souls. If we understood what the Bible is and does for us, we would be just as fired up as one of those crazy game show contestants with the grocery cart in front of them, waiting for the bell to sound. One of my favorite verses, Jeremiah 15:16 says it best, **"Your words were found and I ate them, and your words became for me a joy and the delight of my heart."** So, ready for a feast? Here are five things you need to do if you want to consume God's Word and feed your soul.

1. READ IT

"Where should I start?" Most Bibles average around 1,400 pages. So think of the Bible as two big books of four to five regular-sized books. In order to make sure you comprehend the power of what you are reading, savor it like you would your favorite dessert—take a bite or two, then put your spoon down. If you read it for twelve minutes each day, or one and a half hours per week, you could finish reading the Bible in a year, and you will be so incredibly blessed you would want to start all over again the next year. It's really not as intimidating as most people make it.

t Up!

BY JAMES
MACDONALD

O CONSUME GOD'S WORD

EAT THEM, AND YOUR WORDS BECAME FOR ME A JOY AND THE DELIGHT
CALLED BY YOUR NAME, O LORD GOD OF HOSTS. — JEREMIAH 15:16

As for *where* to start, go to the gospel of John, the fourth eyewitness account of Jesus' life. As you read it slowly, every time you see the word *believe*, underline it and ask yourself: *Believe what?* After that, read 1, 2, and 3 John, then another gospel. That'll keep you busy for a while. Pray before you begin reading each time. Ask the Lord to open your mind and heart to His truth and then believe that He will. Also, don't lie down when you read the Bible. It's not a magazine or a dime store novel—it's God's Word. If you give it the respect it deserves, it will rock your world.

Here's a second thing. Don't just read it:

2. QUESTION IT

Here are some prompts I use; over time, you can develop your own.

1. **"What portion of my reading stands out to me?"** You'll read two or three chapters and you'll feel drawn to a certain part. Go back to that part and ask the following questions.
2. **"Why does this part have my attention?"** What is it about this that has caught my attention? To help you answer that question, use the remaining questions.
3. **"Is there an example for me to follow?"** I can't tell you how many times God's Word has impacted my life just from asking this question. All of a sudden BOOM!—something jumps right off the page. "James, you should be more like that!" I love it when God's Word calls me to be more of what the Lord requires.
4. **"Is there an error for me to avoid?"** It's very comforting to know that if I have unknowingly stepped in a wrong direction or made an unwise decision, God's Word can reveal that to me. It's

easy to see the mistakes others make, but much harder to see our own mistakes. This is where the Word of Gods becomes a mirror (James 1:23-25).

5. **"Is there a duty for me to perform?"** Is God's Word calling me to act? Am I neglecting something in my home or where I work or in my personal life? If so, I want to know what it is so I can work on it.

6. **"Is there any promise for me to claim?"** So often God's Word brings strength and encouragement. As you study the Bible, you will hear the Lord committing Himself to certain things or to act in certain ways. As you come to those promises, you might just acknowledge, "Yes, God! You are like this, and You've promised to be this way for all my life, and I trust You." Your heart will be thrilled as you learn and review the promises of God.

7. **"Is there a sin for me to confess?"** You won't read the Bible long until you come across passages that reveal to you the error of your ways. One promise that helps me with this is, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9).

Now as you begin to question God's Word, you're going to be ready to do this third thing.

3. PLAN IT

If you are going to benefit from the Bible as much as you can for the rest of your life, you must have a plan as to how you will apply what you are learning. Have a journal open beside your Bible and write some notes. Write some thoughts in the margin of your Bible. When

THE JOY AND DELIGHT FOUND IN FILLING YOUR LIFE WITH GOD'S WORD IS JUST WAITING FOR YOU

the Word convicts you about anger or deceit or selfishness, have a strategy to deal with those sins. Make your plan specific and measurable. The results you begin to see will amaze you.

4. PRAY IT

So often people are unsure of what to say in personal prayer. When you pray back the truths of God's own Word, you can be confident you are praying according to His will. You can also be confident that God will respond to what you are asking if the direction truly comes from His Word. There is an incredible power when you pray God's Word back to Him. When you open the passage and say, "God, You're this way, and you've promised to always be this way." Wow! So . . .

5. SHARE IT

When you've learned something from God's Word, you have to share it with somebody else. Take time to tell something you've learned to your spouse or friend or co-worker. Hebrews 10:24 says that we are supposed to "consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds." The reason we share God's Word is not for ourselves; it's for others. Then, as a by-product, we get the incredible blessing from seeing almighty God use it.

So, picture this—you're shopping cart is empty, you're at the line, the starting bell is about to ring. *Ready?* All the joy and delight found in filling your life with God's Word is just waiting for you. *Set?* "Your words were found and I ate them, and they became for me a joy and the delight of my heart." *Go!* ■

Pictures of God's Word



FIRE

"Therefore, thus says the LORD, the God of Hosts, 'Because you have spoken this word, behold, I am making my words in your mouth fire and this people wood, and it will consume them.'" (Jeremiah 5:14) I experience the reality of that Scripture on a weekly basis. I have the privilege of standing before thousands of people with God's Word in my mouth and seeing the incredible impact that it makes. I see the truth penetrate their hearts, grip their minds, move their emotions, and, best of all, engage their wills toward transformation. God's Word is like fire; it consumes people's hearts.

SWORD

"For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any double edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart." (Hebrews 4:12) Not a knife or dagger, but God's Word is a sword, the weapon of hand-to-hand combat. The sword of God's Word cuts to the heart of the matter. Ephesians 6:17 says, "And take . . . the sword of the spirit, which is the Word of God." When Satan is trying to tempt us or discourage us, it's the Word of God we use to defeat him. Amazingly, Jesus Christ Himself used the Word of God as a sword to deflect the temptations of the enemy (Matthew 4:1-11). Can we afford to do less?



HAMMER

"Is not my word like . . . a hammer that breaks the rock in pieces?" (Jeremiah 23:29) If God can't get to you with the fire or the sword, guess what? The hammer's going to fall. Many of those whose lives have been changed by the Word of God reference a time when their hearts were very hard and God had to break them. And it was painful. Nobody wants to meet the hammer of conviction and change. That is why the Scripture exhorts us, "Today, if you would hear His voice, do not harden your hearts" (Psalm 95:7-8).



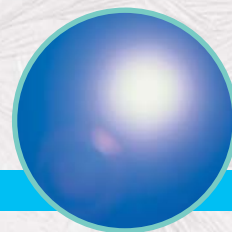


SEED

"Having been born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever." (1 Peter 1:23 NKJV) In one of His parables Jesus said, "The seed is the word of God" (Luke 8:11 NKJV). A seed starts so small and takes time to grow. Similarly the Word of God starts to work in our hearts, but it takes time. Sometimes we have to hear the same thing several times before it really starts to connect. In the same way, God's Word planted in the human heart will bear much fruit over time, but it requires a willingness to plant the seed by faith and wait.

LIGHT

"Your Word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path." (Psalm 119:105) Here's the great thing about light. If you're walking around in the dark, you will stumble over stuff and hurt yourself. The Word of God works in our lives so that we don't walk down dark alleys anymore. We don't make dumb mistakes. If you know what it is to be perplexed about an important decision hanging over your head, then you understand the value of having God's Word light your path.



MILK

"Like newborn babies, long for the pure milk of the word, so that by it you may grow" (1 Peter 2:2). We were born with our mouths open. What mother's milk is to little babies, so the Word of God is in the life of a sincere person of faith. I don't see adults crying because they haven't been physically fed, but how many are filled by anxiety, fear, and discouragement because they have neglected God's only provision for their spiritual nourishment?



MIRROR

"For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks at his natural face in a mirror, for once he has looked at himself and gone away, he has immediately forgotten what kind of person he was. But one who looks intently at the perfect law, the law of liberty, and abides by it, not having become a forgetful hearer but an effective doer, this man will be blessed in what he does." (James 1:23-25) God's Word shows us ourselves! It confronts us with truth and convicts us about our true need. If I have a blob of mustard on my face and, after looking in the mirror, forget to rub it off, how silly would that make me? So the real power then is not in the words exclusively but in my doing what the Word of God says.

MEAT

"For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you have need again for someone to teach you the elementary principles of the oracles of God, and you have come to need milk and not solid food. For everyone who partakes only of milk is not accustomed to the word or righteousness." (Hebrews 5:12-14) If you've known Christ for any amount of time at all, you find yourself saying, "Isn't there more?" The answer is yes! There is more—the meat of God's Word. Milk is like the elementary or basic things of the Bible. "But solid food is for the mature, who because of practice, have their senses trained to discern good and evil" (v. 15).



Dr. James MacDonald is the founding pastor of Harvest Bible Chapel in Rolling Meadows, Illinois and radio Bible teacher on Walk in the Word (walkintheword.com) which emphasizes the precise exposition of God's Word and its practical life application. James and his wife Kathy have three children—Luke, Landon, and Abigail—and reside in the northwest suburbs of Chicago.

WORDS

THE ETERNAL SECURITY

BY CHARLES COOPER

ONCE SAVED, ALWAYS SAVED. DO YOU BELIEVE IT? CAN YOU LOSE YOUR salvation? Where do you stand on this pivotal point? More importantly, how do you defend it? Can you defend it? Some are apt to recite Scripture after Scripture that supports their belief. I could choose different references that would *seem* to support both sides of this issue, but that would be a waste of time. In most cases, people base their understanding of a particular verse on some teaching they received by someone, somewhere. There is a better way!

Taken at face value, the words of Scripture mean exactly what the normal, natural, customary sense suggests. Scripture promises salvation to those who believe. Given the condition of my heart before salvation (the heart is deceitful above all, Jeremiah 17:9), if God's promise of salvation does not cover all the ways I can mess up, then salvation is not really salvation. Satan has had 6,000 years to gain experience dealing with humanity. He knows us! He knows that at our best, it takes very little to trip us up. If God's salvation depends on us for its permanency, can we ever be sure that we are not deceived?

At the heart of any debate about the nature of biblical salvation are the two words "eternal life." The normal, natural, customary sense of the phrase "eternal life" conveys the idea of life without end, everlasting life, life beyond time, or life that keeps on going and going. If what one receives as a result of faith in Jesus Christ is not "eternal" in duration from the point of reception, then the Bible has committed an error. If one can lose "eternal life" due to unfaithfulness, then one never truly had eternal life. Eternal life is an unambiguous phrase that cannot mean anything else but life without end. Therefore those who argue that "once saved, always saved" is not scriptural must overcome the normal, natural, customary sense of the phrase "eternal life."

In the Gospel of John, the author states that the purpose of his gospel is "that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name" (John 20:31). Faith in Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God, results in "life in His name." John tells us how to get "life." If we believe certain things about Jesus, we get life. Is this "life in His name" eternal life? John 6:47 states, "Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes has

COUNT

Y OF THE ELECT



eternal life.” The presence of “truly, truly” is a textual clue that Jesus prefixes to significant statements. It is a flashing red light signaling that what is about to be said is utterly important and true. Belief brings eternal life. But what does Jesus mean by “eternal life?”

Our English word *eternal* derives from the Latin word *aevum*, which means “age.” The Greek phrase translated “eternal life” is ζῶναι αἰώνιον (zōnē aiōnion = “life eternal”). The life eternal one receives for believing in Jesus is associated with “the kingdom of God” (John 3:5). The kingdom of God (God’s physical reign on earth) is the next age of the earth. The Bible speaks of two ages. The Lord’s statement in Matthew 12:32 confirms this fact. In detailing the consequences of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit the Lord states, “But whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit, it shall not be forgiven him, either in this age or in the age to come.” Eternal life is necessary for those who would be part of “the age to come.” John indicates in Revelation 20:4 that those who come to life do so to reign “with Christ for a thousand years,” the beginning of the eternal reign of God.

The result of faithfulness to the Lord is correctly called “eternal life.” Therefore, the question that must be answered is this: is the phrase “eternal life” phenomenological or noumenological? The Bible often states things phenomenologically; that is, things are stated from the way they appear rather than from the way they really are. Psalms 50:1 states, “The Mighty One, God, the LORD, has spoken, And summoned the earth from the rising of the sun to its setting.” The author is speaking phenomenologically. The sun gives all appearance of rising and setting. Similarly, Jesus tells his disciples that the mustard seed “is smaller than all the seeds that are upon the soil” (Mark 4:31). Now a microscope will prove this statement wrong if this text is not spoken phenomenologically. But to the naked eye, the mustard seed appeared to be the smallest seed known to man two thousand years ago.

THERE IS NO CONFUSION IN
JOHN’S WRITING THAT A
PERSON CAN KNOW BEYOND
A SHADOW OF A DOUBT
THAT HE OR SHE POSSESSES
ETERNAL LIFE.

Those who believe that eternal life is really not *eternal* life view the phrase phenomenologically. For those who believed and walked faithfully for a while, it only appeared that they had eternal life. In reality, it is encumbered upon them to continue to believe and walk faithfully with the Lord. Only at the end of their physical life on earth can the matter be settled once and for all. Then and only then can such a person’s life be declared “eternal.” However, this conclusion would seem to contradict John 3:15.

John 3:15 speaks from a noumenological perspective. In this perspective, things are presented as they really are. The verse states “that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.” It does not say, “Whoever believes in him *shall receive* eternal life.” The latter would indicate a possible time lapse between the “believing” and the “receiving” of eternal life. The Greek is clear, meaning that everyone who believes may have in Him eternal life. Once belief is initiated, eternal life is an immediate possession. The verb ἐχῆ (echē) in an active sense means “to have or hold.” The core sense is to be in possession of something. In this case, one who believes has a firm grip on eternal life. The one who believes has eternal life, immediately.

The simplicity of John’s statement forces one to look elsewhere to find a way to contradict the plain sense of this passage. In their thinking, since the text is clear that belief in Christ guarantees eternal life, *belief* must be the problem. What is genuine belief? Have you ever been in a study group where the idea of believing something is contrasted to believing *in* something? Is that distinction true in Scripture as it pertains to belief?

The idea of believing something invokes simple intellectual assent that the thing is true: Airplanes do fly to Orlando. Believing *in* something invokes a more heartfelt acceptance and commitment to a truth: I will fly in that airplane to Orlando. The verb πιστεῦω (pisteuō = “to believe”) is used in seven different constructions in the Gospel of John. In all but one, the sense of the verb is for a heartfelt commitment that goes far beyond mere intellectual assent. Belief, in the Gospel of John, is an action. In a later letter, John writes, “These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know that you have eternal life” (1 John 5:13). There is no confusion in John’s writing that a person can know beyond a shadow of doubt that he or she possesses eternal life.

Certainly other examples are raised in Scripture that deal with this topic. There are people who claim to be born from above but live like those born of the devil. Scripture recognizes this and calls for such individuals to examine themselves to see whether they are truly in the faith. Scripture also teaches that God disciplines His children who are disobedient. If a person is thus identified as a “child of God” and is cared for as one cares for a child, can that child ever be completely severed from his parents? Examples such as these open the door for interesting discussion, yet the issue of eternal life for the believer can be known beyond any doubt. Don’t take my word for it. Take God’s Word for it—if you believe in Jesus Christ as Savior of your life, then eternal life is yours and nothing can ever take it away. ■

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Bible Software

Where Should You Begin?

Eager to immerse yourself in a study of the Scriptures and hundreds of years of commentary? Libraries can now be at your fingertips, as these applications prove with power and affordability.

by George Fredericks

The Bible is very specific about the importance of studying God's Word daily and in-depth. Thankfully, Christians today have the wonderful opportunity to take advantage of modern technology in the area of Bible study. There are numerous software packages available to the student of the Bible. Some of these are basic in design and inexpensive, while others can perform searches intricate enough to aid even the most learned Bible scholar and, not surprisingly, usually cost more than those of basic design. How do you know which one is right for you?

You should base your choice primarily on what you want to accomplish. If your desire is to do simple concordance searches in one or two Bible versions, then look at the most basic programs available, all of which are able to accomplish this type of task. If your goal is to search not only various Bible translations but also commentaries, theology books and other biblical guides, there are software options for this as well. These, of course, are often more complicated.

Another guiding principle in the purchase of Bible software is the cost. Many times our budgets do not allow for Bible programs costing hundreds of dollars. Keep in mind, however, that numbers alone do not really reflect the worth of a software package. There are other things to consider when looking at a software package, including how easy the program is to use, the availability, if any, of technical support, and the number of titles included in the package. Many times the

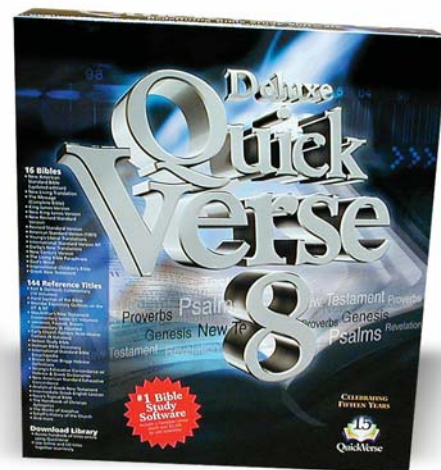
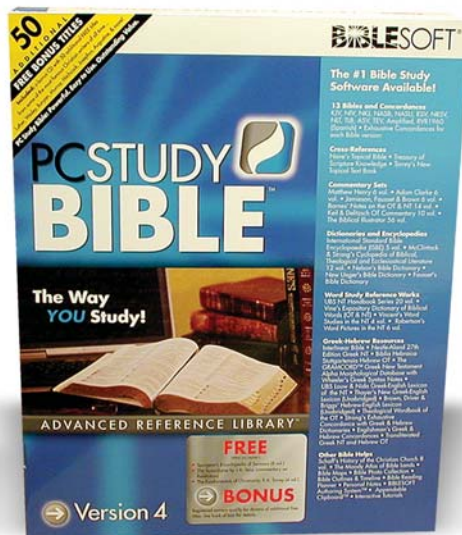
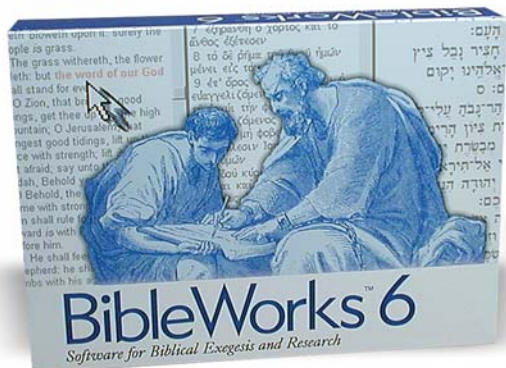
cost of the printed materials found in Bible programs can cost thousands of dollars, yet the software, with all of the various titles, is only a couple hundred dollars. You should also consider whether you will use the functions of the software package. Some packages focus on biblical language study, but if you don't know how to read Greek or Hebrew, the package will be of little use to you.

What will Bible software really do for you? Besides saving money when compared to buying the actual books found on these programs, you will be able to accomplish more in a shorter period of time. The computerized Bible program allows you to do searches in minutes that may take hours or even days to accomplish with the same material in printed form. This is one of the great benefits of purchasing this type of software.

Let's take a look at a few of the more popular Bible programs available today.

BibleWorks Version 6

This program can be summed up in one phrase: "Exegete the Scriptures!" From BibleWorks's beginning in 1992 (it was first known as Hermeneutika), their goal was to make a software package for people working in the original languages of the Bible. They then added modern language Bibles from around the world to their software package. Today this program is a powerful biblical study tool.



This current version of BibleWorks attempts to make lexical and morphological searches as simple as possible. Complex searches in various languages can be complicated, even with the help of a computer, but BibleWorks has been diligent in trying to make even the most difficult searches simple enough to learn quickly. They provide online help, and the package comes with a wonderful video tutorial. The software also ships with a very large and complete written manual, but everything on the manual can be accessed in the program itself.

The package contains over 139 resources, including more than 90 different modern-language versions of the Bible, a number of original language texts, lexicons, morphological databases, and various reference works. BibleWorks also offers six extra modules for an additional cost, including two Hebrew grammars, an intermediate Greek grammar, a Greek lexicon, a Hebrew lexicon, and the sectarian texts of the Dead Sea Scrolls.

One of the most impressive features of this package is that it allows you to search the Jewish Aramaic Targums and the Latin Vulgate. If you are interested in studying the word of God in its original languages, or if you need to use Bibles in languages other than English, this is a software package to consider.

PC Study Bible Version 4

This program is easy to install and is a delight to work with. Biblesoft offers five different software packages under the title PC Study Bible. The most basic of the five packages is called the Discovery Reference Library. Even at the low cost of \$59.95 this package allows you to do searches in multiple versions of the English language Bible, and it contains commentaries, theological works, and other biblical helps. The top package, the Advanced Reference Library, has over 250 available unlocked titles, including commentaries such as Carl F. Keil and Franz Delitzsch's Old Testament commentary set, various Bible encyclopedias, theological resources, language resources, and other outstanding Bible helps. Biblesoft also includes various church history resources.

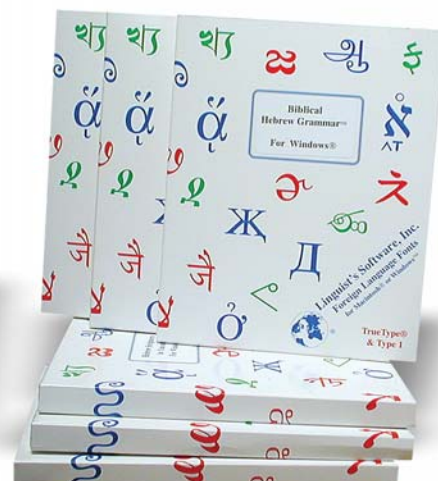
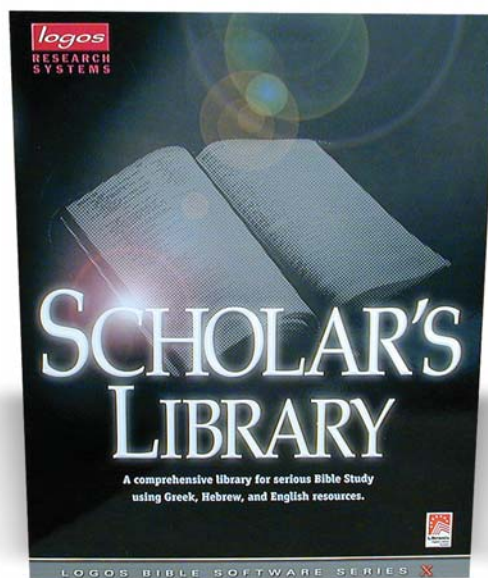
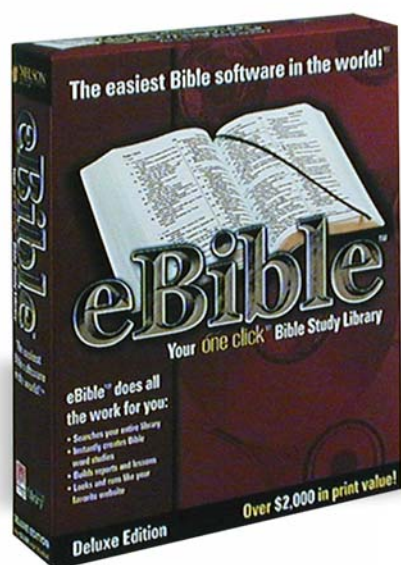
I was impressed with the ease at which searches can be done, and I liked the tabs found at the top of the workspace when the program is on. They look like hanging folder tabs, and they are easy to see when working on multiple searches at the same time. This allowed me to go back and forth between searches without difficulty.

Biblesoft has been supplying quality software to Christians since 1988. Their mission from the beginning has been to develop and make available to all Christians the very best Bible-centric computer tools to enable them to grow deeper in the knowledge of God. If you are interested in an easy-to-use yet very complete Bible software package, then you should consider this offering. The company also offers a very basic Bible program for free through their website. To find out about this go to www.biblesoft.com.

QuickVerse 8

FindEx, Inc., formerly known as Parson's Technology, has done a fine job with their QuickVerse 8 software package. Over one million licensed copies of QuickVerse have been sold since its inception. FindEx offers three levels of the Quick Verse 8 package. The basic level is QuickVerse 8 Standard, and it contains a collection of Bibles, commentaries, dictionaries, and other study helps. Though this first package was designed for more basic Bible study, it is still very comprehensive. The next level up is the QuickVerse 8 Expanded. This package adds more titles to the software, thus becoming a better tool for more in-depth Bible study. The top package is QuickVerse 8 Deluxe, which includes over 204 resources, a marked increase from the other QuickVerse packages. Two impressive features of QuickVerse 8 Deluxe are the logical nature of its procedures and its accessibility to beginners. At the same time, it also contains resources and abilities to be useful to more advanced Bible scholars. I appreciated the comprehensive nature of the titles included. You can also order versions of QuickVerse 8 specifically made for use on PDAs.

Two other programs offered by FindEx, Greek Tutor and Hebrew Tutor, are also of great benefit when it comes to learning



Greek and Hebrew. Both are complete language courses, and they even allow you to hear the pronunciation of alphabets, words, and phrases in the original languages.

Logos Bible Software Series X

The first thing I noticed when I started working with this program is that it contains a massive collection of Bible study tools. Logos Research Systems has produced an outstanding Bible study program for all levels of study, and they have spent many years refining their Bible study package. The current version of Logos Bible software goes back to 1986 when Bob Pritchett developed a simple searching program for the King James Version of the Bible. Today, Logos, with the use of the Libronix Digital Library search engine, gives you access to over 3800 titles. The top package, the Scholar's Silver Edition, includes over 250 unlocked titles.

I owned an earlier version of Logos software, and Series X is a significant improvement from past versions. In addition to giving you access to numerous biblical resources, it also allows you to do language researches, making it especially useful for pastors and seminary students.

Logos offers six different software packages. The most basic package is the Christian Home Library, and it gives you access to 65 different Bibles and study helps. The newest and most powerful package offered by Logos, the Scholar's Library Silver Edition, includes well over 250 unlocked titles and contains the full biblical language supplement, which allows you to do in-depth linguistic searches.

The Logos program impressed me in several ways. First, I was amazed at the technical support given by Logos. All the software packages had very good support, but Logos's was exceptional. They actually have a Series X website where you can work through various aspects of the Series X program with a Logos technician. I was also amazed at the diverse resources available for the Libronix system through third-party sources. In addition, this software allows you to view search results in a variety of graph forms.

e-Bible

The e-Bible is one of the newer Bible software packages on the market. Thomas Nelson decided to make much of its wonderful printed material available for computer research utilizing the Logos Libronix Digital system. The result is a comprehensive offering of Bibles, commentaries, and other research tools that can load directly into Logos Bible Software Series X or stand-alone. The deluxe package offers over 110 unlocked resources, and Thomas Nelson offers numerous add-ons.

One of the great features of this package is the cost, which Thomas Nelson purposefully kept low. At the same time, the company did not cut quality. They offer many of Dr. John MacArthur's books in an add-in package for e-Bible users, and they have also put some of their large commentary sets into electronic format, including the Word Biblical Commentary series. This massive scholarly commentary contributes significantly to the study capabilities of e-Bible.

Linguists Software

Linguist's Software is a program that creates and designs language fonts. This type of software not only helps Bible scholars do research but also helps them create materials for research. The mission of Linguist's Software is to provide fonts, biblical texts, and other language resources to help Bible scholars better work in the computer environment.

Linguist's Software offers over 2000 different modern and ancient language fonts. They also offer various biblical texts and other language helps in Microsoft Word format. Some of the Bible programs mentioned earlier in this article utilize fonts produced by this ministry.

I spend quite a bit of time doing research in the Old Testament, and Linguist's Software's newest offering of Hebrew fonts that work under Window's Unicode is a tremendous help to me. The program actually lets you type the Hebrew from right to left using Microsoft Word 2003, which makes typing Hebrew text much eas-

Bible Software Comparison Chart

ier. You can purchase ancient Ugaritic (Canaanite) fonts as well as Egyptian Hieroglyphic fonts from them, and they offer language scholars, pastors, missionaries, and many others the opportunity to produce and use non-English languages to further their research on the Bible.

Clearly there are many great resources available to help you study the Bible. Any of the previously mentioned software packages would make a great addition to your library, and when used regularly, each package will enhance your study time of the Word of God. As the apostle Paul exhorts us, "Study to show thyself approved." ■



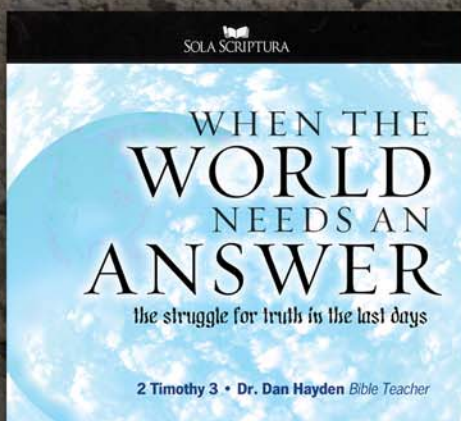
Dr. George Fredericks has been serving as a lecturer and researcher at the Holy Land Experience since 2001. He has pastored churches in Florida and Texas, and has taught for Tyndale Theological Seminary, Moody Bible Institute, South Florida Bible College & Trinity International University. His studies have included Dead Sea Scrolls, Hebrew, Greek, Aramaic, Latin, Ugaritic (Canaanite) & Coptic.

	Bible Works 6	e-Bible	Linguist's Software	Logos Bible Software Series X	PC Study Bible Version 4	Quick Verse Version 8
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Titles Available	139 plus unlocked titles included with this software. Including: Bibles, commentaries, and language helps.	110 plus unlocked resources included with Deluxe package. Standard and Discover packages have fewer titles.	Over 2000 language fonts, plus Hebrew Old Testament text, Greek New Testament text, grammars, and other titles.	Over 250 unlocked titles in the Scholar's Silver Edition. Fewer unlocked titles in other editions.	Over 250 unlocked titles in the Advanced Reference Library. Fewer unlocked titles in other editions.	Over 204 titles unlocked in the Deluxe Version. Other versions have fewer titles unlocked.
Expandability	6 modules available for additional cost.	Nelson makes many of its published books and sets available for the software.	Limited only by number of languages available. Each language font separate.	Over 3800 titles can be purchased as upgrades to this software.	Numerous titles available for download as well as on CD.	Numerous church-related titles available. PDA versions available.
System Requirements	PC/Windows 95/98/ME/NT/2000/XP 32 MB RAM CD drive 300 MB - 1.4 GB HD video card, sound card	PC/Windows 95/98/ME/NT/2000/XP 64 MB RAM CD drive, 60 MB HD video card: 800 x 600 or higher	PC/Windows 98/NT/2000/XP (Preferably XP) Microsoft Word (Preferably Word 2003)	PC/Windows 95/98/ME/NT/2000/XP 64 MB RAM CD drive, 60 MB HD video card: 800 x 600 or higher	PC/Windows 95/98/ME/2000/XP All editions, Pentium 333 32 MB RAM, CD drive 58 MB HD 256 color graphics card	Pentium 2 or higher Windows 98/ME/2000/XP
Target Market	Pastor, teacher, and students of the Bible that regularly work with the biblical languages and non-English Bibles.	The new Christian through the seasoned pastor.	Pastor, teacher, and students who use various language fonts and desire OT and NT texts for use in MS Word.	The new Christian, pastor, or seasoned Bible scholar.	Pastor, teacher, new Christian or student of the Bible.	Pastor, teacher, new Christian, student, and church administrator.
Emphasis	Exegesis of the biblical text.	Many biblical resources at a reasonable price.	Excellent fonts and textual resources for use in Word.	Tools to equip the church for Bible study.	Quality electronic biblical resources	Great resource for the church.
Costs	\$299.95 Modules available for additional cost.	\$49.00-399.00 Extra titles available for additional cost.	Each item is priced separately.	\$149.95-999.95 Extra titles available for additional cost.	\$59.95-499.95 Free product downloads at website.	\$99.95-299.95 Other add-on products at additional cost.

But realize this, that in the last days difficult times will come. For men will be

lovers of self
lovers of money
boastful
arrogant
revilers
disobedient to parents
ungrateful
unholy
unloving
irreconcilable
malicious gossips
without self-control
brutal
haters of good
treacherous
reckless
conceited
lovers of pleasure

Holding to a form of godliness, although they have denied its power...



Paul's description above from 2 Timothy 3 nails our contemporary culture and the twisted philosophies that are contributing to its decline. In *When the World Needs an Answer*, Dan Hayden reminds us that God will enable us to minister effectively to the people of the 21st century, not due to mere religious ritual, but through living godly lives based on the careful study of God's Word. Nearly 8 hours of teaching on 8 CDs. Call 800-844-9930 to order. www.solagroup.org
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Babylon

Duane Garrett

Babylon was one of the greatest cities of ancient Mesopotamia. A fairly important city by 2100 BC, it became the hub of the old Babylonian Empire under Hammurabi (1792–1750 BC). The city soon declined after Hammurabi's death, however, and was sacked by the Hittites around 1531 BC. Thereafter it was an important, if not dominant, city in Mesopotamia. However, it later became powerful once again under Nabopolassar, who founded the Neo-Babylonian Empire. This was Babylon's most glorious period; it ruled the ancient Near East from 625 to 539 BC. The most famous king of this period was Nebuchadnezzar II (604–562 BC), who, using the vast riches he accumulated from conquest, transformed the city into perhaps the most magnificent capital in antiquity.

The ruins of ancient Babylon, 53 miles south of Baghdad in present-day Iraq, encompass approximately 2100 acres. Excavations have revealed the glory of the city constructed by Nebuchadnezzar II, particularly the fortification system. An inner city of approximately 1140 acres was built on both sides of the Euphrates River. This was surrounded by a wall 5.5 miles long, incorporating an inner wall 21 feet wide and an outer wall 12 feet wide. Between the walls was a 24-foot space filled with earth, resulting in a total defense-depth of 57 feet. Outside the outer wall was a moat, fed by the Euphrates, ranging in width from 60 to 250 feet. To the east of the inner city were two more double walls totaling 4.5 miles in length. To provide additional protection against invasion from the north, Nebuchadnezzar constructed an enormous wall 20 miles north of Babylon. It was 16 feet thick and extended from the Euphrates to the Tigris River, a distance of approximately 25

miles. Within the city, Nebuchadnezzar's magnificent palace occupied an area of about 50 acres. Added to this were over fifty temples, numerous shrines and other buildings.

Babylon held a prominent place in the minds of the prophets. Isaiah and Jeremiah both predicted the downfall of Babylon (Isaiah 13–14; Jeremiah 50–51). Jeremiah also predicted that Babylon's famous walls would be torn down (50:15; 51:44, 58). In 539 BC, after defeating the Babylonians at the northern defense wall, Cyrus the Great and his Medio-Persian army entered Babylon without

a fight. The Babylonian chronicle describes the fall of Babylon to Cyrus. In 482 BC, Babylon's revolt against the Persian king Xerxes led to the razing of its fortifications.

Thereafter, Babylon went through a slow decline. In Revelation 18, Babylon is taught by some to represent godless human culture. Today, little remains of the city's former grandeur. For additional information, see Isaiah 13:20–22; Jeremiah 50:3, 39–40; 51:29, 37, 43. ■

Duane Garrett is an editor of the forthcoming *Archaeology Study Bible*.



The Luther Old Testament

Dr. Herbert Samworth

Many people are aware that Martin Luther translated the Greek New Testament into German while an exile at the Wartburg Castle during the latter months of 1521. Fewer know that Luther was also responsible for the translation of the Old Testament into German. Like his work on the New Testament, Luther's translation broke new ground. Before Luther, all translations of the Old Testament into European vernacular languages used the textual basis of the Latin Vulgate, a translation itself. Luther's textual base was the Hebrew text printed at Brescia in 1494, although he consulted the Septuagint, the Vulgate, the commentaries of de Lyra, and the *glossa ordinaria*, the prescribed interpretation of the biblical text in the Middle Ages.

However, Luther was an accomplished Hebraist. As a professor of biblical studies, he had lectured from the Psalms as early as 1513. He recognized the importance of the original languages to give the true sense of what God had declared in His Word. Luther determined to give the German people as accurate a translation of the Word of God as possible. What had made such a profound impact on his life must be made available to all the German people. However, the German Bible was not only to be accurate, it was to speak the language of the people. Luther commented that in his translation he attempted to make Moses so German that no one would suspect that he was a Jew.

There was another way, in addition to the translation from the Hebrew, that the Luther Old Testament broke new ground. Luther did not do the work alone. He formed a committee of scholars who worked with him. He affectionately gave the name Sanhedrin to this group of fellow workers. Among the members of the

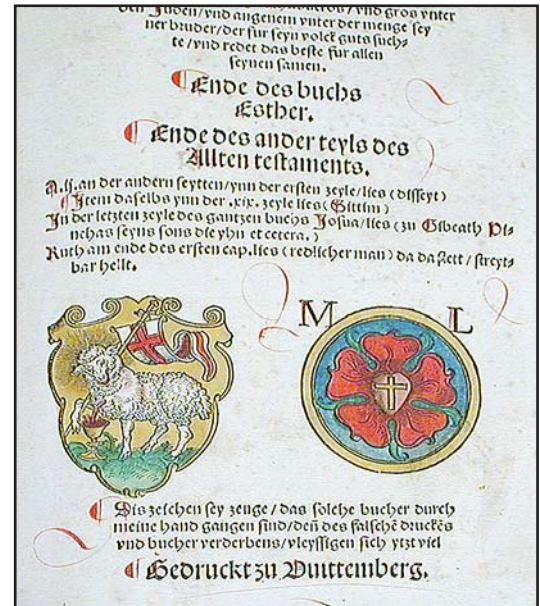
Sanhedrin at various stages in the translation process were scholars such as Philipp Melanchthon, Johannes Bugenhagen, Justus Jonas, Caspar Cruciger, and the Hebraist Matthaeus Aurogallus. Luther recognized the value of additional workers to accomplish this great task.

The work on the Old Testament began when Luther returned from his exile at Wartburg in 1522. By 1524 the translation had reached the end of the Song of Solomon. Rather than waiting to translate the Prophets and the Apocrypha, Luther had the work printed in three volumes: the Pentateuch, the Historical books and the Poetical books. Christian Doring and Lucas Cranach were the printers and publishers of volumes two and three while Melchoir Lotter was responsible for the printing of volume one.

The volumes were copiously illustrated by woodcarvings executed by Cranach. In volume two, the Historical books, twenty-three full-color woodcuts appeared, three of which were full page. Samson was the most popular Biblical character with no less than five of the woodcuts illustrating scenes from his life, while illustrations of David's life appeared just three times.

The remaining books of the Old Testament, including the Apocrypha, were not translated and printed until April 1, 1534, when the first edition of the Luther Bible in Low German was issued from the press of Ludwig Deitz of Lubeck. Hans Luft of Wittenberg printed the first complete Bible in High German in autumn of the same year.

The Van Kampen copy of Luther's Old Testament, VK 1111, includes volumes two and three bound together in a single volume with a concordance to the New Testament also printed in 1524. Another oddity is that the printer



for volume three was Adam Petri of Basel who issued a reprint in the same year as the original printing. How these three volumes from the cities of Wittenberg, Basel and Strasburg came to be included in a single binding is impossible to state at the present time.

As the image above shows, at the end of volume two—the conclusion of the Song of Solomon—there is a woodcut of the Lamb of God (Agnus Dei) and a rose with a heart and cross and bearing the initials M. L., a sign of authenticity.

The Luther Old Testament (VK 1111) is presently on display in the special exhibit *Light in the Dark Ages* in the Scriptorium at the Holy Land Experience in Orlando, Florida. In addition, the first complete Luther Bible in Low German (VK 368) is on permanent display in the Gutenberg Room at the same location. ■

The Luther Old Testament is part of The Van Kampen Collection, one of the largest private collections of Bibles, artifacts, and biblical manuscripts in the world. The Collection is the centerpiece of Sola Scriptura's ministry, and is housed at The Scriptorium, an interactive museum at The Holy Land Experience in Orlando, Florida.

You Call Yourself a Christian?

Stu Kinniburgh

I received a call the other day from a friend who earns his living as an artist. He is an absolutely amazing talent who can capture life, emotion and personality on his canvas like only a rare few. He had been severely injured and was unable to work for a month while he was in the hospital and going through physical therapy. During this time his small staff of assistant painters hounded him for money and coordinated behind his back for other work. They did not offer any emotional support and failed to show even the most basic kindnesses such as providing a meal. When he called me, he expressed frustration at his employees' actions, saying that the whole affair had caused him to lose faith in humanity. He followed this up with the statement "And these guys call themselves Christians!"

Wow—did you ever imagine that your actions might cause someone to doubt the value of all of humanity?

My friend happens to be Jewish, yet through our friendship and working relationship, he clearly understands the message of the New Testament. His expectations of the actions of Christians are based on his reading of the Bible and his association with our ministry. He expected more of his Christian employees; the standards were higher.

Is this fair? Do you believe that you are being held to a higher standard than unbelievers? Are we to live our lives in such a way as to be an example to others?

If God had simply wanted to instruct us in the way we should live, He could have accomplished it by providing a written set of rules and instructions. Instead, He also gave us models to follow, examples to emulate. Look at the words from Hebrews 12:1-2:

Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

In addition to following the example of Christ, we are to follow the example of other mature believers, as Paul indicated in 2 Thessalonians 3:6-9:

Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you keep away from every brother who leads an unruly life and not according to the tradition which you received from us. For you yourselves know how you ought to follow our example, because we did not act in an undisci-



plined manner among you, nor did we eat anyone's bread without paying for it, but with labor and hardship we kept working night and day so that we would not be a burden to any of you; not because we do not have the right to this, but in order to offer ourselves as a model for you, so that you would follow our example.

Finally, we are to live in a way to be an example to others, as in 1 Timothy 4:12:

Let no one look down on your youthfulness, but rather in speech, conduct, love, faith and purity, show yourself an example of those who believe.

Are the standards of moral conduct and action higher for Christians? Yes—but I am reminded of a bumper sticker I once saw: "Christians

aren't perfect, just forgiven." This does not offer a license to sin because of God's amazing grace, but it does acknowledge some facts: We will make mistakes. We will let others down. We will grow weary. And when we fall short, God will forgive us as we seek Him. However, this should not be an excuse, nor should it be the end of the story! We should seek to restore our relationship, as well as our testimony, with people we may have injured. What helps to make us truly different in this world is our response when we realize we have erred—admitting that we were wrong and then doing the right thing.

At this point you may wonder to yourself, "could my friend possibly *deserve* the treatment given to him by his employees?" Perhaps he is such a vile leader that others reveled in his misery and pain as some sort of "just due." Read these words from Titus 2:6-10:

Likewise urge the young men to be sensible; in all things show yourself to be an example of good deeds, with purity in doctrine, dignified, sound in speech which is beyond reproach, so that the opponent will be put to shame, having nothing bad to say about us. Urge bondslaves to be subject to their own masters in everything, to be well-pleasing, not argumentative, not pilfering, but showing all good faith so that they will adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in every respect.

Regardless of how you are treated by your employer, your actions are to be above reproach. I know of a young man who works for a major theme park in Orlando. His actions regularly reflect his relationship with Christ in that he is a dedicated worker, positive in attitude, willing to serve, and firm in his beliefs. He started working for the theme park as a ride attendant, yet his infectious faith permeated his work and caused him to stand above the crowd as he interacted with guests and other workers. He was personable with his peers, but as they would go places that he felt were inappropriate, he went his own way. Over time, he was recognized by management as a model employee and was selected to represent the company to special guests

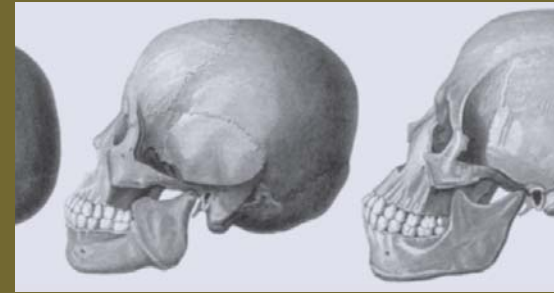
and corporate leaders. More importantly, when his supervisor encountered personal difficulties, he sought this young man out for counsel—all because of the consistent example of his life.

Two sides of the same coin: the artist disappointed at the example of a group of Christian workers and the supervisor seeking the advice and counsel of a Christian employee. Only one serves to further the cause of Christ. *Show yourself an example of those who believe!* ■

We should seek to restore our relationship, as well as our testimony, with people we may have injured. What helps to make us truly different in this world is our response when we realize we have erred...

The Missing Link... Where Is He?

Question: Evolutionary scientists, Ken, like to portray themselves as unbiased researchers. But you don't think they are very good at reconstructing the fossil record, do you?



Ken Ham's Answer: A student approached me once with an illustrated book on evolution. He opened up to a picture of one of our supposed ancestors called "Lucy." Lucy looked somewhat human but yet ape-like. The student asked me, "How do they know Lucy looked like this?" I replied that this was a good question. I explained that if someone were to dig up his own skull in a hundred years, they could find an artist to draw a picture and make him look ape-like or human-like. The student wondered, "Do scientists really just make up information?" I responded, "Actually, sometimes they do." I shared with him the story of a medical illustrator who was contracted to produce drawings for a biology text. One of the drawings was to be of Lucy. When the illustrator finished his drawing, the book's authors rejected it, claiming it was too human-like. He was told to make Lucy look more ape-like. Keep this story in mind the next time you read a book on evolution or visit a science museum.

Have scientists explained the origin of the different races? Using the Bible, creation scientists have the explanation! Read **Ken Ham's** summary of their findings on the Answers in Genesis website: www.answersingenesis.org.

Another Gospel

Dr. Dan Hayden

Bobby and Skippy enjoyed being identical twins. Looking alike gave them opportunity to fool people by pretending to be each other. As athletes, they were relatively small but very quick and deceptively fast. The visiting team often got confused when they played man-to-man coverage in a basketball game. Bobby's number was 69 and Skippy's was 96, so the mirror image numbers on their jerseys made the confusion even more amusing. Of course, the twins played it to the hilt. Running crisscross patterns and zigzagging in and out, they created a maze of intrigue and deception. The guys were good, and it worked. It was all great fun.

The star of the team, however, was the center—a tall, Italian kid with a swarthy complexion draped over a competitive spirit. Vince wasn't quick, but he was poetry in motion. He had an eye for the basket and rarely missed. Maneuvering around the key, he would patiently wait as Bobby and Skippy played havoc with the defense. Then a well-timed pass to Vince was all it took for two more points.

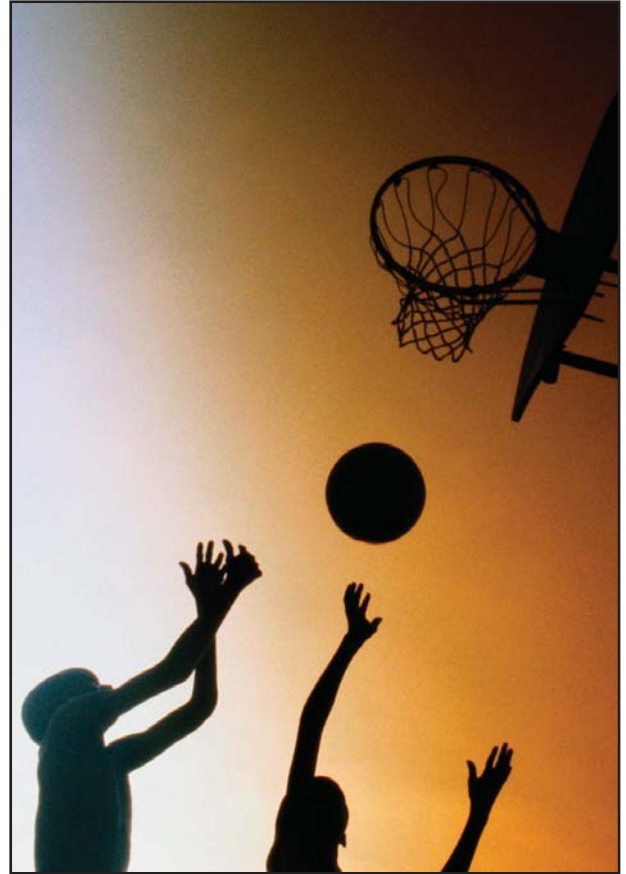
The twins and Vince were my friends, and I have great memories from those days. But my purpose in describing them is to emphasize the concept of comparison. In comparing Bobby and Skippy, we could say that each of them was *another* of the same kind—in fact, identical. Yet Vince was *another* of a different kind (when compared to the twins). He looked different and he acted different. You see, *another* can mean two separate things depending on who is being compared.

The Greek language has a way of making this distinction between similar things and things that are different. The New Testament writers could choose one of two words for *another*. The word *allos* means “another of the

same kind.” Bobby and Skippy were *allos* when compared to each other. *Heteros*, on the other hand, is a word of contrast indicating something of a different nature or quality. In the basketball illustration Vince would be a *heteros*, another of a different kind.

Now, understanding the distinction between *allos* (another of the same kind) and *heteros* (another of a different kind) is crucial when reading Paul's words in Galatians 1:6-7. The King James Version simply says, “I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto *another* gospel, which is not *another*, but there are some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ.”

The phrase “another gospel, which is not another” seems a little confusing, doesn't it? So, what did Paul mean by saying that? Well, Paul was writing in the Greek language, and he actually said “another [*heteros*] gospel, which is not another [*allos*].” Paul was warning the Galatians about versions of the gospel of Christ that were totally different (*heteros*) than the true gospel of grace. There was nothing similar (or *allos*) about them! The New American Standard version catches this distinction: “I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting Him who called you by the grace of Christ, for a *different* gospel; which is really not *another*...” (emphasis mine).



In our day, we need to heed this same warning. The Gnosticism of The Jesus Seminar and *The Da Vinci Code* are presenting themselves as the true gospel of Jesus Christ. But Paul would say that this so-called “Christian Gnosticism” is a *heteros* gospel rather than one that is *allos*. This new alternative gospel is an imposter peddling a fraud. Paul's following words in Galatians 1:8 are worth remembering: “But even though we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to that which we have preached to you, let him be accursed.”

That is Paul's evaluation of “Christian Gnosticism.” It is a different kind of gospel that is not at all Christian. That being true, the gospel of The Jesus Seminar and *The Da Vinci Code* is “accursed.” ■

It's All Good

Renaut van der Riet

If you have spent any amount of time around the emerging generations, you've likely heard the phrase, "it's aall goood," slang for "that's okay; not to worry." During my ten years of working in youth ministry, I grew to love this little phrase and have consequently adopted it into my everyday vocabulary. You see, these three simple words capture and foster the attitude that I believe every Christ follower should adopt. I am not suggesting that everything in life is good. I realize we all face great burdens and trials. I am aware that we all do things that are far from good. What I have discovered is a promise in God's Word that enables me to say, "it's all good."

If we love the Lord and are called according to His purpose, then He promises to work all things together for good (Romans 8:28). There is such wonder in this promise! It even goes beyond our trials and circumstances. God has demonstrated that He is able to take even our greatest failures and use them to achieve immeasurable success. Let us consider the crucifixion of Christ, an event that marks one of humanity's bleakest moments, yet, thanks to God's grace, also the cornerstone of our greatest hope! As we face tremendous difficulty and pain, we can find peace in the knowledge that the Lord can, and will, piece these events together perfectly in order to achieve His will and His purpose for our lives.

God confirms His promise to work all things for good in James 1:2-4, as He reminds us that whenever we face trials of many kinds, our faith is tested, and we develop perseverance. "Perseverance must finish its work so that [we] may be mature and complete, not lacking anything." Mature and complete, not lacking anything? That sounds great to me! God is at work in all our circumstances and failures to bring about good.

Life is tough. We often carry almost unbearable burdens and face devastating circumstances. Yet, God is in control, and He is at work in all things. We are able to find peace that transcends understanding through God's promise that extends beyond this life, bringing purpose to our daily struggles and hope for the future. It is because of the joy that I find in this truth that I am able to exclaim with confidence, "IT'S ALL GOOD!" ■





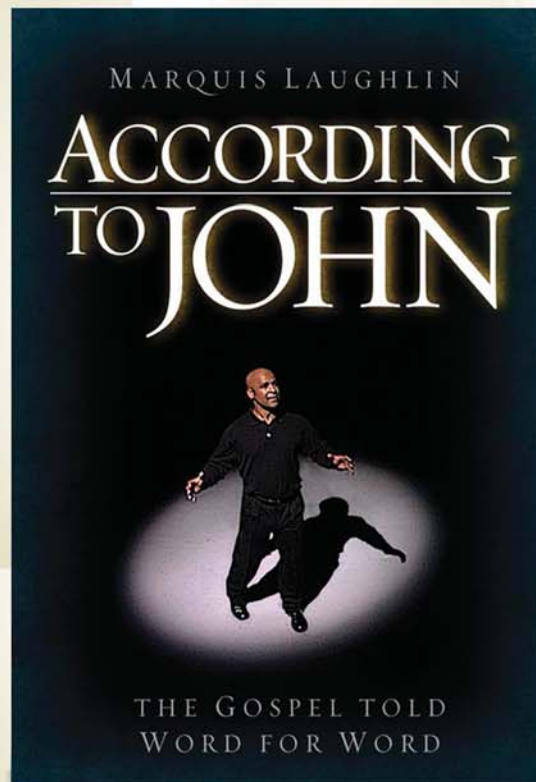
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