

A Simple Guide to the Basics of the Bible

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Preface

This book is the first book in a three-part series. The entire series can be found on my website. Each subsequent book will flow from the one or ones that came before it, and the series is intended to be read as a whole. If anyone wants to read one of the books apart from the others, or wishes to read the series out of order, I'm all for it. But the reader should understand that choosing to take either of those routes could lead to confusion for many. The second book in the series is titled *A Simple Guide to the Basic Teachings of the Bible*; and the third and final book is titled *A Simple Guide to the Basics of the Christian Life*. I will be explaining why I am writing this series, and why I have chosen to break it up the way I have, in the first chapter of this book.

As the title to this book suggests, and as the titles to all the books in this series suggest, this book and series will only be covering the basics of true Christianity from

the Bible. I will be leaving out a massive amount of important material. Hence, if you hear Christians talking about something, or somebody brings up something at a Bible study, or you hear your pastor say something from a sermon, etc., and you are like, “How on earth could he have left that out of his series(?!),” it is important to understand that I cannot cover everything without these books becoming too overwhelming for my target audience. These books are only meant to be a starting place for most Christians; we should all be growing in our knowledge of God throughout our Christian journeys.

Most of what I defend in this series will be defended from the Bible itself, and that is by design. But at times, especially in this first book, I will say some things that pertain to history or other matters, and you may want to have resources to test what I am saying. If that is the case, you can see my book *A False Kind of Christianity*. It can be found on my website. At the end of that book in the bibliography, I give a number of resources on church history, Christian teaching, and the views of many who do not believe in Biblical Christianity. If you do decide to read that entire book, bear in mind that I have changed my mind on a few things since the time of writing it. I wrote it almost five years ago, and from further research and thinking through things more sharply, I have come to a few different conclusions on some things. So, if you see some things in this series or in any of my other works on my website that are a little different from that book, that is why and for now I stand by what I write in this series and in my posted works. But, these differences are very few in number and are nothing major. I stand by the overwhelming bulk of what I wrote in that book.

This series is not at all intended to be a replacement for pastors. At many points in this series, especially if you are truly new to Christianity, you may not understand everything I say. Many times you may not totally grasp how the verses I reference actually defend what I’m trying to defend. In all such cases, you should ask your pastor or a pastor at your church to help you with that section. That pastor may not agree with what I’m saying, and that’s ok, but hopefully he will be able to help you understand what I’m trying to say. And you should listen to his arguments and think through my arguments, and then prayerfully come to your own decision. This series is intended to help those who are seeking God, and it is intended to help pastors who cannot always go over all the basics of the faith with new believers or those like my son (who I will

describe soon). It is also intended to help Christians who are not sure about what branch of Christianity they should accept. In all such cases, you should still seek the help of your pastor, but you should be trying your best to come to your own conclusions even if it means you might have to gently leave your current church. If you have a pastor that is not open to helping you because he fears you leaving, that is not a good pastor and you should probably find a different church now.

I have also written a number of other books and essays for beginners as a supplement to this series. They can all be found on my website. Please don't let the number of them overwhelm you. They are all very short. All of the books are even under 100 pages, with the exceptions of the book on church history and the books on going deeper in doctrine. And even those books are less than 200 pages. Please don't feel like you need to get through all of them quickly. I recommend really taking your time with this series and then reading through those slowly and carefully after you have finished this series, and as you have time. Even if you just read one chapter per week and then take long breaks between books, that is completely fine. Even if it takes you 10 years to get through all of them, that is ok. But, I do recommend reading all of them eventually if you want to have a very solid foundation for the knowledge of our faith.

I also often reference these works throughout this series in order to give you more information on certain subjects as they come up in this series. However, I don't recommend bouncing all over the place as you read through this series. I recommend making notes in your phone of pages in this series where there was a topic you are not too familiar with where I point you to where I give more information on that topic in my other works. Then, after you have read through this series, I would come back to those pages and look things up. Then, as you have time, you can make your way through the entirety of the other works for beginners and not just isolated sections. The only exception to this is I do strongly recommend reading the essay "Addressing Heresy" discussed below after you finish this preface, and then continue on with the rest of this series. At the very end of this series, I also recommend a number of recent great teachers of the faith. I recommend reading or listening to any of them as you have time once you are finished with this series.

If you are someone who is new to the faith, but is hungry to learn, and has the capacity and time to learn a lot of in-depth material quickly, I recommend reading through all of my works for beginners; then my book *A False Kind of Christianity*; then the works of RC Sproul; and then you can begin to look at many of the works I cite and Sproul cites for your further reading at that point. I also will be writing a number of response books to the enemies of the faith that will be posted on my website over the next few years (Lord willing). Hopefully, those can also be very helpful to you. But, I recommend only diving into those after you have read all of my books for beginners and *A False Kind of Christianity*.

The next item to address here is the issue of heresy. I understand what a terribly unpopular topic this is in our culture today. But, whether we like it or not, the Bible teaches its reality and the fact that we must take it very, very seriously. Therefore, before you plow forward with this series, please first read my essay “Addressing Heresy.” It can be found on my website and it will greatly help you understand why I write a lot of the things I do in this series and in my other works as well. It is very short (less than 10 full pages) and simple.

Finally, if you have never received Jesus as your God and Savior, please do so now. You do not know what can happen even in the next few moments, and so there is no time to wait. If you are not ready at this time, but become ready at any time you are reading through this series, please return to this section and receive Him. When you are ready, pray the prayer below sincerely from your heart and you will become a true Christian. It is very, very important to understand that merely saying the words of this prayer will not save you. There is no ritual, whether it be a prayer or anything else, that saves us. You must actually and sincerely mean these words or they will be of no help to you.

“Dear Lord Jesus, I believe that you are God Almighty and the only Savior. I recognize that I am a sinner and I have come to hate my sin. I ask that you come into my life so that I can have an eternal relationship with you, your Father, and your Spirit. I ask that you forgive all of my sins based on what you did on the cross and through your bodily resurrection from the dead. I ask that you cover me with your righteousness. I ask that you give me your Spirit so that you will become number one in my life, far above all

else, and so that I will be completely changed. I want to live my life for you from now on, and I can only do that through your Spirit. I understand that I will continue to sin until I die or you come back, so please give me the strength through your Spirit to always seek your help and to continue to ask for your forgiveness. I now know I will spend all eternity with you. I now love you and worship you, and I am so thankful and grateful to you for saving me. Amen.”

Chapter 1: Why This Series?

This series is being written from a Confessional Presbyterian perspective within the broader church (the church refers to God’s people; but sometimes the word is also used to describe a group of Christians or the building where they meet). I am passionately and unapologetically Confessional Presbyterian. Now I know many, many of you (if you haven’t already shut down the book!) are probably like, “Oh boy, here I was thinking this book might help me to understand the basics of the Bible better, but he actually wants me to become part of his random movement! What a waste of time!” Some of you may know something about the stereotypes of Presbyterians and are like, “Yuck! Presbyterians are a bunch of stuffy, liberal, wannabe Christians who idolize their brains!” Trust me when I say that I understand these feelings.

I first fully gave my life to Jesus just before my twenty-first birthday in 2000. I had been attending a megachurch for years, and I continued to attend for about a year after coming to know our Lord. I remember a guest speaker at that church preaching one time and he made the joke, “Uh oh, I see a number of you starting to look at your watches. I better wrap up so we can beat the Presbyterians to the restaurants!” It was a funny joke and everyone laughed, including myself. My parents took us to Episcopalian churches on and off growing up. My mother was the only one of us who was ever into it. And even she only went inconsistently and pretty much stopped altogether by the time I was in high school. While most of those churches growing up were actually Conservative Evangelical, they had a very strong Liberal Protestant feel to them. And

my parents themselves have never been Conservative Evangelical, and we rarely talked about religious matters in any depth growing up.

There was only one Presbyterian church in Santa Cruz County where I grew up. It was an old church, made of red brick with lots of stained glass windows. I knew almost nothing about Presbyterians, but my basic feeling was that they, along with Lutherans and Methodists, were basically like my old Episcopalian churches. They had nothing on my hip megachurch that was for sure! Or, so I thought. (By the way, if you don't know what all these terms are, don't worry, I will define all of them later in this series or point you to where you can find more information on them).

So before you close this book, I am asking you to give me a chance. If you don't end up becoming a full Confessional Presbyterian like myself, I will still love you as my brother or sister in Christ. And I promise you, you will still come away from this series knowing a lot more about the Bible (God's word) and true Christianity. And knowing more about these things will lead you to know more about Jesus, and that is what it is all about! But I think most of you will be pleasantly surprised by what you learn about Confessional Presbyterians, and I suspect that many of you will either join us, or join a movement that is very close to us. On this journey, you will find, as is the case with most things in life, that many of the stereotypes have some truth behind them, but they do not come close to painting the full picture. I want to be clear that I was not raised in a Confessional Presbyterian home, as I stated above. And while I have some Scottish blood, I am mostly Danish, Irish, and English. Therefore, I am not Confessional Presbyterian because of cultural reasons. There is nothing wrong with being raised Confessional Presbyterian; you should be extremely proud of that heritage if that is the case for you. But I became Confessional Presbyterian purely out of conviction.

My passion is to help all Christians, but especially those that struggle with intellectual matters, know more of the things of God. One of my sons has a severe learning disability, and it has been very challenging to raise him in many ways. All three of his siblings have fallen away from the Lord at one time. As I am writing this, two of his siblings are not walking with God. One of his siblings fell away for a time in late middle school, but later in early high school he powerfully gave his life to Jesus, and he has been very faithfully walking with Jesus ever since. But my son with the learning disability

has been a professing Christian since he could understand the gospel (the good news of salvation). It has been a bumpy road though, largely because of his disability. I could have easily said to myself, "I probably shouldn't teach him too much from the Bible because he won't be able to handle it." But I wasn't going to do that because I knew that wasn't what God wanted. There were times when I pushed him too hard, and there were times where I watered things down too much. But despite his struggles, at seventeen years of age he knows the basics of the Bible and Confessional Presbyterian teaching. And these teachings have sustained him through some very difficult days.

I was also heavily involved in ministry work for about fifteen years. During this time, I was a teacher of Bible and history at a small Christian school in Hawaii for almost ten years. I was also a chaplain in the Army Reserves, I taught Sunday School, and I was a youth pastor for three different stints. And while I taught many people the Bible during this time, including countless young people, my heart always went out the most for those who wanted so badly to know the things of God more, but struggled to understand.

And the fact of the matter is that most Confessional Presbyterian churches in America don't do a very good job of reaching out to these people. That really isn't meant to be overly judgmental. I have been part of churches of this nature for a very long time, and I have seen firsthand the enormous amount of good they do. But in this area, if we are being honest, we have to admit that we have not done a great job here. These churches tend to mostly attract upper middle-class folks with a strong intellectual bent. In fact, many of these churches often don't deal with a lot of new converts to Jesus either. Most of the people who join these churches come from other Conservative Evangelical churches that these people feel were too intellectually shallow. It is awesome that we meet the needs of these Christians, but the effect is often far too many new Christians or Christians who struggle intellectually end up in churches that have some very poor teachings in my opinion. Most of these Christians never leave these churches because these churches have done a good job of meeting their needs overall, but these Christians often have no idea what they are missing out on. Knowing the Bible better draws people closer to Jesus, plain and simple. And so it is a shame when so many Christians are not carefully taught all that the Bible has to say, or worse,

are taught things the Bible doesn't seem to say. I am so passionate about trying to change this, especially in America. The primary purpose of this series, therefore, is to try to begin to chip away at this problem.

Because of this, the language used throughout the books of this series will be as casual as possible. In a previous book of mine, *A False Kind of Christianity*, I also wrote in a casual style even though that book was addressing some meaty topics. But because I wrote that book primarily for those in ministry, I wrote how I would talk in normal conversation. In this series, I will be writing in an even more casual style, talking how I would talk with my son with the disability. Therefore, the prose of this series may seem clunky to those who are more scholarly. I will often use the same words. I know this will not make for beautiful writing. But that is not the goal of this series. The goal is simplicity.

With that said, I was raised in the suburbs by very educated intellectual parents (especially my dad), I went to very good schools growing up, and I have three degrees. Hence, even when I am trying to be as casual as possible, my language at times can still be hard for my son to grasp and it may be hard for some of the readers to grasp at times. Plus, many of my readers may not have any sort of disability at all. Many of them may excel in academic and intellectual matters far, far more than I do. Yet, they may still be from parts of the country or the world where English is spoken in a very different manner than I speak. For all such people, and for all such people like my son, if at any time I use a word or phrase that is confusing to you, Google it and you should be able to grasp what I am driving at from there. I will at all times seek to avoid overly complex words and phrases, and when I do use a word or phrase you have a hard time understanding, it will be rare and hopefully Googling it will clear things up.

Even with all of that laid out, I know that many have been given a bad education and so the language of this work may still be tough. Many of these people probably have no disability, but haven't had the opportunity to learn well. If this is you, please work with someone who can help you work your way through this series. I promise you it will be worth the effort. I don't say that because I am such a great writer. I am not a charismatic person and I know this comes through in my writing. These books may not seem terribly exciting at first. But I am going to carefully lay out all of the basic elements

of the Bible throughout this series, and by getting these basics into your bones, you will draw closer to Jesus.

I know many Confessional Presbyterians in America will object to the simplicity of the books in this series. And that is precisely why we are failing to reach the vast majority of Christians, period. The Bible addresses every topic of life to one degree or another. And the Bible also clearly calls some in the church to be able to fight intellectually with the strongest intellectual opponents of the faith. Therefore, extremely deep, complex, and systematic theology is absolutely necessary. I have spent most of my adult life studying such things, and will continue to do so until I am no longer able. I have already written a work that pertained to systematic theology and I plan to write many more. Confessional Presbyterians have always believed these things, and I am no different.

The problem is, not all Christians can go that deep. My son cannot, he simply cannot. Many, many others are able to go this deep in the sense that they have the intellectual abilities to go this deep, but because of life circumstances they do not have the time to do so. Further, many new converts, including many of the most brilliant (especially in parts of the world where Christianity is rare), have to start out with easier material because Christianity is so foreign to them. It is not right that far too many Confessional Presbyterian churches, especially in America, often let other churches lay the groundwork for new believers from non-Christian backgrounds, and wait for them to come around to us. Many of them never will. Confessional Presbyterian theology is for everyone, and we need to work harder to get it out to everybody.

And I am not saying that Christians should stop with the books in this series. Those that are able to go deeper, should go deeper. After the books in this series, I recommend following the plan I laid out in the preface. Those that have the abilities and life circumstances allowing them to go deeper, should especially begin to devour everything written and spoken by R.C. Sproul. I don't agree with everything he says, but for the most part he was the greatest Confessional Presbyterian teacher of the last fifty years by far. Once you really have Sproul down, if you desire to go even deeper, he gives many references to the very deepest works available and I would encourage you to read those as you are able. Also, once you have Sproul down, I highly recommend

reading all of the Reformed (I explain what I mean by this word in my book on the denominations and movements within the true church today [pages 12-13]; it can be found on my website) Confessions and Catechisms (especially the Westminster Confession of Faith).

But, I cannot be more clear when I say that if you are not able to go much deeper than my books for beginners, that is ok. You will still be learning an awful lot and again, Confessional Presbyterian churches need to make more room for all Christians, and not only mature (by mature here I mean someone who has walked with Jesus for a while, and not in the sense of contrasting with those who are immature people) intellectual Christians.

You may be asking, "But, why three books? Doesn't that actually make things harder for those you are trying to reach?" The reason I have split this series into three books when they could have easily been combined into one is because I know for my son, reading a longer book (even when it is not that long) can seem daunting. Seeing that a shorter book is before him inspires a lot of confidence in him. He can read one book, take a break for a few weeks, then try another. My hope is that splitting things up this way will be helpful to those like him.

At the end of this first book, I have included a very short and easy Confessional Presbyterian catechism. A catechism is a document that includes questions and answers to those questions from a biblical perspective. They are intended to help younger people or people new to Jesus better understand the Bible. They have been around for centuries. But most of the ones in existence today are very hard for someone like my son to understand. This is partially because of his disability, but also because he is far removed from the language of these catechisms from a cultural standpoint. These documents are often memorized, but they don't need to be memorized. Reading them again and again though, even after you might start to feel sick of them (by all means take breaks from them for long periods if necessary!), can be very helpful for review purposes.

Obviously, you should try to go beyond the catechism in this book as much as possible. But for many Christians who either struggle like my son, or who are super busy with life, having those basic teachings down will be a huge step in the right

direction. You must test what is in the catechism with the books of this series that will point you to where we as Confessional Presbyterians believe these things are taught in the Bible. All of the answers except for one are extremely short. The one answer is so long because I did not want to split up the question that goes with this answer into multiple other questions, in order to keep the catechism as short as possible. Again, everything about this series is trying to make learning the Bible as easy and as manageable as possible, for as many as possible. I recommend going through that answer slowly and carefully each time you read the catechism. Again, you don't need to memorize the answer. Each time you read through the catechism, you will remember more and more from the full answer.

As you work your way through the books of this series you will need a Bible, especially for the second and third books of this series. If you don't have a Bible, you can go to BibleGateway online. On that website, you will find the Bible for free in many different English translations. In chapter four of this book, I will be going over the various English Bible translations. I will also be going over how to reference the Bible, and how to understand when others are referencing the Bible as well. Please make sure to look up all the Bible references I give throughout the series. I know that will take some time, but it is so important that you never only go by what I am saying. Everything must be tested by the Bible. There is no doubt I will say at least a few things in this series that are not biblical. I have prayerfully studied the Bible in-depth for over twenty years now, begging God to help me interpret it correctly. But I am not perfect, and so not all of my conclusions are correct, and it is important you do your best with God's help to come to your own conclusions.

With all that I've said so far in this chapter made clear, I want to return to my journey to becoming a Confessional Presbyterian. In one of my former books that I've already mentioned a few times, *A False Kind of Christianity*, I present a detailed testimony of my life before coming to Christ, my actual conversion to Jesus, and the period shortly after coming to know our Lord. At one point, I explained how after coming to know Jesus I really wanted to know what the Bible taught. I read the Bible constantly, and I read books on the Bible as much as I could as well. I explained how at one point I was reading a book that I overall liked, but there were some things the author said that I

thought for sure couldn't be true. I explained how in my zeal I ran downstairs and grabbed paper and pen, and how I was going to write down all he said that I didn't like so that I could study the Bible on those matters in order to show myself that what he was saying was wrong. I explained that before I could even write anything down, it hit me like a ton of bricks. I suddenly realized that what I was doing was terribly wrong. I should not approach these issues as if I already knew the answers when I had not studied these things myself. I already knew that the Bible taught a lot of things that really challenged me from the standpoint of my upbringing. Therefore, who was I to think in advance that what this great Bible teacher was saying was wrong before I had even given what he was saying a chance?

I explain in my book how this episode led me to question every version of Christianity, including Conservative Evangelicalism itself. I go on to detail that eventually God led me to see that Conservative Evangelicalism is essentially the church on earth today, even with all of its many flaws. But, because my book was written for the whole church and not only for Confessional Presbyterians, and because I was only seeking to address Progressive Christianity in the book, I left out a number of other details of what happened after this episode. I left out the fact that the author I was reading was a man named D. James Kennedy. Kennedy was one of the best Confessional Presbyterian teachers and pastors of the twentieth century. And the teachings that he was presenting that I thought for sure must be wrong are known as the doctrines of grace. I will explain these teachings in the next book of this series, but they are some of the core teachings of Confessional Presbyterians. Confessional Presbyterians are not the only Christians that hold to them, but Confessional Presbyterians have always been some of the most passionate defenders of these teachings. These teachings are not easy to swallow at first though, and I honestly hated them as I went through this searching period.

By the end of this searching period, God had made it clear to me that He did not want me to leave Conservative Evangelicalism, but He did want me to leave the megachurch I had been attending. I couldn't believe it, but I had become convinced that Confessional Presbyterianism most conformed to the Bible. And this was not solely because of Kennedy, it was because of my overall study of the Bible, which included countless authors from numerous different perspectives. My family and I ended up

joining that old red brick Presbyterian church and I loved it. I ended up preaching and teaching at the church in later years, and that was one of the best congregations I have ever been in. My oldest son was three when we joined and he was baptized shortly after that. About a year later, my daughter came along and she was baptized a couple weeks after her birth. When I started my searching period, I did not hate infant baptism like I hated the doctrines of grace, but I did think the teaching was whacky. But I had come to see things very differently.

You are probably saying about now, “Ok, but lots of people search for the truth and come to very different conclusions. We are all biased, so what makes Confessional Presbyterianism so different?” I completely understand that we are all biased. I get it, I really do. But that is precisely the problem. It is our biases that get in the way. You might say, “But none of us can ever completely overcome our biases.” I agree to a point. None of us can ever *completely* overcome them, but with a lot of prayer and effort, we can put many of them to bed. I understand that our culture largely rejects this notion today, but this rejection is deeply unbiblical. As Christians, we are to set aside our traditions, upbringing, and personal biases, and allow the Bible to speak for itself. People, including many of the smartest theologians from other branches of the church, reject Confessional Presbyterianism for a host of reasons. Many believe the doctrines of grace can’t be true because they are hard to swallow, as I said earlier. Many believe infant baptism is a Roman Catholic teaching. Many don’t want to honor the Sabbath because they believe it is legalistic to do so. Because so many “Presbyterians” are liberal, they reject Confessional Presbyterianism out of hand. All I am asking is that you tune out all the noise and allow the Bible to speak for itself. Pray like crazy that God would help you put aside your biases, and test carefully everything I say in this series against the Bible. If you do that, you will not agree with everything I say on every point, but I am convinced you will see the truth of Confessional Presbyterianism.

I experienced this firsthand. During this searching period I was attending a Confessional Pentecostal (I will provide more information on this group as we proceed) Bible college. One stereotype of this movement is that it is not very theological. But the professors at this institution were very aware of this stereotype and were doing all in their power to combat this reality within their movement. Most of the Bible, church

history, and theology professors had one or two PhD's. One was a New Testament scholar, highly respected in his field. Many of them had written technical works. These guys knew their stuff. And I bombarded them with questions, both during and after class. I also did the same to my pastor at the megachurch.

At first, I was not too focused on the doctrines of grace as I thought those could be easily disproved down the line. With my megachurch pastor, I first focused on questions regarding evolution. With my professors, I first focused on the Pentecostal teaching on the baptism of the Holy Spirit. I found my pastor helpful, but I did not find my professors very convincing despite their knowledge, learning, brilliance, and obvious godliness. They seemed to especially struggle when I kept pointing to 1 Corinthians 12:13. But both my pastor and my professors really seemed to struggle to answer the doctrines of grace when I eventually brought those up later. At times, they became irritated by my questions, and remember, at first I *wanted* to believe the doctrines of grace were unbiblical. You may not understand all the things I have referenced in this paragraph, we will explore them all as this series progresses. But I want to be as clear as I can be when I say that we as Confessional Presbyterians are never afraid to have our teachings come under scrutiny. I encourage you to ask others you respect for answers if you end up struggling with some of our teachings, and then decide for yourself from there.

As I said earlier, even if you don't end up becoming Confessional Presbyterian, I will still love you as my brother or sister in Christ. My hope is that you become something that is very close to Confessional Presbyterian. And even if that is not the case, I will still love you all the same. And as long as you are a true Christian, you should still be able to get a lot out of this series. Confessional Presbyterianism is not a cult; it teaches all of the teachings that have been taught by all true Christians for two thousand years. But, if you do end up becoming a Confessional Presbyterian like I did, I want to be clear that Confessional Presbyterianism is not perfect. Please, please remember that there is no such thing as a perfect person; perfect family; perfect organization; perfect church; perfect denomination; or perfect movement. If you go in expecting too much, you will be disappointed. I have absolutely loved being a

Confessional Presbyterian the past twenty years. It has been such a huge blessing to me. But it has been far from perfect.

It is so important to understand that Satan is a real being. He is not a mythical character, or a vague symbol for evil. The Bible everywhere presents him as a real being who hates God; hates God's church; hates God's truth; hates God's law; and hates God's gospel (if you don't know some of these terms, that is ok, they will all be explained as the series moves forward). Therefore, if Confessional Presbyterianism really does represent the Bible the best out of all the branches of the Christian tree, we should not at all be surprised that Satan comes after Confessional Presbyterianism so hard. He is the author of lies and confusion, and so he often makes it hard for people to see the truths of Confessional Presbyterianism. But with effort, it is not that difficult to break things down and overcome the confusion he seeks to spread. Remember, God is the author of truth, and if you seek Him, He will lead you into His truth more and more even though things can often seem so confusing at first. I can't go over all of the ways Satan tries to muddy the image of Confessionals, but I cover some of the key ways he does this in my essay on the history of Confessional Presbyterianism, when you are ready for it. That essay is on my website in the section on works for beginners.

The final thing I want to say in this chapter is that the most important thing to remember at all times as you make your way through this series is that it is all about Jesus. Don't ever make it about yourself, and Jesus will lead you down the right path. You might be saying, "Um, you are the one who is making it all about being Confessional Presbyterian. I want to make it all about Jesus." I totally get this feeling. But it is important to remember that the term *Confessional Presbyterian* is only a term. It is a term that is used to distinguish us from those that we believe are awesome Christians, but are unfortunately teaching some things that we believe Jesus Himself does not teach. All true Christians wish we could call ourselves *Christians* and leave it at that. It is depressing that so many other labels are needed. But the church has always been forced to use labels. Many groups claim to be Christian that are not. And this has been true from the earliest days of the church. Therefore, the church must use labels to separate ourselves from these groups. And even within the true church,

Christians disagree over important matters and so labels are needed to describe the various branches, movements, and schools of thought within the church.

Today, the church calls itself *Evangelicalism* or *Conservative Evangelicalism* in order to distinguish ourselves from Roman Catholics, Liberal Protestants, the LDS Church (more information will be given on this religion as we proceed), and other groups. These labels are necessary. You may ask, “Does this mean I have to tell people I am a Conservative Evangelical instead of just saying I am a Christian?” No, it does not. I don’t recommend using the term *Conservative Evangelical* when first getting to know someone. It is a technical term and will only probably throw this person off. I recommend simply saying that you are a Bible-believing Christian and leaving it at that. Then, if someone really wants to know what all that means, I recommend following the advice I give in my essay “Tips for Witnessing,” after you have completed this series. That essay can be found on my website. I do not recommend only saying that you are a Christian though either. This is because there are just too many people that claim to be Christian and so that could mean anything to anyone. By saying that you are a Bible-believing Christian, it makes it clear that you are a follower of Jesus, but that this has a specific meaning for you, namely that you follow Him through His word. Then, as said, if this person wants you to clarify further, you can do so using some of the tips I give in the essay above.

And even within the true church, there are many different groups that have differing views on various issues. You might say, “Who cares! Isn’t diversity a good thing, why do we need to focus so much on our differences?” This is a very healthy and biblical view to have to a point. But it is not totally biblical, and largely comes more from our current American culture whether you want to see that right now or not. Christians should not argue over stupid things, and I fully admit that this does indeed happen far too often. This reality is sickening and you are right to hate it. We should not get so bent out of shape regarding the music at church, the design of different churches, what time the service is at, how many small groups a church does or doesn’t have, etc.

With all that said, it is important to understand that during the Old Testament period, the nation of Israel was God’s people. But Israel was often a giant mess. Many Israelites had very unbiblical views. Many Israelites, including many leaders, were

allowed to hold views that were blatantly anti-biblical. Such people were not true Israelites and according to the Bible, they should have been kicked out of the nation. Many other Israelites, including many great Israelite kings, were holding to the Bible (as it had been written up to that point) overall, but still made serious mistakes regarding their teachings. I don't mean they only blew it like David, I mean they taught things and continued to teach things that went against God's word. Now a true follower of God can never blatantly reject anything that is taught beyond all doubt in the Bible. But many of these Israelites were clearly not pressing in and seeking God on certain points, and later God made this even more clear in His word.

One of the most striking examples of this was when certain Israelite kings would bring the country back to God, but would still allow the Pagan shrines to exist. I explain what the term *Pagan* means in my book on the religions of the world (pages 31-33). It can be found on my website. But, essentially the kings mentioned above were very godly kings who were nevertheless not completely submitting to God's word. And it was the duty of other Israelites to point this out. This is all we are seeking to do today as Confessional Presbyterians when other great Christians still refuse to submit to all that God has said. And we see the exact same reality in the New Testament. Many of the churches were going astray, and the apostles (I will explain what an apostle is in the next book of this series), especially the Apostle Paul, had to correct them.

Hence, if you do become a Confessional Presbyterian, be very careful to remember that we should only be Confessional Presbyterians because we want to be completely faithful to Jesus. Do not become judgmental towards other groups in the church. As we will see, one of the core teachings of Confessional Presbyterianism is that if God had not chosen to reveal so much to us, we would be no different than anyone else. We are no better than anyone else, including other Christians. A lot of Confessional Presbyterians lose sight of that.

True Christianity is all about Jesus all of the time. True Christians are obsessed with Jesus and love Him above all things. At all times when reading this series, this must be kept in mind. Even when I am discussing things that at first glance do not seem to be directly about Jesus, always remember that everything in the Bible is about Jesus. Even those things that do not seem to be directly about Jesus are telling us more about

Him because they are telling us how Jesus has done things, as this world belongs to Him.

Many passages in the Bible make this clear, but one of the most important and foundational passages in this regard is found in Matthew 10:37-39. It says, "If you love your father or mother more than you love me, you are not worthy of being mine; or if you love your son or daughter more than me, you are not worthy of being mine. If you refuse to take up your cross and follow me, you are not worthy of being mine. If you cling to your life you will lose it; but if you give up your life for me, you will find it (NLT)." Here Jesus makes it clear that we are to love Him far above all else. He is the purpose for our existence. We can only find true life by giving up ourselves in exchange for Him. Beware of false teachers who make Jesus into a way for you to get all the goodies you want. Jesus will bless you with many earthly blessings because He loves you, but these are never ever the point of life. Jesus Himself is the point, and only He can bring us true fulfillment. As odd as it sounds at first, the most selfish thing you can do is let go of yourself and give yourself to Jesus. You were created for Him and you will only find joy, fulfillment, peace, and purpose by having an intimate relationship with Him far above all else. And as we will see later in this series, Jesus wants us to learn more about Him from His word. So if we want to draw closer to Him, we will obey Him here.

This is why Christians are in fact called *Christians*. It is because they are those who love and follow Jesus *Christ* far above all else. It is truly sad and upsetting that so much of the world uses this label when they have no idea what it truly means.

For those of you that are familiar with the Trinity, you probably have a good question about now. For those of you who are not familiar with the Trinity, we will dive into that teaching in the second book of this series. For those who are familiar, you may be asking, "What about the Father and the Holy Spirit? If our focus is on Jesus, doesn't that take away from them?" As true Christians, we worship all three members of the Trinity. It is so important that we learn about all three, sing worship songs to all three, and pray to all three. But Jesus is the focus because He alone of the persons of the Trinity became human. It is His role within the persons of the Trinity to fully reveal God to us. When we focus on Him, we are not taking away from the Father and the Holy Spirit at all. When we worship any member of the Trinity, we are actually worshiping all

three because they are one God. The Father and the Spirit always point us to Jesus because they know that we most understand God by looking at Jesus, and so we are actually coming to know them more as we focus on Jesus. Now obviously, if we never focus on the Father and the Spirit, that would be unhealthy and sinful. With that said, our primary focus should be on Jesus, and through Him we also worship the Father and the Holy Spirit.

Chapter 2: Remnant Theology Part 1

What is Remnant Theology?

Before diving into this chapter, it is important to define some terms. The first term is the word *remnant*. This word refers to a portion of something that is a small remainder of the greater something from which it came. Sometimes the original something is now mostly gone, and sometimes the original something remains, but has been radically changed. Hence, if someone cooks a lasagna in a big pan and most of the lasagna gets eaten, we can say that what is left is a remnant of the lasagna. The word can also be used to describe a hat, for example, that has been covered in mud. If there is a very small portion of the hat that has not been spattered by the mud, we could say that a remnant of the hat remains clean.

The next term is the word *theology*. This word refers to the study of God. The word is often used to describe any religion trying to understand its own teachings on their “god” or “gods” better, but true theology only refers to true Christians studying the one true God through the Bible. Within true Christian theology, the word is used both broadly and more narrowly. Broadly it refers to the entire study of the Bible. However, the word is often used more narrowly to describe the various subcategories of theology. Hence, we can say that there is the theology of the Holy Spirit. This refers specifically to the study of the Holy Spirit from the Bible. The fancy name for this particular branch of theology is called *pneumatology*.

The next term is the word *doctrine*. This is merely a fancy word for *teaching*. It is used in Christian theology to describe the various teachings of the Bible. It is often used by theologians to describe the teachings of the Bible in a more formal way, so as to emphasize that we are dealing with the most important teachings of life by far. Throughout this series, I will sometimes use the word *teaching*, and sometimes I will use the term *doctrine*. I will be using the terms interchangeably throughout this series, but it should be understood at all times that regardless of which term I use, the teachings of the Bible are the most important teachings we can learn.

The next term is the word *philosophy*. This word comes from ancient Greece and means *the love of wisdom*. It primarily describes what we can know from our minds apart from nature and the spiritual realm. All people believe in at least some philosophy. All true Christians, for example, must believe that it is important for us not to contradict ourselves. If you think about it, if true contradictions exist, we can know nothing at all. This is because if something is true, it could also be not true at the same time. As Christians though, we are emphatic that we cannot know all that we need to know from philosophy alone, or from philosophy and nature alone. Some people disagree though, and you should be aware of this as we discuss some of the other religions and worldviews (I will discuss the terms *religion* and *worldview* soon) in this chapter, this book, and this series. True philosophy is simply addressing the basic common sense principles we all know instinctively in our minds. The principles we use to interpret the rest of life. Be aware though, that there are a lot of false philosophies out there that try to convince people of all manner of nonsense because people often do not want to think through things very carefully.

With those terms understood, remnant theology refers to the biblical teaching that God has chosen to only save a very small remnant of humankind. After Adam and Eve fell, God saved them very shortly afterwards. Hence, at that time, one hundred percent of the human population was saved. But soon after Adam and Eve started to populate the world, the percentage of the population that was saved became smaller and smaller. God was only saving a remnant of humankind. This continued all the way to the time of Jesus. Only a very small percentage of humankind was truly saved when He went back to heaven, probably only a few thousand. After Jesus, God has caused

His people to grow big time, and to grow throughout the world, instead of mostly in the land of Israel only. And this will continue until Jesus returns. However, to this day, the overall percentage of the world that is truly saved is only about 2-4%. Further, within God's truly saved people, there is always an even smaller percentage of that group that is following God's word in most of its particulars. There is always a remnant within the remnant of God's people. Sometimes this remnant forms a much larger percentage of God's overall people than at most times throughout church history. During the beginning stages of the Reformation (we will discuss the Reformation later), this was one such rare period. But throughout biblical history and church history, this remnant within the remnant is usually very small.

Before moving forward, I do want to clarify that this does not mean there are only going to be a few people in heaven. The Bible makes it clear that there will be a great multitude of people in heaven. All that is being said is that throughout history, only a small percentage of the people living on earth at any given time are actually saved. But when you add up all of these people over history, the number is going to be quite large. There are at least 200 million genuinely saved people on the earth today. That alone is a huge number. So, when you take all the saved people throughout history and add them to the number of saved people today, the number is probably close to a billion people. That may not seem like a huge number to us today in some ways because of how big the world has gotten, but to a person in the ancient world, that number would have seemed astronomical.

I know all this sounds odd to people at first. Most have heard that "Christianity" is the largest religion in the world, and so they often assume most of the world is some form of "Christian." Most have heard that most of America is some form of "Christian," and so they often think that America is a Christian nation, and that most other nations in the world are the same or similar. People don't understand that Satan uses these misconceptions, especially in places like America, to lull people into staying where they are spiritually, so that they will not seek God. Allow me to unpack the actual reality of things a bit.

For the rest of this chapter, and to some extent in the rest of the chapters, we are going to get into some numbers. If you are not great with math, don't worry, you are not

alone! I'm terrible with math. So, if any of the numbers confuse you, have someone help you through them. The stats I am about to give are not exact. They are rough estimates based on years of my own research. But if anyone wants to challenge them, all one has to do is some research online on his or her own, and he or she will see that I am not presenting anything that is remotely misleading. Many will disagree with my interpretations of the data, and that is fine, but the basic data is not in dispute.

So, for example, when I say below that the current world population today stands at about 8 billion people, some could challenge that number. This is because all projections of world population are just that, they are projections. This does not mean that they are wild guesses. But it does mean that they are not exact and all scholars agree on this. Therefore, most projections say that at the time of me writing this paragraph, the world population is at almost 7.9 billion people. That is almost seven billion, nine hundred million people. But by 2023 (it is now 2023), only one year from now, most projections say that we will be at about eight billion. So I am rounding up a touch, but the basic gist of what I am saying would not be challenged by anyone knowledgeable on the subject. Further, because the population grows so quickly, often projections are a little behind anyway.

As far as my interpretations go, some would say, for example, that I should not split certain groups into different religions or worldviews the way I do. Some would say that all groups that believe in one "god" should be considered the same religion. So, they would say that Islam and all forms of "Christianity" should be considered one religion. There is no way to reconcile such a notion with the Bible, but many people assert this. With that said, given my interpretations of the data based on the Bible, no one knowledgeable would seriously challenge the basic numbers I give because everyone knowledgeable on the subject agrees on the basic numbers. So, when I say, for example, that the religion of Islam today stands at about 2 billion people, that is not challengeable. Again, many would say that I should not categorize Islam the way I do, but they would still not challenge that basic number.

Now, some might object that the number 2 billion is not precise enough, even though they would agree that as a round number it is not inaccurate. This is because most projections put Islam at about 1.9 billion. However, most of those projections come

from census data or studies that are somewhat old. Populations grow very fast over ten years, especially today because the world has gotten so big, and because medical technology has improved so much (not nearly as many babies die as they did only a couple hundred years ago). Further, Muslims tend to have large families and so the projections always tend to be behind a bit. So, at all times I am making my own guesses, assessments, and projections from my own research, but the basic gist of what I say would be agreed upon by all who have studied the subject. If I said that Islam was only made up of 1 billion people, for example, that would be flat out incorrect.

Some projections are more difficult than others though. For instance, trying to project the number of Buddhists (more information will be provided on Buddhism as we proceed) in the world is a lot harder than trying to project the number of Muslims in the world. This is because a number of people in Asia, especially China (which is the largest country in the world as far as population), do not fit into any religious category in a neat and tidy fashion. Many people in China have a very mixed perspective on religion. Some mix elements of Buddhism, Chinese Folk Religion, Confucianism, and Taoism! Some Chinese people consider themselves Atheists, but many of these Atheists are very different from the bulk of Atheists found in America. Many of these Chinese Atheists do not believe in any “god” or “gods,” but they do find many of the more philosophical elements from the religions I listed above very helpful. So, many of them would look very “religious” to us in America, but they would still consider themselves Atheists.

This is also why the numbers can be very different among those trying to classify these things, based on how they classify many people within China. Many would place huge numbers of people within the No Religion (more information will be provided on this worldview as we proceed) category because these people are not part of any organized religion. But most of these people are actually quite “religious.” And a lot would not place many of these Chinese residents in the Nature Religion (more information will be provided about this religion as we proceed) category because many of these residents only practice certain rituals from a more cultural standpoint. But these rituals do tend to include worshiping some aspect of nature. How one decides to categorize these people will shape how one tallies the numbers for the categories of

Buddhism, No Religion, and Nature Religion. Many would say that Chinese Folk Religion is its own distinct religion, and a major one at that. But, I think most in this category dabble in Chinese Folk Religion, and are actually more Buddhist, No Religion, or Nature Religion, depending on the person.

Further, it is important to understand that many categorize people twice, whether they do this intentionally or not. For example, many will list Chinese Folk Religion as its own religion as I said, but many within this group will get tallied under Chinese Folk Religion as well as No Religion because Chinese Folk Religion is not a fully organized religion. You should be aware of this because when I give my final numbers, I am trying to be careful to do my best to not double count people. I believe that the best way to categorize a person is by whatever worldview is most prominent in his or her life and thinking. Hence, if a person primarily looks at the world through the lens of Chinese Folk Religion, they belong in that category in my opinion. And I believe that such a person must be put under the broader category of Nature Religion because almost all forms of Chinese Folk Religion worship some aspect of nature. However, if a person is primarily Buddhist in his thinking and only engages in Chinese Folk Religion for cultural reasons, I think such a person should be categorized as a Buddhist. And if a person is primarily Agnostic in her thinking, and only engages in Chinese Folk Religion to make her mother happy, she is an Agnostic, and thus part of the broader category of No Religion. So if you do some research and see numbers somewhat different from my own, that is why.

Getting back to Buddhism, the problem is that some people would prefer to only list those as Buddhists that are die hard Buddhists. While others, like myself, think it is more accurate to list as Buddhists anyone whose worldview mostly comes from that religion. Therefore, a more conservative estimate of Buddhism would be around 500-600 million people, while I and those like myself on this issue would put the number closer to 1 billion. Regardless of where one stands on this issue and others, everyone knowledgeable on these subjects agrees on the basic gist of things. And what I present below is the basic gist of things interpreted through the lens of the Bible, my own research, and my own interpretations of the data.

Before actually breaking down the numbers, there are a few more issues that make categorization more difficult. The first has to do with the definition of *religion*. Not

everyone agrees on this definition. Many people say that religion must include the belief in a “god” or “gods,” and at least the worship of those “gods” or a “god” in some sense. This is actually a very narrow definition of religion, but for the sake of argument, let’s not protest against it too much. A better term is *worldview*. I tend to use the terms *religion* and *worldview* interchangeably, but as I said, many would not like that. A worldview refers to the way in which one interprets the world. Therefore, everyone has a worldview. Many American Atheists say that they do not really have a worldview, they merely interpret the world using only reason and the facts. I don’t agree at all that this is what they are doing, but even if we granted them this, that is still a worldview. Their worldview is that people should only use reason and the facts to come to conclusions and they believe that most people, especially religious (as they define religious) people, do not do this. I disagree with their worldview, but they do have one. You should also understand that the label *No Religion* will be somewhat confusing given how I have defined the term *religion* here. However, I retain the label in my writings because it is an official title used by most sociologists for this group. But, you should understand that I believe that all people have a religion in some manner of speaking.

Another issue that makes categorization more problematic is that many people within a category do not agree that everyone who claims to be in their category is really part of their category. So, for example, many Muslims do not believe that Sufi Muslims are true Muslims. These Muslims, therefore, would place Sufi Muslims in an entirely different worldview category. However, most non-Muslims like myself are not going to make these judgments between more or less true Islam. We would say that all of Islam is false. But because I am a Christian and the Bible tells me that many people and groups who claim to be “Christian” are not actually truly Christian, I am going to classify the various “Christian” groups very differently than would many others. You should be aware of this as I breakdown the numbers below. Most outside of true Christianity, and many who claim to be “Christian,” would lump everyone who claims to be “Christian” into the broad category of “Christian.”

Further, many simply list the different groups of “Christian” when talking about different “Christian” groups within a nation or something along those lines. Hence, they will often list something like Catholic; Lutheran; Baptist; Pentecostal; and the LDS

Church. But, they will often not make any attempt to clarify if most of these “Lutherans” are Liberal Protestant or if they are Conservative Evangelical. The same would be true for the “Baptists.” They will also often not clarify if most of these “Pentecostals” are Conservative Evangelical or part of the Pseudo-Pentecostal/Charismatic Movement (the only reason I don’t put *Pentecostal* and *Charismatic* in quotes is because these terms are being used as part of an official title for this religion). All of these labels will be explained later in this series or I will point you to where more information can be found on them.

This is not always because they are trying to be inaccurate. Again, they are not going to make these careful distinctions because they are not Bible-believing Christians. The same would be true for me if I was talking about Islam in a certain country for example. I might just say that there are such and such a number of Muslims. And even if I did break things down along Sunni and Shia lines (the two largest subgroups within Islam), I would still probably not talk about all of the various groups that call themselves Sunni or Shia in a given country even though such distinctions would be extremely important to many of the people within those groups within that particular country. Sometimes this would be so important to these groups because they do not consider all of the other groups who call themselves Sunni to actually be Sunni, or even Muslim for that matter. The same would be true for many of the Shia groups. It is very important to be aware of these things if you decide to research these matters further on your own.

With all of that said, many people hear that “Christianity” is the largest religion or worldview on the planet and mistakenly assume that this means most people in the world are truly Christian. The problem is that there are a lot of religions and/or worldviews in the world today. Hence, the largest one merely means it has more people than any other, but that does not at all mean that most people in the world are part of that religion/worldview. If we take all of the people in the world that claim to be “Christian,” the number is about 2.5 billion people. That is about one third of the world’s population, and would indeed form the largest worldview in the world if that was the proper way to categorize things. That means that even if every single one of these people were truly saved, the unsaved world would make up almost 70% of the world’s population. It is very important to understand that even though the “Christian” population

in the world represents the largest worldview group from the perspective of most non-Christians, God's primary way of categorizing things in the Bible is between those that know Him and those that don't, and not by splitting up all of the various groups who do not know Him. So, even if the number was as high as 30% Christian, God would still only be saving a remnant.

Now if you want to argue that people outside of those who claim to be Christian do actually know God and are saved, you need to understand that there is no way to reconcile this with the Bible. There are many passages in the Bible that make this clear, but one of the most important is the passage we examined in the previous chapter where Jesus makes it clear that we cannot have true life with God unless Jesus is number one in our lives far above all else. Anyone who claims that Jesus is number one in his or her life far above all else, would also see himself or herself as a "Christian."

But even the 30% number is very problematic. Almost half (honestly probably more) of those who claim to be "Christian" actually live lives where their religion plays almost no role in their lives. Such people are known as *secular*. This does not mean they are not religious in any sense. They claim to be "Christian," and to whatever extent they understand and believe in their version of "Christianity," these beliefs shape how they view the world. But, throughout their daily lives, they do not think about these beliefs very much. Or, many of them do not live by these beliefs. They would say they know they are doing wrong things, but that they still believe that certain actions are right or wrong. Some people make the distinction between *secular* and *religious*, but based on what I have said, this isn't very helpful. A better distinction is between *secular* and *spiritual*. Some people are secular, like American Atheists, because they don't believe in spiritual matters. Others are secular because while they believe in spiritual matters, these beliefs do not affect their lives very much. I use the term *spiritual* in the technical sense to describe those who both believe in spiritual matters and who live out their spiritual worldview to a high degree.

As we will see in the next book of this series, the Bible is quite clear that those who do not live the Christian life show that they are not truly saved. And the passage from Jesus about Him being first in our lives also shows this. Therefore, when this fact is taken into account along with all that was said in the previous paragraph, the number

drops down to about 15% of the world being practicing “Christian.” That would mean that around 85% of the world does not truly know God. Unfortunately, things get worse.

Out of that 15%, most deny doctrines that the Bible says no true Christian can deny. Most of these are part of heretical groups (see my essay “Addressing Heresy” for more information on heresy if you require that), although some are in true churches and the leadership of these true churches don’t know about their beliefs yet. Some very sound theologians will often use the term *cult* to describe heretical groups. In my opinion, this term is used too loosely to describe heretical groups and so I generally avoid it. I cannot examine all of these key beliefs that no true Christian can deny here, but I will examine four. The first is the belief that Jesus is God and we are to seek His glory alone. The second is the belief that Jesus is also a full human being. The third is the belief that we are saved by grace alone, through faith alone, based on the work of Christ alone (this does not mean that we don’t believe in the saving work of the Father and the Holy Spirit; it means that no other human or angel saves us; the same is true regarding seeking the glory of Jesus alone). The fourth is the belief that true faith receives both the forgiveness of sins from God and also the Holy Spirit who changes us so that all true Christians live a life of good works.

Most of the 15% referenced above come from groups such as Roman Catholicism; Liberal Protestantism; Eastern Orthodoxy (the only reason I don’t put *Orthodoxy* in quotes here is because the term is being used as part of an official title for this religion; the same is true regarding *Jehovah* later in this sentence); the Pseudo-Pentecostal/Charismatic Movement; the LDS Church; or the Jehovah’s Witnesses. For more information on the first four of those see my *A Biblical Guide to the Religions of the World*. For more information on the last two, see my book on church history (chapter 10). And each of these groups denies one or more of the four core teachings referenced above. That leaves about 2-4% of the world’s population. God has truly only saved a remnant from humankind.

The only major group that holds to all four of those absolutely crucial teachings above is Conservative Evangelicalism, and it makes up the bulk of that 2-4%. If you are a new Christian, chances are you are already attending a Conservative Evangelical church even if you don’t know it yet. If you are not, God will probably eventually lead

you to one. There is a small number of true Christians that hold to all four of the core teachings listed above that are not Conservative Evangelical. I think most of these are truly Christian as said, but I still disagree with them strongly on certain matters, and they are very few in number as stated. Therefore, the church today is mostly made up of Conservative Evangelicals. It is important to say that this does not mean no one from the groups listed above is truly saved. Some in those groups do not truly understand all that their group teaches. They love Jesus above all else, but unfortunately are confused regarding all that their group teaches. Such people, therefore, are not truly in their hearts part of these groups. So, for example, you might have a professing Roman Catholic who is truly a Christian. But it is important to note that such a person is not truly a Roman Catholic at heart. Having said that, such people are few and far between.

As said earlier, the world is made up of almost 8 billion people today. And almost 99% of the world falls into one of ten basic worldview categories from a biblical perspective. I will list these below according to the number of people in each category. About 100 million people fall into one of the many very small religious/worldview categories. Many of these very small worldviews are heretical groups, many of them with absolutely bizarre beliefs. I cover some of the more well known larger ones in my book on church history. Therefore, while Satan does all in his power to make religion seem hopelessly confusing, only about 1% of the world does not fall into one of the ten major categories. Again, with God's help, He will always break things down for us so that we can see the truth more clearly. What makes things even more simple is that almost 75% of the world's population fits into one of the top four of these categories.

These ten categories are: Islam (around 2 billion people); Roman Catholicism (around 1.5 billion people); Hinduism (around 1.3 billion people); Buddhism (around 1 billion people); Nature Religion (around 500 million people); No Religion (around 500 million people); Liberal Protestantism (around 500 million people); Conservative Evangelicalism (around 200-300 million people); Eastern Orthodoxy (around 200 million people); and the Pseudo-Pentecostal/Charismatic Movement (around 100 million people). Many of you may be wondering about Judaism, how can it not be in the list? Judaism is such a well known religion because of its massive influence on the world. But as far as numbers go, it is actually not a major religion. If you would like more

background on each of these worldviews (including Judaism), this can be found in my book *A Biblical Guide to the Religions of the World*.

Right about now many of you are probably saying, “What is with all this religion talk? I hate religion, only give me Jesus!” I completely understand this feeling and for the most part, I strongly agree with it. But, we need to not oversimplify things and so please hang in there with me for a bit longer. I promise you, I am not a big fan of religion at all, at least not as that term is understood by so many today. Anyone who knows me can testify to this. In my essay “Addressing Heresy,” I discuss all of this further. I only use the term in a more legitimate fashion to describe the church as a group. This is very helpful in order to distinguish true Christians from people who falsely claim to be “Christian.” The Bible is quite clear that we need to know who to worship with and who to preach the gospel to. Therefore, in this sense, discussing religion and/or worldviews is very, very necessary.

Many of you may be saying, “All this seems so judgmental. Who are we to say who knows God and who does not. And I especially don’t like saying that so many people who claim to be Christians are not actually Christians. This all rubs me the wrong way.” I also get this feeling very much as well. I struggled with this so badly during my searching period. I will say more about this later in the next chapter. For now, I would ask for your patience and for you to press forward with this book and series. And I would once again highly recommend my essay on addressing heresy that I have mentioned a few times. I discuss all of these matters in more depth there.

Conservative Evangelicalism is made up of ten primary subgroups. You are probably like, “What is with the number ten?” That is honestly purely coincidental. I will list these groups not in the order of numbers (although I will give approximate numbers), but in the order they appeared on the scene in church history. They are: Confessional Lutheranism (around 50 million people); the Confessional Continental Reformed Churches (around 10 million people); Confessional Anglicanism (around 25 million people); Confessional Presbyterianism (around 20 million people); Confessional Congregationalism (around 2 million people); the Confessional Baptists (around 50 million people); Confessional Methodism (around 25 million people); Confessional Pentecostalism (around 100 million people); the Confessional Independent Bible

Churches (around 40 million people); and the Confessional Charismatic Churches (around 5 million people).

If you look up some of these groups online, be aware of the fact that you will probably see different numbers than the ones I give here. This is because if you look up *Lutheran*, for example, the site will probably be lumping together everyone on the planet that claims to be “Lutheran.” This includes millions of Liberal Protestants who don’t even believe the Bible or what traditional Lutherans themselves believe. You might say, “But certainly a movement can evolve and change. Merely because some Lutherans don’t believe what the original Lutherans believed five hundred years ago, that doesn’t mean they aren’t real Lutherans does it?” Reasonable evolution and change is of course normal and acceptable. Traditional or Confessional Lutherans today have indeed changed on certain very important doctrines from the original Lutherans 500 years ago. But if one has strayed so far from the origins of an organization or movement that the origins have become largely meaningless, then no one has the right to say that he or she is still part of this organization or movement. And people should be honest about this. With all that made clear, my numbers are rough estimates based on years of my own research, but at the end of the day I want to be clear that they are only estimates.

And it’s not only Conservative Evangelicals who get frustrated with the way things are often portrayed online, in case I sound like I’m complaining or twisting facts. I live in Southern Utah, where most of the population is some version of “Mormon.” If you go online and search *Mormon*, most sites will give numbers for all of the various “Mormon” groups combined. But, if you ask these “Mormons” around the world, and especially the ones around here, they do not see each other as part of the same religion. The biggest group is the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (the only reason I don’t put *Jesus Christ* in quotes here is because this name and title are being used as part of an official title for this religion). Most people know this group simply as the “Mormons.” But, the LDS Church no longer likes to be called by that name and we should respect that. They are also not super keen on being called *LDS* or the *LDS Church*, but most understand that the full name is quite a mouthful to always say or write out. Hence, I try my best to avoid the term *Mormon*, but call the religion the *LDS Church*, and the people either *LDS*, or *LDS folks*, or something along those lines. With

all that clarified, they believe that all of the various polygamist groups around here are not truly following the church Joseph Smith founded. And most of the various polygamist groups reject the Latter-day Saints Church, as well as all of the other polygamist groups. And many other religious groups don't agree with a lot of the way things are classified online either.

Now, sometimes this is because the researcher is being lazy, and sometimes it is only because he or she is merely doing his or her best to classify things in the most simple fashion possible from the vantage point of his or her particular worldview. Sometimes, it is just easier to say that all those groups that trace their lineage back to Joseph Smith, are part of the same basic religious classification even if they don't all see each other as part of the same religion. As I said earlier, many Muslims would not appreciate me lumping all Muslims into the same basic religion. But, I am not going to judge what is more true Islam than something else that claims to be Islam because I believe all forms of "Islam" are false. So, it is important to understand that my numbers are simply based upon looking at all of the data from an explicitly Conservative Evangelical viewpoint.

If you would like an overview on the basic history and teachings of each of the branches of the true Christian tree listed above, I present this in my book on the denominations and movements within the true church today mentioned earlier. I do understand that the mere presence of these ten groups is saddening. Obviously, all Christians wish we agreed on everything. But that will not happen until Jesus returns. With that said, we see various groups forming even as the New Testament was being written, and so unfortunately, this is the reality for the church. And some of these groups in the New Testament era were doing pretty well overall, while others were doing solid in some areas but not so hot in others, while others were really struggling. Therefore, it is our duty to seek God and try to find the group out of the ten above that most conforms to the Bible today. We are not to choose based on what we most want to be true. We must choose based on the Bible itself.

And no matter how you slice it, whichever group is in fact closest to the Bible on all matters is still going to be a remnant within the remnant. Even if Confessional Pentecostalism (the largest group of the ten) is the most biblical group out of the ten, it

still only makes up about 30% of the true church at best, and only about 1% of the world's population. Therefore, in light of all that we have seen in this chapter, despite the fact that almost one third of the world claims to be "Christian," only about 2-4% truly know God and are saved; and within that group, an even smaller number is really pressing in and conforming to the Bible across the board. As we will see, this is exactly what God's word teaches us to expect.

Chapter 3: Remnant Theology Part 2

The Importance of Remnant Theology

The primary reason remnant theology is so vitally important to understand as true Christians, is because it utterly destroys any form of "follow the crowd" mentality. True Christians will always be in the minority. Even when God establishes Christian cultures, these cultures must understand the pressures that will always come from the outside world trying to get these cultures to change and compromise. Unfortunately, rarely do these cultures stand strong for long. And even within the true church, those that are seeking to follow God's word to the fullest will always be a remnant within the remnant. This can be extremely difficult because the church is our refuge as Christians to a large extent, and when even the church fights against us over certain things, it can be very, very discouraging.

All people have a deep and powerful desire to fit in. Even though I am an introvert, and I've always been an introvert to some extent, I hate to be embarrassed or to be ostracized. It is no fun at all. So this teaching does not come naturally to any of us. Currently, I live in Saint George, Utah. It is a wonderful city that has blessed myself and my family in many ways. But it is a predominantly LDS area. It is also growing like you wouldn't believe. It is one of the fastest growing cities in the country as I am writing this. Many people come from other parts of the country, and many of them join the LDS Church in order to fit in. Many of them say that they have always felt they were missing

religion in their lives, and so joining the LDS Church makes sense. And the LDS religion is all too happy to welcome them with open arms. But a relationship with Jesus is not about getting your religious fix on. It is not about becoming a more balanced person, religion being one part of our humanity. A true relationship with Jesus is all-consuming. Everything in our lives as true Christians revolves around our obsession with Jesus. And as we will see, Jesus cares very much about what we believe about Him. Therefore, joining the LDS religion or any other false religion is no small thing.

And my worry is that many, many professing Christians who attend biblical churches are actually joining these churches for the very same reasons that the new LDS folks I talked about above are joining the LDS religion. Some of these people have attended churches I was in, and they tend to see church, Jesus, the Bible, and Christianity as sort of a social club or a self-improvement regimen. They don't tend to last very long. Jesus does not exist to make you better. Don't get me wrong; if He chooses to save you, He will completely change you from the inside out and that will indeed make you better. But this change is not towards becoming a better person as the world defines that, but it is towards loving Him and glorifying Him more and more. It is never about you or me. Throughout many phases of church history, in many parts of the world, becoming a Christian was and is a life and death decision. Just because you live in America that protects our religious freedom (for now anyway), does not mean that God is asking any less of you than those other Christians. Remember the passage we looked at in the first chapter. Jesus said that if you are not willing to take up your cross and follow Him, you can't have Him. Far too many professing Christians think this is only for the super duper hero Christians. Nope. Jesus makes it clear that all true Christians must be willing to suffer for Him or you are not actually a true Christian.

It is so important, therefore, to not worry about what will be the easiest decision given your cultural context. You may offend your neighbors, your parents, your best friends. Obviously, do not go out of your way to be offensive to anyone. But, becoming a true Christian or searching the Bible deeply for yourself may lead to this and you need to be ok with that. If you decide against becoming a Confessional Presbyterian out of genuine conviction, that is fine. But if you decide against it because it won't be easy; or because it is not a very big movement in America; or because it is not popular even

within the church; or because you don't like some of the teachings; these are not good reasons to reject it. Most of the Israelites throughout Old Testament times who were seeking God across the board were very unpopular in Israel. The prophets of God in Israel were almost always hated, and at times, were severely persecuted. Going along with the crowd, even within the people of God, can often be a very ungodly thing to do.

This does not mean that we ever have the right to be intentionally divisive within the church. God hates it when Christians cause division. We should work with our fellow Christians as much as possible. We are not to judge them, and we should only fight against doctrines we think are really unbiblical when appropriate. If you do become Confessional Presbyterian, you must do all in your power to find a solid Confessional Presbyterian church near you. Even if you have to commute a little bit, it is the right thing to do. If there is not one near you, you still need to attend church. Do all you can to find the most biblical church you can find, and do not try to "convert" people to Confessional Presbyterianism at this church. You can certainly have conversations with Christians when appropriate who do not attend your church, doing what you can in appropriate ways to fight for the truth, but with those who attend your church you will want to avoid this so as to not create division.

This may sound hard, but I have had to do it myself. I have mostly been able to attend Confessional Presbyterian churches since becoming a Christian, but not always. On more than one occasion, I have lived in places where there were very few good churches period, let alone any Confessional Presbyterian churches. In each case, I have had to attend Calvary Chapel churches for a short time. Calvary Chapel churches are part of the Confessional Charismatic branch of the Christian tree, and they passionately believe in and preach the word of God. I thank God for them. But I do have many strong disagreements with them. And so while attending these churches, I had to keep my mouth shut about some of my beliefs and that was ok. But, I still watched and read the best Confessional Presbyterian teachers and pastors, and I stayed in contact with Confessional Presbyterians as best I could. When appropriate, I defended Confessional Presbyterian teaching outside of my local church.

At this time, I would like to return to what was said earlier regarding my complete understanding over any worries that all of this seems judgmental. As true Christians we

must avoid being judgmental at all costs. I understand that there are a lot of mean people out there that claim to be Conservative Evangelical Christians. But, by definition, they are not true followers of Jesus. I also understand that even true Christians get carried away, I have gotten carried away plenty of times. We are sinners, and when we act badly, it is not a reflection on Jesus and what He intends for His true church. Remnant theology should never cause pride or judgment towards those in other worldviews, and especially not towards our brothers and sisters in Christ. It should cause deep humility and pity. I know people don't want to be pitied, so we should not always show our sadness for others so as to not insult them, but it should grieve us terribly that so many are not going to heaven.

This grief, however, does not give us the right to place ourselves above Jesus. As we will see, Jesus makes it very clear that only a few will be saved. Therefore, it is not our job to say that those are Christians whom the Bible says are not. Doing so may seem loving and accepting to you at first, but in the end, you are not truly loving these lost souls. You are loving yourself, because believing such things makes you feel better about yourself. People in other worldviews, even those that falsely claim to be "Christian," need you to love them enough to tell them the truth so that they can be saved. And you are not helping your brothers and sisters in Christ when you continue to allow them to believe things the Bible does not teach. Now again, be very, very cautious here. If you are too pushy, you are only going to harden them in these beliefs.

And I am not saying that we can ever infallibly know the heart of someone else. Some people have mental conditions that are very hidden. Therefore, a small number of people may know God, but may seem completely without such mental conditions and say things that would normally make us think that they do not actually know God. While this is rare, it does happen. With that said, this doesn't change the fact that outwardly we are not to worship with someone that does not seem to submit to Jesus through the Bible, and outwardly we must preach the gospel to such people. This does not mean that unbelievers cannot attend our churches. We should be delighted if they attend. But, we should be honest with them; they should never be allowed to hold any leadership positions in any ministry; they should not be allowed to be part of the worship team; and

they must not be allowed to partake of the sacraments (we will discuss the sacraments more in the third book of this series).

I fully understand how much this all goes against current American culture. In our culture today, people worship tolerance, unity, and peace at all costs. But as surprising as it may seem to you at first, this mentality is not biblical. As Christians, we are to be deeply tolerant of people up to the point of lying to them. We are to seek unity as much as we can, but the church must guard itself against false movements. Christians should avoid violence at all costs with few exceptions, exceptions we will examine later in this series. Tolerance, unity, and peace can be taken too far though. Jesus said, "Don't imagine that I came to bring peace to the earth! I came not to bring peace, but a sword." This comes from Matthew 10:34 (NLT). We should seek peace as much as possible, but the good news (the gospel) of Jesus divides people and you should be aware of that. Paul says, "So when we preach that Christ was crucified, the Jews are offended and the Gentiles say it's all nonsense." This comes from 1 Corinthians 1:23 (NLT).

I understand that for many of you this is still a very hard pill to swallow. As I said, it was a very hard pill for me to swallow. To this day, only myself and two of my children are the only people out of all of my family on both sides (this includes aunts; uncles; cousins; nephews; second cousins; third cousins, etc.) that follow Jesus. But, often as Americans we feel entitled. We feel that if we become Christians, we shouldn't have to change all that much about our outlook on life. We are sort of cleaning some stuff up. But God demands that you completely change the way you look at the world every bit as much as a Muslim convert from the Middle East. If Jesus is now your Lord, you must do what He says, even when it is painful and often doesn't make total sense to you at first.

The final thing I want to say in this subsection is please be so careful to avoid making anything other than Jesus the essence and focus of Christianity. Not your spouse; not your kids; not your parents; not your siblings; not your family in general; not your career; not your country; not your race; not your culture; not your brain; not your body; not your health; not your money; not your fight for any good cause; *nothing*. Making anything other than Jesus the focus and essence of Christianity is idolatry. Idolatry is to worship anything other than God. And it does not always have to be in the

form of praying to something; or singing worship songs to something; or bowing down to something; or engaging in worshipful rituals to something. All of these things are forms of worship, and all of these must only be directed towards God alone. Having said that, making anything above Jesus, on the level with Jesus, or even close to Jesus, is also idolatry. Many false groups, and unfortunately, many professing Christians sometimes, make “Jesus” a means to their own ends. They make “Jesus” a big genie in the sky, so that they can get what they want. Sometimes this takes place in very crass ways, like when someone believes “Jesus” is going to give him or her a super fancy car. Other times, the idolatry appears more noble. For example, many people believe “Jesus” exists to give them victory in a particular cause they are fighting for. But Jesus does not exist to give you things. You exist to worship and glorify Him, period.

This does not mean that Jesus will never give any Christian a fancy car. It also doesn't mean that He will never give us victory in our fights for justice. God loves to give His people good gifts, and we should always be overflowing with gratitude for whatever gifts He gives us. But we are never to expect particular gifts, only to be mightily blessed by God in general, and we must allow Him to decide the particulars. There is nothing wrong with asking God for specific gifts. In fact, we are commanded to do so as we will see later in this series. But these are always to be humble requests; they are never to be demands, and they are never to be our focus. Our focus must always be on Jesus Himself. A lot of true Christians lose sight of this at times throughout their walk with God. And it is not even always towards sinful things. Often, it is towards a wonderful good like fighting against abortion. All Christians are commanded to fight against such things however much they can given their particular life circumstances. But if this fight becomes the focus, if it becomes the essence of Christianity, idolatry and false teaching (heresy) have taken place.

What I am about to say is not popular. It will probably turn off a great deal of people who have read this book up to this point. It will probably cause many to not go on to finish the book, or the series. But it needs to be said. Being a true Christian teacher, as God has called me to be, is never about being liked or popular. It is not about selling books. I will always be honest with you in my writings, but that often means alienating many people, even many true Christians. So here goes. Jesus is not

your political leader. He does not exist to give your particular reign, regime, or party victories. He is a servant to no one. Everything exists to serve Him. Being a Christian is not about being a Republican or a Democrat. And being a Christian is most certainly not about the victory of your race through political means (or any other means for that matter).

This does not mean that we should not fight for racial equality. We most certainly must do so as true Christians. This does not mean that there are never times when a certain party is clearly more in line with Christian values. When this is the case, a Christian is duty bound to vote for that party. But it is still the case that this party is never to become the focus or essence of Christianity. And no party is perfect, and so every Christian should never be so loyal to any party that he or she refuses to criticize this party. And any party, no matter how great, can deteriorate and so again, no Christian should ever be so loyal to any party that it blinds him or her to the fact that this party may be moving away from Christian values. When I was first a Christian, I genuinely thought the Republican Party was the clearly better party. I thought it was obvious that it was more in line with Christian values. Given that conviction, I voted Republican and fought for the Republican Party however I could. That was the right thing to do given my convictions. But I still never made it the focus of my life, and I never ever pushed for it to become the focus of other Christians or the church in general. It was one aspect of my obedience to Christ. And I have been appalled by the direction the Republican party has taken in the last few years.

There are far too many white Conservative Evangelicals in our country (especially in the Old South; for more on how I use the term *Old South*, please see my essay on my website on that subject) that believe to be a Christian means one must support the Republican Party no matter what. Many support bizarre conspiracy theories. You may say, "You are really a liberal." But I am one of the most conservative people on the planet, both theologically and politically. True conservatism though, seeks the truth and not nonsense, even when that nonsense is allegedly being used to support good causes. All of this has led to disgrace upon the church because so much of the church in America has supported the vile antics of Donald Trump. I understand that a lot about the Democratic Party is grotesquely evil, and I understand that Trump did fight for a lot

of causes (especially against abortion) that were in line with the Bible. But the idea that he is above criticism is frighteningly unbiblical.

Now if Christians voted for him reluctantly because they felt they had no other choice, I am not being overly critical of them. If he runs again in 2024, he may again be the best choice given the circumstances of our nation right now (I think this is especially the case with all of the excellent decisions that have come down from the Supreme Court; and Trump does deserve a lot of credit for this, especially the reversal of *Roe v. Wade*). And I still think it is best to vote Republican in most cases, while still being critical of the party. I also think it is wrong to ever vote Democrat. I personally couldn't bring myself to vote for Trump in 2016 (no I didn't vote for Hilary; I voted third party), but I admit I voted for him very, very reluctantly in 2020. But I never stopped criticizing him when he did things that were extremely unbiblical. And I always said that there is no way we should accept him as our brother in Christ. He has never shown any evidence that he is a true Christian. That isn't me being judgmental; I always prayed for Trump and always hoped he would change, and even become a true Christian if God so willed.

But I was often disgusted by his words and behavior, and I was shocked by what happened at the Capitol, especially how he treated Vice President Pence (who is a true Christian). I was heartbroken by how many Christians tried to downplay those events. Many Christians still support Trump over Pence, and that is shameful. Pence did the right thing and Trump proceeded to shame him. All true Christians should side with Pence. I'm not saying that Trump was directly responsible for the violence at the Capitol, that is quite a stretch. But his rhetoric leading up to the Capitol riot was appalling, and his treatment of Pence was repugnant.

Many true Christians in this country that are white (especially in the Old South) still believe that Christianity is primarily a white religion, or at least white Christians should be the leaders. These true Christians are not overt racists; if they were, they would not be true Christians (I am not at all saying that there are no people who claim to be "Christians" that are overt racists; there are plenty, but again, they are not true Christians and I am not addressing such people here). They rejoice to see anyone become a Christian, they treat all people with respect, and they accept people from all races as their brothers and sisters in Christ. But they still tend to see the church as

being a basically white institution and this is implicitly racist whether they want to see this or not. This is one of the primary reasons so many of them have been blinded by Trump.

On the flip side, many minority Christians in our country have become far too wedded to the Democratic Party. This union was understandable at first. The Democratic Party pledged to help minorities and did so in many ways. As the Republican Party more and more became the party of the white Old South, many minorities felt they had no place in that party. But the Democratic Party has become one of the biggest supporters of abortion, the LGBT+ (I mean no disrespect to those in this movement, but the acronym has become far too long [some use one as long as LGBTQIA2S+]; hence, I only use the above acronym, with the plus sign meant to convey the rest) movement, and has very strong Socialist tendencies. These are all extremely unbiblical views. Many minority Christians, especially African American Christians, say that they disagree with these views within their party and that they try to fight against them, but they say that the Democratic Party is still the more Christian party because it seeks to help and include all people. I think you could have made that case a few decades ago, but I'm sorry, it is very hard to make that case today. Those Christians who still vote Democrat for these reasons, I do not overly judge if they are doing so reluctantly. But there really should be more of a reluctance, and a greater zeal to fight against those highly unbiblical elements within their party.

And as politically incorrect as it is to say, there are still far too many African American Christians who sometimes sound like the primary work of the church is to fight for equal rights for African Americans. Please don't misunderstand me. All Christians, and not only African American ones, should fight for equal rights for African Americans. And I'm not saying that when African American Christians make this mistake, they are as bad as white American Christians who still see the church as primarily a white institution. Given the history of our nation, there is not a moral equivalence there, and I'm not saying there is. But, as much as we should fight for equal rights for African Americans, and for all Americans, the primary purpose of the church is to worship and glorify Jesus. Everything else, even fighting for equal rights, must take a back seat to that.

I bring up all of this because as you seek to know God better through the Bible, it is important that you come to all of your conclusions through prayer and your own study of the Bible. Do not join any church; denomination; movement; branch; or political party because that is what is expected of you culturally. And never be afraid to speak the truth, even within the church, even within your culture, even when it is unpopular, as long as you are careful to do so in the right contexts so as to avoid being blatantly divisive. Remember, as I said, the prophets were often the most hated people within Israel.

The Biblical Basis for Remnant Theology

The most foundational passage on remnant theology is Matthew 7:13-14. Jesus also says something very similar in Luke 13:23-24, but that passage goes on to elaborate on other matters. I encourage you to read that verse, but we will focus on the verse from Matthew here. If you don't know how to look up Bible passages yet, go ahead and finish this chapter, then read the next chapter, and then come back to this section and look up all the verses I reference in this section, but don't quote. This verse from Matthew is one of the hardest passages in all of the Bible. But it is so important to remember that these are not my words, or the words of Confessional Presbyterians. These are the words of Jesus Christ Himself. And He makes it clear in no uncertain terms that only a few people will be saved.

The next passage I want to look at comes from Romans 11:4. I encourage you to read all of Romans 11 to get the full context. Some of it might not make total sense to you now if you are new to Jesus, but you should be able to get the gist, and I will go over many things throughout this series that will eventually help you understand this chapter better. For now, what I can say is that Paul is making sure that the Roman Christians have not given up on the Jews. Paul is saying that God has always saved a portion of the Jews, and at the time Paul wrote his letter to the Roman Christians, God was continuing to do that. Paul himself was Jewish ethnically. Paul goes on to say that during the end times God will save most of the Jews living at that time. But in this particular passage, Paul points out how at the time of Elijah (an Old Testament prophet),

Elijah thought he was the last Jew to be saved. And God tells him that isn't the case, He has saved 7 thousand Jews. That number may be small in the big scheme of things, but it was much bigger than what Elijah thought.

Now, you may be thinking, "Ok, but that only refers to Jews. Maybe God had saved a ton more Gentiles." But there is no evidence of this throughout the Old Testament. Some Gentiles were indeed saved, but they were always the exceptions (we will go over the differences between Jews and Gentiles in the next book). With that made clear, what is so important about this passage for our purposes here is that it shows that at the time of Elijah, God had only saved about seven thousand people. Now the full number of the saved at that time was probably higher because of Gentiles who worshiped the one true God, but again it couldn't have been by much based on what we just discussed. Elijah lived at a time when Old Testament history was pretty far along. Israel as a people had existed for well over a thousand years. Israel as a nation had been around for about six hundred years. And in Elijah's day, the world's population was probably around 10 million. 7 thousand people was only about .07% of that entire population. Most of the world at that time had never even heard of Yahweh (the name for God) or any of the Bible as it had been written up to that time. It is true that God promises throughout the New Testament to vastly grow His kingdom, and we have seen that since Jesus went back to heaven. 200-300 million people is far, far more than 7,000. 2-4% is far, far bigger than .07%. And Christians are found all over the world today. But the same basic remnant principle applies according to Jesus in Matthew 7:13-14.

The final portion of the Bible we will examine in this subsection is Revelation 2-3. In these two chapters Jesus addresses seven churches. These were not seven isolated, individual churches. These were churches in cities or areas that were made up of smaller churches. Collectively they made up most of the overall church on earth at that time. And what is so important about this section of the Bible is that these churches were not all equally healthy. Some were doing much better than others. One was doing so bad, it was on the verge of not being a true church any longer at all. Only two were praised across the board, and of these two, one was praised the most. And the criticisms Jesus has for the five churches are not only about their morality. In some

cases, it was their teachings, or teachings they were allowing. Now, Jesus is clear that these bad teachings were producing immorality, but that is always the case to one degree or another with all bad teaching.

Jesus praises the church in Smyrna and the church in Philadelphia for pressing in. These two churches were the minority within the broader church, and this was a blessing to them. We must not be afraid to be the minority within the broader world, or within the church today. With all of that in mind, I encourage you to proceed forward with our Bible study in this series with an open mind, understanding that sometimes those closest to the truth are often not those we think.

Chapter 4: The Breakdown of the Bible

While the Bible does begin at the beginning of time, and ends at the end of this world as we currently know it, in between it is not actually organized by chronology. It is organized according to genre for the most part. Further, it is not organized in the order that the books were written. So, for example, the letters of Paul were written before the Gospels, and yet they are found after the Gospels in the New Testament because that makes the most sense. The two main sections of the Bible are the Old Testament and the New Testament. The Old Testament primarily details the history of God's people before the time of Jesus, while the New Testament primarily details the ministry of Jesus and the beginnings of the Christian church. There are sixty-six books in the Bible, thirty-nine in the Old Testament, and twenty-seven in the New.

The Old Testament is split up into five major sections. These are: the Pentateuch; the historical books; the poetical books; the major prophets; and the minor prophets. The Pentateuch is made up of the books written by Moses. They are: Genesis; Exodus; Leviticus; Numbers; and Deuteronomy. They primarily deal with the history of God's people from creation to the death of Moses (if you don't know all of these biblical characters and events, we will get into that more in the last chapter). The historical books are made up of Joshua; Judges; Ruth; 1 Samuel; 2 Samuel; 1 Kings; 2 Kings; 1

Chronicles; 2 Chronicles; Ezra; Nehemiah; and Esther. They primarily detail the history of God's people from the death of Moses to the return of the Israelites from exile. We don't know for certain who wrote most of these books. Joshua wrote Joshua, and Ezra probably wrote Ezra and Nehemiah. The poetical books are made up of Job; Psalms; Proverbs; Ecclesiastes; and Song of Solomon. They are primarily poetry as the name suggests. We don't know who wrote Job, but we do know who wrote most of the rest. Psalms was written by a number of different authors, but mostly by David. Proverbs was mostly written by Solomon, and Ecclesiastes and Song of Solomon were written by Solomon.

The major and minor prophets were written by a number of very important prophets that existed from about 1000 BC to 400 BC. There were other important prophets during the Old Testament period, but most did not write any books of the Bible. The major prophets do not refer to prophets that were more important than others. It refers to the fact that the books they wrote were much longer than the books written by the authors of the minor prophets. The book of Daniel actually has less chapters than some of the minor prophets, but as far as word length, it is longer than the minor prophets. The only exception is the book of Lamentations. But this is only because this book was written by the prophet Jeremiah, and was originally part of the book of Jeremiah. All of these books were written by the person that is also the title of each book, with the exception of Lamentations, which was written by Jeremiah, as said. The major prophets are made up of Isaiah; Jeremiah; Lamentations; Ezekiel; and Daniel. The minor prophets are made up of Hosea; Joel; Amos; Obadiah; Jonah; Micah; Nahum; Habakkuk; Zephaniah; Haggai; Zechariah; and Malachi.

The New Testament is also split into five main sections. They are: the Gospels; Acts; the letters of Paul; the general letters; and Revelation. The Gospels primarily detail the ministry of Jesus. They were written by the people the books are named after. They are Matthew; Mark; Luke; and John. Matthew and John were both part of the original twelve disciples of Jesus (the first apostles). The book of Acts primarily details the beginnings of the Christian church. It was written by Luke (same Luke as above).

The letters of Paul were written by the Apostle Paul. Sometimes the letters in the New Testament are called *epistles*. So, sometimes these books are called "the epistles

of Paul;” or “the Pauline epistles;” or “the Pauline corpus.” The Pauline corpus is made up of Romans; 1 Corinthians; 2 Corinthians; Galatians; Ephesians; Philippians; Colossians; 1 Thessalonians; 2 Thessalonians; 1 Timothy; 2 Timothy; Titus; and Philemon. The general letters were written by the people the books are named after. The only exception is Hebrews; we don’t know who wrote Hebrews. These letters are also often called *epistles*. So, sometimes these books are called “the general epistles.” They are made up of Hebrews; James; 1 Peter; 2 Peter; 1 John; 2 John; 3 John; and Jude. James and Jude were both half-brothers of Jesus and became leaders in the early church. Peter was one of the original apostles, and John here is referring to the Apostle John from above. All of Paul’s epistles, and all of the general epistles, were written to specific churches to help them work through many of their issues. The only exceptions to that are 1 and 2 Timothy; Titus; and Philemon. These were written to specific individuals, the individuals the books are named after. Although it is very likely that Paul intended for these epistles to be read by certain churches as well after the individual recipient had read the letter. The book of Revelation is about the end times, but I think it is also addressing AD 70 as well (we will discuss this in the next book). It uses highly symbolic language, and it was written by the Apostle John.

Each book of the Bible is split into chapters. The only exceptions to this are Obadiah; Philemon; 2 John; 3 John; and Jude. Each of these books are only one chapter long. Each chapter of each book is split up into verses. These verses are often called *passages* or *texts*. Sometimes a number of verses together will be referred to in the singular because the verses are being looked at together. So, sometimes you will hear a few verses being referred to as this verse, passage, or text. When you want to refer to a specific chapter in a book, you state the book and the chapter. For example, Exodus 5 refers to the fifth chapter of Exodus. If you want to refer to multiple chapters, you use a hyphen to indicate you are referring to multiple chapters. For example, Matthew 16-18 refers to the sixteenth through eighteenth chapters of Matthew. If you want to refer to a specific verse, you use a colon to indicate this. For example, Acts 5:21 refers to the twenty-first verse in the fifth chapter of Acts. If you want to refer to multiple verses you use both a colon and then a hyphen to indicate this. For example, Hebrews 7:1-3 refers to verses one through three in the seventh chapter of Hebrews.

When referring to a book audibly with a number at the beginning, it has become traditional in the church to say, “First Samuel,” or “First Corinthians,” etc. If you say, “One Samuel,” or “Two Corinthians,” you won’t be sinning, but people in the church will look at you funny (although on occasion you will hear “One” or “Two”). When listing a number of sections together, you use a semicolon to form the list. For example, 1 Kings 2:3-5; John 5:1-2; and 2 Peter 2:3-6 means that you are telling someone to look up each of these sections of the Bible. Be careful here though, because if you are not paying close attention, sometimes you can think someone is referring to verses when they are actually referring to chapters. For example, Genesis 10-12; Psalm 52:1-3; and Proverbs 28:2-5 refers to the tenth through twelfth chapters of Genesis, the first through third verses in chapter fifty two of Psalms, and the second through fifth verses in chapter twenty eight of Proverbs. If you read too quickly you might think I was referring to Genesis chapter ten, verse twelve. But, I was referring to Genesis chapters ten through twelve.

When referring to the book of Psalms, you call it “the book of Psalms” or “Psalms.” But when referring to an individual chapter, you should say, “Psalm 73,” for example. If you are referring to multiple chapters in Psalms, then you use the plural, as in Psalms 39-41, for example. For whatever reason, a lot of people refer to the book of Revelation as “the book of Revelations” or “Revelations.” This is technically incorrect. It is the book of Revelation. The Gospels are often referred to in multiple ways. For example, Matthew is known as the “Gospel of Matthew;” “the Gospel according to Matthew;” “Matthew’s Gospel;” or plainly “Matthew.” The same is true for the other Gospels. There is only one Christian gospel, but each of these books is talking about the gospel from the vantage point of each of the authors. They did not believe in four different gospels, but when they were describing the life of Jesus (which is the basis for the gospel), they each included different details. They do all include many of the same details, but they present them in different ways.

The next thing we need to discuss are the various versions or translations of the Bible. There are a number of English translations of the Bible, and most of them are problematic. Most of these are on BibleGateway. The solid English translations are the English Standard Version (ESV); the New American Standard Bible (NASB); the New

King James Version (NKJV); the New International Version (NIV); and the New Living Translation (NLT). The best is the ESV. All of the Bible quotes found earlier in this book are taken from the NLT though, because of all the good English translations it is the easiest to read. It is therefore the translation I recommend to those I am most trying to reach in this series. But you should be aware of the fact that because those who put together this translation were trying so hard to make it so easy to read, there are times (not often) where it does water things down too much.

Some Christians insist that the King James Version (KJV) is the best version. But this is not the case; although the KJV is an excellent translation and served the church well for many centuries. There is a movement out there that says that anyone who does not use the KJV alone is not a true Christian. Stay away from this movement, it is not a true Christian movement. Some Confessional Presbyterians and others in the church might try to strongly veer you away from the NLT or the NIV in favor of another translation. Within Confessional Presbyterianism, the most popular version is the ESV and you should be aware of this. If your church uses the ESV, then I would bring the ESV or use the ESV on your phone when at church or a church function. But there is nothing wrong with reading the NLT if it is helpful to you. Despite some bumpy spots, overall it is a very good translation, and at some points it even does a better job than the ESV.

Versions that you must stay away from are the New World Translation, the Passion Translation, and the Message. All of these were written by charlatans, and the New World Translation is the Bible of the Jehovah's Witnesses. I'm not saying you can't read these, but if you do, you will quickly notice that they have a very different feel to them and the Holy Spirit will show you they are not from Him. They should never be read by anyone as the word of God; in that sense, you must stay away from them. You also need to stay away from Catholic Bibles. Again, I'm not saying you can't read them, but understand that they are not the word of God. Catholic Bibles contain many of the same books as true Bibles, but they also add a number of books that do not belong in the Bible.

If you decide to use BibleGateway to read the Bible, choose which version you want to use, and then type in whatever chapter you want to read, now that you know

how to look up anything in the Bible. BibleGateway will allow you to look up individual verses, and that can be very helpful sometimes, but for the most part that is not how you want to read the Bible. You will for the most part want to read at least one whole chapter every time you sit to read the word of God. And if you do decide to go through this series, studying the Bible along the way, don't merely look up the verses I reference. Look up the whole chapter of the verses and read the verses in context. But, know that the specific verses I reference are the ones that defend the view I am putting forth to some degree in my opinion.

The Old Testament was originally written in Hebrew, with a few portions being originally written in Aramaic. The New Testament was originally written in Greek. For the most part, the English translations I referenced above do an excellent job of translating the originals. You do not need to know these languages to be able to read God's word. Be careful of preachers and teachers who are always referring to the original languages. They can often make it seem like you can't understand the Bible without them. It is very appropriate and helpful to at times point out how sometimes there is more nuance in the original that was not easily translated into English. But again, pastors and teachers need to not get carried away.

One passage that I reference a few times in the second book to this series, because of its foundational nature, is Genesis 1:2. This passage is so important because it establishes the role of the Holy Spirit as the sustainer of creation. This also shows that it is the role of the Spirit within the Trinity to complete the works of God. But most English translations really struggle to translate what is going on in that passage. In the original Hebrew, when it talks about the Spirit hovering over the waters, it carries the meaning of sustaining. The waters could not continue to exist without the Spirit's sustaining power. So, please be aware of this nuance when I reference this passage. I do bring up the Greek very briefly in the second book of this series, but only to point out that if anyone thinks I'm making too much of the English word *can* in my discussion of John 3 and John 6, the Greek is not unclear like the word *can* often is in English usage in America today. I also bring up in the second book of this series that the way the NLT translates James 2:24 is not the best. You should look up that verse in the NIV. But for

most of the rest of the passages I reference, the NLT does an adequate job. Again, this doesn't mean I think it's perfect at every point, but for the most part it does the job.

One decision of the NLT translators that I don't discuss in any of the other books of this series that you should know about, is the decision to use LORD in the New Testament. In the second book of this series I talk about how the name of God is Yahweh. It is very difficult to try to translate this word into English. Hence, most English translations simply translate it as *Lord*, only in all caps (LORD). When the Old Testament uses the plain word for *Lord* (the Hebrew *Adonai*), it is translated as *Lord* (not all caps). When the New Testament was written in Greek, it followed the example of the Septuagint (the Greek translation of the Old Testament) and rendered both Yahweh and Adonai (when quoting from the Old Testament) with *Kurios* (the Greek word for *Lord*). And it was left up to the teachers of the Bible to explain when Yahweh is found in the original Hebrew.

Most English translations use Lord (no caps) when Kurios is used in the New Testament. However, the NLT uses LORD whenever the New Testament is quoting from the Old Testament and Yahweh is in the original Hebrew. It does this to let the reader know that in the original Hebrew the actual name of God is being used. However, many have argued that this is overly interpretive because Yahweh is not found in the Greek. And I agree with this critique. But again, I still think the NLT overall is a very good translation, especially for those I am most trying to reach with this series.

A lot of you are probably wondering about a Bible reading plan. I cover this in an essay on my website. If you are truly new to the Bible, start with the Gospels. Work your way through all four of them at your own pace as you work your way through this series, and then read my Bible reading plan essay after you complete this series. If you finish going through the Gospels before you complete this series, I recommend starting over with them and going through them again. You can never read the Gospels too often, they are the heart of the Bible. Once you complete this series, I would then begin the reading plan I recommend and at that point the Bible as a whole will make a lot more sense to you.

Finally, if you really struggle to read in general, I would work closely with someone who can help you in this area. Once you get better at reading, and you start to

read the Bible from a solid translation over and over again, the more it will begin to make sense to you.

Chapter 5: What is the Bible?

The Word of God and the Word of Humans

As I have already said, the Bible is the word of God. All true Christians, even the newest, have some vague idea that this is true. But it is important to fully understand what this means. That is what we will tackle in this subsection and the next. It does not matter that the vast majority of the world does not believe the Bible is the word of God. It does not matter that the vast majority of those who claim to believe this, nevertheless do not actually believe a great deal of what it teaches. It is still the word of God. The true Christian knows this because of the testimony of the Holy Spirit. But, it is also the word of humans. God spoke through His prophets and apostles, and He had them write according to their own personalities. Much more will be said on this below in the section on interpreting the Bible.

A lot of new Christians get confused and mistakenly think that Jesus is the Bible, based on John 1:1-14. But Jesus is God, and the Bible is not. We are not to worship the Bible. The word of God was originally much broader than Scripture (the word of God written). God gave His word through angels, visions, dreams, but mostly through His prophets, who both spoke and wrote the word of God. Jesus is called *the word of God* because He is God's ultimate prophet because unlike the normal prophets who often gave the word of God, everything that came out of Jesus' mouth was the word of God because He is God. Eventually though, after the completion of the Bible, God stopped giving more of His word to us in this life. So, for now, the Bible is all we have and all we need as far as God's word is concerned.

Infallible, Inerrant, and Sufficient

God obviously does not make mistakes. And we all know humans make mistakes all of the time. Therefore, we have to ask how things worked when God gave His prophets and apostles His word. Did He give them His word in their minds and then allowed them to paraphrase things pretty freely in their own words? If this were God's method, we could still call the Bible "His word" in a manner of speaking. The prophets and apostles would be giving us the gist of God's word and when they taught something clearly and repeatedly, we could know that this doctrine is from God. When they said something only sparingly and in a confused manner, we could assume that this may not be totally reflective of what God said. When we go to the Bible to answer this question, we see that this is not how God did things. God preserved the prophets and apostles from making any mistakes when giving to us God's word. This means that the Bible, from beginning to end, every word, is the pure word of God.

This means that the Bible is infallible. The word *infallible* means "unable to make mistakes." The Bible is infallible because it is the pure word of God. Because of this, it is therefore inerrant. The word *inerrant* means "without error." The Bible is inerrant because it is infallible. The Bible teaches this in a number of places, but two of the clearest passages in this respect are 2 Timothy 3:16-17 and 2 Peter 1:19-21. Now, this does not mean that the copies and translations of God's word are inerrant. This fact can both scare and confuse new Christians. But, both of these responses are unnecessary. I explain why this is the case in my essay on Bible difficulties. It can be found on my website.

The Bible is also sufficient. This means that we as Christians do not need anything other than the Bible as far as the word of God is concerned. The Bible alone is the word of God in this life after the completion of the Bible almost two thousand years ago. Before the completion of the Bible, God gave His word in many different ways, and not only in written form. But after the Bible was completed, this is no longer the case. Therefore, the Christian does not need tradition, other books, or other people to give him or her the word of God. The Christian does not need such things to interpret the word of God for her or him either. In fact, the true Christian must shun all such things. This does not mean that the Christian should not read Christian books, or listen to

sermons and teachings from godly people. The Christian must do these things. But these things are always merely aids to help us as we try to understand the Bible better. They are never the word of God and they never interpret the Bible for the Christian in an absolutely authoritative way either. Again, the true Christian knows this because of the testimony of the Holy Spirit.

It must be said that unfortunately many true Christians have not fully tapped into the internal testimony of the Spirit regarding the sufficiency of the Bible. Some true Christians have been unsure about certain books of the Bible, and some have thought certain godly books should be included in the Bible that are not actually the word of God. And some have thought that certain things such as church tradition, certain creeds and/or confessions, and certain revelations outside of the Bible, should also be considered the word of God or at least as having the same authority as the word of God. Conservative Evangelicalism strongly and correctly rejects this. And as I've said, only a few true Christians today exist outside of Conservative Evangelicalism. But, these beliefs were far more common before the Reformation and they caused problems. With all that said, all true Christians have always believed that the Old Testament books are part of the Bible, that the Gospels and Acts are part of the Bible, and that all of Paul's letters are part of the Bible. And all true Christians have believed that nothing can be accepted that contradicts these books.

A point of controversy within Conservative Evangelicalism is the place of the gifts of prophecy; visions; dreams; speaking in tongues; etc. Many believe that these gifts are still in operation today. But because they know the Bible alone is the word of God, they are also careful to say that the revelation given from these gifts is not the pure word of God. They say that often those receiving revelation through these gifts mess things up when those recipients try to explain the revelation to others. They would say that it would not even be right to say that when those receiving this revelation say something clearly and repeatedly, it is the word of God. They would say that those receiving these revelations often mess things up pretty badly. So they say that we should always approach these gifts very cautiously, and only ever interpret them in light of the Bible.

But, they say, these gifts still have great value. They say that these gifts often confirm truths God is trying to show us at any given moment from the Bible. Others believe that this doctrine is not taught in the Bible. These others say that when these gifts were used in biblical times, they were used to give God's pure word and therefore cannot be in operation today. I take the second position based on 1 Corinthians 12-14. The second position has been taken by most Confessional Presbyterians throughout church history, but a lot of Confessional Presbyterians in South America, Africa, and Asia today do take the first position. If you do decide to take the first position, it is so important to be so careful with that position as there are many, many false prophets and false teachers today who say all sorts of crazy things in the name of this doctrine. And many of them place their explanations of these supposed revelations on a par with the Bible.

Interpreting the Bible

As was said earlier, the Bible is indeed the word of God, but it is also the word of humans. God spoke through His prophets and apostles, and He had them write according to their own personalities. Therefore, the Bible must be interpreted like any other book. It should not be treated like any other book, it must be revered and believed in ways that are unlike any other book. But it must be interpreted like any other human book. If this were not the case, we could not understand it. The reader of the Bible should at all times use common sense and interpret the history in the Bible as history; the legal language as legal language; the poetry as poetry; parables as parables; and the highly symbolic language used at times as symbolic language.

The Bible is overall a very, very clear book. Even when a section of the Bible contains language that is hard for us to fully grasp all that the author is trying to tell us, we can still usually get the gist of what he is trying to say. The Bible is very repetitive in order to drill home to us the truths God wants us to know. Therefore, as long as the Bible is, it is for the most part teaching the core themes and doctrines we are going over in this series. It does so in a lot of different ways. With all that said, the Bible can be confusing at times because it was written by so many different authors so many years

ago. This is why it is so vitally important to focus on the clearest passages in the Bible. When we do this, we can see the plain teachings of these passages being repeated in creative ways throughout the Bible, and they often help shed light on the confusing passages. And when we can't understand something, that is ok, God will reveal that to us in eternity. The reason so many people come up with so many wild and off interpretations of the Bible is because they add to the Bible, they take away from the Bible, or they don't focus on the clearest passages. Or they engage in some combination of these three practices. When we start with the plainest passages and go from there, the Bible is overall very clear in what it teaches. Whenever we read the Bible, we should pray that the Holy Spirit will help us use these sound principles of interpretation so that we don't get carried away into bad interpretations.

Because the Bible can be confusing at times, it is very important when coming to our doctrines to use the clearest passages. Now, I will often in the second and third books of this series reference a whole chapter or sometimes even multiple chapters. When I do this, you should understand that I am not saying that everything in these chapters is completely clear. What I am trying to do is say that within these chapters we find many very clear passages that teach the doctrine I am trying to prove. It also needs to be said that when coming to our doctrinal conclusions, we should not use only one or two isolated passages. Now throughout this series you will often see me reference only one or two passages at times. But this is only because I will always later reference passages that shed even further light on a previous doctrine. It is important to remember that all of the teachings of the Bible are interconnected. And the more consistent we are in trying to harmonize all of these teachings, the more we can be sure that we are allowing the Spirit to lead us in the right direction. It is also important to say that there are a number of very difficult passages in the Bible. Most of these passages are not unclear, they are very, very hard to fully understand why God said them at all at first glance. I go over this reality more fully in my essay on Bible difficulties mentioned above.

Be careful of false teachers who always want the Bible to use technical language. They will often ask things like, "If Jesus is God, why doesn't the Bible say, 'Jesus is God'?" The Bible commands us to plumb the depths of the Bible and to put it

all together in order to come to our doctrinal conclusions. God did not speak in His word using technical language. The Bible is so much cooler than that. We have to work to understand it and put it all together. It is true that the Bible does not say, "Jesus is God." But it does say, "This faith was given to you because of the justice and fairness of Jesus Christ, our God and Savior." That is pretty clear! This verse comes from the second half of 2 Peter 1:1 (NLT). And the Bible uses many other verses like that as we will see in the next book. Another example would be the fact that the Bible never says that we are saved by faith alone, even though that is the very core of the good news (the gospel) of the Bible. But, it does say, "For this is how God loved the world: He gave His one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life." Also about as clear as you can get. This verse comes from John 3:16 (NLT).

Some verses are not quite that clear regarding a certain point, but if you read them carefully, you will still see the point. An example would be Psalm 51:5. It reads, "For I was born a sinner - yes, from the moment my mother conceived me (NLT)." At first glance, this verse does not seem to be saying anything about us receiving our sin nature. David is primarily talking about how he understands that he has been a sinner as far back as he can remember. But, in order to plumb the depths of this verse, we have to think through it carefully. If we take the verse completely literally, this means David was sinning in his mother's womb. That certainly doesn't seem right. How can a baby sin? And he even takes things all the way back to the moment of his conception. But a baby doesn't even have brain waves at the moment of conception. So, can we conclude that David is exaggerating for effect here to make the point as strongly as he can that he has been a sinner from before he can even remember? If we had other strong biblical evidence for concluding this, then yes, that would be a sound interpretation. But, the Bible is clear that we inherit our sin nature from Adam (Romans 5:12-14). From this, the obvious question is when do we inherit this? Psalm 51 clearly answers this and so we should not take the verse overly figuratively. Therefore, the most sound interpretation of the passage is that David was not literally sinning in his mother's womb, but that he did have his sinful nature from the time of his conception. And if that is true for David, that is true for the rest of us.

At all times when reading and interpreting the Bible, we must always be using good logic to come to the best interpretations. We should always take verses literally unless we have good reason not to do so. If this were not the case, we could interpret everything figuratively and come to whatever conclusions we want. Even here, you still have to be careful. Some true Christians have said that we should interpret the Bible literally whenever possible. This is going too far and leads to bad teachings and contradictions. Everyone agrees that sometimes a completely literal interpretation is ridiculous. For instance, in John 10 Jesus calls His people *sheep* a number of times. No one thinks He is talking about actual sheep here. However, at other times, a figurative interpretation is not obvious. In Romans 9:3, for example, Paul talks about how he would be willing to be cut off from Jesus if that would save his Jewish people. If we had nothing else to go off of, we would probably take Paul literally here. It is certainly possible to take him literally here. But, if we do so, we would be blatantly contradicting the rest of the Bible. Remember the key passage we looked at towards the end of chapter one. The passage where Jesus says that He must be number one far above all else if we are to be true Christians. Therefore, if we take Romans 9:3 literally, that means Paul was not a true Christian because he loved his Jewish people more than Jesus. And that is clearly not what the Bible teaches. Paul was one of the strongest Christians that ever lived.

Paul is clearly exaggerating here for effect, to show us how much he loves his people. This is why sometimes we do have to take a more figurative interpretation, because God's word will never contradict itself. But, even here we still need to be very careful. When we come to the sound conclusion that a verse shouldn't be taken completely literally, we have no right to say, "Ok cool, now I can interpret it however I want!" Merely because we come to the sound conclusion that Romans 9:3 shouldn't be taken too literally, does not mean we can say that Paul was saying how much he loves Burger King. That would be an absurd interpretation. We still must interpret passages using as much common sense as possible, even when we interpret a verse more figuratively.

Right about now you may be saying, "I don't know. This all seems a little complicated. And I don't want to interpret the Bible incorrectly, so I'll stick to the really

explicit passages.” The problem with this is that Jesus doesn’t allow this. One of the scariest sections in all of the Bible is Matthew 22:23-33. This section is recording a time when Jesus was debating with the Sadducees. The Sadducees were the priests and most of them had become false teachers by Jesus’ day. One of the false doctrines they taught was that there is no resurrection. I am not talking about Jesus’ resurrection here. I am talking about the resurrection of people in general. They taught that our bodies will not be resurrected, and that our souls will not be resurrected to heaven when we die either. Many of them said we don’t have souls at all. Jesus quotes a verse from Exodus to prove them wrong (Exodus 3:6). The key thing to notice is that the verse from Exodus says nothing explicit about resurrection. It does not use the word *resurrection*, and it says nothing explicit about our souls going to heaven. The verse is not even about the resurrection primarily. It is about God reminding Moses that He is the God of his ancestors.

Yet, the verse and its implications are still very clear. One of the clear implications of the verse, as Jesus makes plain, is that it was saying that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were still alive in some sense when God said these words to Moses. Obviously, their bodies were not still alive because they had been buried. So, their souls must have still been alive. And if that is the case, God will resurrect their bodies eventually as well because God created our souls and bodies to be united (Genesis 1-2). The Sadducees were mistaken and Jesus holds them accountable for not correctly interpreting the word of God. This shows that we are responsible for not only interpreting the explicit passages, but also for rightly interpreting all of the implications of every clear passage.

This is why Paul reminds us to be careful about what we believe (1 Timothy 4:16). You might be saying, “But the Sadducees were leaders among God’s people, and Paul is addressing Timothy, who was also a leader. I don’t think God holds non-leaders to the same standards.” That is certainly true to an extent. But all Christians are responsible to know the Bible as best they can. This is made clear in 1 John 2:26-27. In this passage, John makes it clear that we are not to rely on any teacher, but the Holy Spirit is the one who teaches us as Christians. If we don’t submit to the Spirit, we are obviously being disobedient. And the Spirit doesn’t teach us by whispering in our ears, or by implanting His teachings in our brains, or by only using parts of the Bible. He

teaches us through His word, the Bible, and all of the Bible (2 Timothy 3:16). Even when the Holy Spirit makes it clear to us that the Bible is the word of God and that it is the only word of God for us today through His internal testimony, He does not whisper in our ears, or send us a voice from heaven, or anything like that. He causes us to instinctively know that these things are true.

You might say, "Well maybe John was only writing to leaders in 1 John." 1 John 2:12-14 makes it clear that isn't the case. Now, does this mean we don't need teachers and leaders? No, of course not. The Bible makes it quite clear elsewhere that we do need them. John is saying that you are never to believe every word any teacher says. They are there to be a help to you, but ultimately you must seek to understand the Bible for yourself. And don't ever be tempted to say, "Well I know this doctrine is true because the Holy Spirit told me it was true." The Holy Spirit only uses His internal testimony to tell us that the Bible is the word of God; that it is the only word of God we need today; that we should interpret it according to common sense; that we are truly saved; and that we grow in our walk with God through Bible reading and prayer. We will discuss that last point more in the final book of this series. For everything else, the Spirit teaches us through all of the Bible (again see 2 Timothy 3:16).

Therefore, it is a complete cop-out to overly use the truth of the internal testimony. The Sadducees easily could have said that they knew Jesus was wrong because "god" told them Jesus was wrong. But even they knew better. They had to deal with Jesus' argument. And you must do the work of trying to understand the Bible as best you can. This does not mean you need to be a scholar or an official theologian (every Christian is a theologian in a sense because we are all students of the Bible whether we like it or not). But, it does mean that you must do your best given your abilities and life circumstances. The more you pray for the Spirit to help you, the more He will help you to understand the Bible correctly, but when discussing doctrine with a fellow Christian who disagrees with you, you will need to do your best to defend your view from the Bible. If it becomes clear that you cannot defend your view, you need to go back to the Bible or change your view on that point.

With all of that said, be very careful when false teachers object to words and phrases the church has used for centuries to summarize certain doctrines. For example,

the word *Trinity* is not in the Bible. It is a summary word the church uses for convenience to describe the doctrine that the one true God exists in three persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. It is very inconvenient to always have to say that mouthful every time we are talking about that doctrine, and so the word is often very helpful. But they will object saying, "If the doctrine of the Trinity is so important, why isn't the word in the Bible?!" This is really not much different than when they ask, "Why doesn't the Bible say, 'Jesus is God'?" But there is nothing sinful about us using words for convenience. The question should always be, "Does the Bible teach this or that?" And the Bible most certainly does teach that Jesus is God as we have seen, and it also most certainly teaches the Trinity as we will see in the next book of this series.

Sometimes even true Christians will make this mistake. While no true Christian will ever deny something that is taught in the Bible beyond all doubt like the Trinity, sometimes true Christians will deny lesser matters. Now, if a true Christian disagrees with me on a lesser matter, that is fine, but he or she shouldn't do so only because the summary title for a doctrine is not found in the Bible. So, for example, Confessional Presbyterians believe in what is known as "the covenant of works." Many Christians believe in something similar, but not in that exact doctrine. And some will say they reject it because the words *covenant of works* are nowhere found in the Bible. We admit this, but say that the concept is there. And we also say that those who argue like this are being very inconsistent because they won't hesitate to use the word *Trinity*.

False teachers will also make this mistake in regard to how we as true Christians categorize all of the different doctrines of the Bible. They will once again object that these various categories are nowhere explicitly spelled out in the Bible. This once again misses the point though. Jesus does not hold us accountable only for what the Bible explicitly says, but for all of its implications as well. And since the Bible commands us to be very careful about our teachings, we are obviously going to want to categorize things in a careful and organized fashion. Not all true Christians agree on the precise way to categorize things, but general agreement exists, and for the most part how I have split things up in this series follows this general agreement.

One of the most important big distinctions that the church has made over the years is the distinction between teachings that are primarily about what we are to

believe, and teachings that are primarily about what we are to do. Now, of course, this distinction is not absolute. We are commanded to believe what God says. In that sense, we are to do something even with the teachings that mostly have to do with what we are to believe. But the general distinction is still helpful. This is why the second and third books of this series are split up the way they are; the second book is more about the teachings we are to believe, while the third is more about the teachings that tell us what we are to do as Christians. This doesn't mean that the third book isn't about the teachings of the Bible. What the Bible commands us to do are still teachings of the Bible. But the distinction is helpful when trying to organize all of the Bible's teachings. So we speak about the teachings that are teachings in a more narrow sense, and the teachings that more particularly are about the Christian life. Again though, be careful not to push this distinction too far, because understanding what we are to believe is an important part of the Christian life.

Finally, some teachings do not easily fit into either overarching category. The doctrine of the church, for example, has a lot of elements regarding what we are to believe, but also a lot of elements regarding what we are to do. So, a lot of teachers will place it in the first category, while others will place it in the second. In this series, I placed it into the third book for the most part.

Chapter 6: The History of the Bible and Conclusion

The History of the Bible

Biblical History

While I would love to get into an in-depth study on the history in the Bible, it is beyond the purposes of this series. I will give a short synopsis here though, that will hopefully be helpful to you as a basic introduction. It is important to understand that I am not talking about how the Bible came together in this subsection, but about the history of

God's people as it is recorded in the Bible. This history is clearly very, very important to God. The Bible is made up of many different genres, but the most prominent is history. And this history is not a general history of the world, although it does detail how God began everything and how God will end everything. It is primarily a history of God's followers.

This history began with Adam and Eve, the first followers of God. Later, a great man of God by the name of Abraham came along. Abraham lived around 2000 BC. We don't have great dates for the events before the time of Abraham because it is hard to tell if the genealogies in the Bible have gaps or not. What I mean by gaps is that when it says that so and so was the ancestor of so and so, or so and so was the descendant of so and so, we don't know if these descendants are distant descendants sometimes or not. So, some Christian scholars have tried to add up the genealogies in order to come up with an approximate date for the first day of creation. These dates vary, but if one assumes that there are no gaps, the dates usually come out to around 4000 BC as the date of creation. But if there are gaps, we don't really know the exact date when God first brought everything into existence. It is only when we get to Abraham that things become more concrete.

Before moving forward, I want to encourage you if you are truly new to Christianity to watch *The Bible* by the History Channel. It is ten episodes long and it will give you a very basic, but strong beginning understanding of the history of the Bible. Understanding this history and the key events of the Bible is essential to fully understanding the second and third books of this series. But be careful. The series is not perfect. While it is overall very good, it adds words and details that are not in the Bible. Sometimes it adds details to provide some historical context, and usually these details are historically accurate even if they are not found in the Bible. Sometimes though, it unfortunately changes details from the Bible. For the most part, it is only doing this so that it can condense things. But there are times when the makers are clearly interpreting the Bible, and they are not doing a good job. And I don't want you to be embarrassed either. If you go to a Bible study or something and say something from this series thinking it is from the actual Bible, you may be corrected. The series also leaves out a lot, but it does cover all of the main events. Finally, the series is not very doctrinal

and so don't go into it expecting too many concrete doctrines from the Bible. It is mostly trying to give an overview of the major historical events from the Bible, and for the most part it does a good job of this.

Some Confessional Presbyterians will object to this. Some will say that we shouldn't watch anything with images of Jesus. This was the belief of most Confessional Presbyterians for a long time, and some still believe this today. So, they will not even buy children's picture Bibles for their kids if they have pictures of Jesus in them. Most Confessional Presbyterians today no longer believe this, seeing it as a somewhat legalistic belief that is hard to fully defend from the Bible. But, most of these Confessional Presbyterians who do take this position are very godly people and so they should be respected. And they do have a strong point because Jesus is often depicted as being of Northern European descent, even though He was Jewish. If Jesus is depicted, He should be done so accurately and it is very frustrating that this is rarely the case. And the series from the History Channel unfortunately continues this error.

Others would object to watching a series on the Bible not made specifically by Conservative Evangelicals for Conservative Evangelicals. And they would point to the errors I spoke of above. But this series really is very entertaining and well done for the most part, and my son has found it extremely helpful to him. So, I think it will be helpful to many of you as well. So, I honestly recommend putting this book down for a while until you make your way through that series (even two or three times to really get it down if necessary), and then you can come back to this point and the rest of what I say will make a lot more sense. I would watch the series while reading through the Gospels on your own, so that you have a basic idea of the history of the Bible while still making sure you are reading the word for your own spiritual strength in the process. A lot may be confusing to you in the Gospels at first, but after you watch the series from the History Channel, and finish this book series, they will make a great deal more sense to you. Once you come back to this book, I would continue to read through the Gospels on your own until you are finished with this series. Then you can begin the Bible reading plan I recommend.

In order to simplify things, the dates I am about to give are not exact, but they are all very close. Biblical history can be split up into twelve overarching sections. They are

the pre-patriarchal period; the period of the patriarchs; the period of slavery in Egypt; the period of Moses and the Exodus; the period of Joshua and the conquest; the period of the Judges; the period of the kings; the period of the exile; the period of the return to Israel; the Intertestamental period; the period of Jesus; and the period of the apostles. The pre-patriarchal period refers to the period from creation to Abraham. The major events of this period are creation; Adam and Eve; Cain and Abel; Noah and the flood; and the Tower of Babel. The period of the patriarchs refers to Abraham, his son, his grandson, and great grandsons. His son was Isaac, Isaac's son was Jacob, and Jacob's sons became the twelve tribes of Israel. This period lasted from about 2000 BC to 1800 BC. The period of slavery in Egypt lasted from about 1800 BC to 1500 BC. The period of Moses and the Exodus lasted from about 1500 BC to 1400 BC. The period of Joshua and the conquest lasted from about 1400 BC to 1300 BC. The period of the Judges lasted from about 1300 BC to 1000 BC. The period of the kings lasted from about 1000 BC to 600 BC. The period of the exile lasted from about 600 BC to 500 BC. The period of the return to Israel lasted from about 500 BC to 400 BC.

The Intertestamental period was the period when many of the Jews were back in Israel, but were ruled over by other empires. The first of these empires was the Persians, followed by the Greeks, and then the Romans. The Romans were ruling over Israel at the time of Jesus. This period is called "the Intertestamental period" because it is the period of time between the Old Testament and the New Testament. The Old Testament was finished around 400 BC, and shortly after the time of Jesus, the New Testament began to be written. So, the Intertestamental period lasted from about 400 BC to AD 30. The period of Jesus was from about AD 30 to AD 33. Jesus was born before this time, but this time is when His ministry took place. Finally, the period of the apostles lasted from about AD 33 to AD 100.

It is important at this point to briefly say something about church history. Remember, the history in the Bible is primarily about God dealing with His followers. Therefore, while church history is not biblical history, there is a very real sense in which it is an extension of biblical history. We will tackle this topic in the next subsection. I am going to have to highly simplify things, but this will still give you a very basic introduction.

Church History

Church history can be split up into five basic sections. These are the ancient church period; the Middle Ages; the Reformation; the Modern era; and the Postmodern era. The ancient church period lasted from about AD 100 to AD 500. The Middle Ages lasted from about AD 500 to AD 1500. The Reformation lasted from about AD 1500 to AD 1600. The Modern era lasted from about AD 1600 to AD 2000. The Postmodern era began around AD 2000 and is still going.

The ancient church period was a time of horrible persecution for Christians until around AD 300, when the church became united to the Roman Empire. The church was overall strong during this time, but bad teachings and practices did start to develop, and while the end of persecution was certainly welcomed, it also led to the church becoming more and more weak as it transitioned into the Middle Ages. The Roman Empire fell around AD 500, and this led to the Middle Ages. Western Europe fell into a period of deep decay, while Eastern Europe regrouped and became the Byzantine Empire. The Byzantine Empire saw itself as the continuation of the Christian Roman Empire, but it was never as strong as the old Empire.

Because the church was so divided culturally, in many ways two overarching sub-churches developed within the overall church. The church in the West became the Catholic church, and the church in the East became the Byzantine or Orthodox church. The term *catholic* means *universal*, and was used to emphasize that the church includes all true Christians in contrast to false groups that merely claim to be Christian. The term *orthodox* means *correct doctrine*, and was used to emphasize the truth that the true church is made of all of those who hold to what the Bible teaches in general, also in order to contrast the true church from those that do not hold to the Bible in general. Conservative Evangelicals will use both terms (*catholic* and *orthodox*) today, but in the lower case to distinguish us from Roman Catholics and those within Eastern Orthodoxy. None of this means that true Christians can never hold to bad teachings, many often do. But it does mean that no true Christian will ever deny anything that is taught in the Bible beyond any question. Both of these churches were true churches,

but more and more throughout the Middle Ages they began to fall away from the truth. Because of this, more and more moral corruption began to seep into the church as well.

All of this led to God raising up the Protestant Reformation, the most glorious move of God by far throughout all of church history. The church in the Middle Ages had radically blurred a number of key teachings. The five most important were: the Bible alone is the word of God (*sola scriptura*); we are saved by grace alone (*sola gratia*); we are saved by faith alone (*sola fide*); we are saved based upon the work of Christ alone (*solus christus*); and all of this is to God's glory alone (*solus deo gloria*). These five *sola* titles were Latin titles that the Reformers gave to these core doctrines. Three of these five are actually sub-doctrines within the broader doctrine that we are saved by grace alone, through faith alone, based upon the work of Christ alone; the third of the four major teachings we discussed earlier on page 28. The fifth of these is part of the first of those four that I listed on page 28. Therefore, four out of these five are teachings that no true Christian can deny, and the church in the Middle Ages was compromising on all four of them. The only one of these teachings that is not listed in the four major teachings I listed on page 28 is the first in this list, namely that the Bible alone is the word of God.

Many Christians before the Reformation believed that church tradition, other books, or revelations from dreams, visions, etc., were also the word of God. But, they were always careful to say that they only accepted these things if they were consistent with the Bible. Had they really pressed in, the Spirit would have shown them that only the Bible is the word of God in this life after its completion. After the Reformation, almost no true Christians have denied the fact that the Bible alone is the word of God today. With all that made clear, the church during the Middle Ages did start to add more and more traditions. They always said that these traditions were in line with the Bible, even if they were not clearly taught in the Bible. But this often was not actually the case.

The Reformation called the church back to these five core truths. These true Christians were called *Evangelicals*, but *Protestants* by their enemies because they were protesting against the fact that the bulk of the church at that time had strayed from the truth. Instead of repenting, the Catholic church as a whole and the Orthodox church as a whole both stubbornly resisted the Reformation and became false churches,

although millions of true Christians left these churches and joined the Reformation. Many others became true Christians for the first time and then left these churches to join the Reformation. The Catholic church eventually became known as the Roman Catholic Church, and the Orthodox church eventually became known as Eastern Orthodoxy. They are both still known by these titles today. Eventually, the label *Protestant* was used so often for God's true people during the Reformation that it stuck and became the more prominent term among God's people for a long time.

During the Reformation, five primary movements developed within Protestantism. These were the Lutheran church; the Reformed church; the Anglican church; the Presbyterian church; and the Puritan movement (all of these are more fully explained in my book on church history). I know people will argue this with me, but the Presbyterians were the culmination of the Reformation. They were the most committed to the five core doctrines spoken of above. Much more is said about them in my book on church history and in my essay on the history of Confessional Presbyterians. After the Reformation, the New world was fully settled and the Scientific Revolution took place. This was the beginning of the Modern era. Both of these led to the Enlightenment during the 1700's. The Enlightenment led to an extreme questioning of the Bible, which culminated in Liberal Protestantism in the early 1800's. Liberal Protestantism said that you can be a "Christian," but you get to pick and choose what you believe from the Bible. True Christians were of course appalled by this idea and so they began to call themselves *Evangelicals* again. Today, sometimes the term *Historic Protestant* will be used of God's true people, and that is a good term because it connects us back to the mighty move of God during the Reformation, but for the most part the term *Conservative Evangelical* is best today.

Liberal Protestants were not content to start their own churches. They sought to corrupt true Protestant churches. This is why I use the term *Confessional* so often in this series and in my other works. Confessional churches and movements are those that hold to the traditional creeds and confessions of the church. A creed or confession is a statement of belief that is used by Christians to either distinguish themselves from other Christians, or to distinguish themselves from groups that falsely claim to be "Christian." Many creeds and confessions up to this day are intended for the whole church to

distinguish us from false groups. Others are intended to clarify what a particular group believes. So a Confessional Lutheran, for example, is someone who believes in all of the major creeds and confessions of the whole church, but also believes in the original confessions of the Lutheran movement.

I know how completely confusing all of this can be, especially to those outside of Conservative Evangelicalism (having to explain all of this to my LDS friends is terribly annoying), but we must remember that Satan is the author of confusion. Hence, in some cities you may have a Lutheran church somewhere, a different “Lutheran” church only a few blocks away, and yet both are not even the same religion despite both being “Lutheran!” The same is true for Presbyterian churches, Baptist churches, Pentecostal churches, etc. Many of these true churches will call themselves “Evangelical Baptist,” or “Evangelical Methodist,” etc., but the problem is that many Liberal Protestant churches will sometimes call themselves “Evangelical.”

Therefore, I prefer to use the terms *Conservative Evangelicalism* for the whole church, *Conservative Evangelicals* for true Christians, and *Confessional* of the various branches of the church so as to emphasize the importance of the creeds and confessions and how they distinguish us from Liberal Protestants in particular. Liberal Protestants do not accept the authority of the creeds and confessions. Many of them will recite them in their churches, but they will often not believe very much contained within them. Hence, you will often have a Liberal Protestant “Lutheran” who does not even believe in the Lutheran confessions. So he is “Lutheran” in name only, just like all Liberal Protestants are “Protestant” in name only, and they are “Christian” in name only as well.

Now, some true Christian churches don’t like creeds and confessions because they fear they can be given too much authority, thus compromising the sole authority of the Bible. But these Christians still believe in most of the doctrines that are taught in the major creeds and confessions, as well as most of the doctrines of the creeds and confessions that are most associated with their branch or movement, even if they do not officially use these creeds and confessions. So you should be aware of the fact that some true Christians don’t use and would not like me using the term *Confessional* to describe them. With that made clear, I feel that the term is overall very helpful.

Further, the fear that these creeds and confessions might be given too much authority is largely baseless, as almost no true Christian believes in every word of these creeds and confessions, precisely because they are not Scripture. We simply believe that they overall do a great job of summarizing Christian belief, or the specific beliefs of a true Christian branch of the true church. Some of the most important creeds and confessions of the early church that are intended for the whole church are the Apostles' Creed; the Nicene Creed; the Chalcedonian Definition; and the Athanasian Creed. After you have read through this series, I strongly urge you to read them. They are all beautiful expressions of Christian teaching. Some more recent documents that are meant for the entire church are the Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy; the Nashville Statement; and the Statement on Social Justice and the Gospel. I highly recommend reading these as well once you have read the older creeds first. I do not believe in every word or statement in any of these creeds, confessions, or statements, but overall they are all excellent summaries of Christian beliefs.

Some of the major confessions of the various branches of the church are the Augsburg Confession for Confessional Lutherans, the 1689 Baptist Confession for Confessional Baptists, and the Westminster Confession of Faith for Confessional Presbyterians. Some of the other ones for the other branches of the true Christian tree are further discussed in my book on church history. I encourage you to read these as well when you are ready. But you should be aware that the language of all the creeds, confessions, and statements can be tough to understand at times because they are trying to clarify some difficult theological points. If anything in them is hard to understand or doesn't make sense, have someone read through them with you.

Many true Christians will use the term *Evangelical* to describe themselves today, but during the late 1900's a new movement developed called *Progressive Christianity*, which has caused that to change. Progressive Christianity is basically a new branch within Liberal Protestantism with a Postmodern twist. Postmodernism is a philosophy that developed during the 1900's that was very relativistic. Relativism is the belief that there is no absolute truth. What is true for you is true for you, and what is true for me is true for me. Progressive Christianity is a subgroup within Liberal Protestantism, with this

Postmodern emphasis. Postmodernism is a philosophy that is much, much bigger than Progressive Christianity, but Progressive Christianity has passionately embraced it.

Progressive Christians have been very aggressive and successful in their efforts to gain converts from the true church, so much so that many of them will call themselves “Evangelicals.” They say they are simply trying to bring the church up to date. But they are not, they are enemies of the true church. Because of this, more and more true Christians are having to call themselves *Conservative Evangelicals* to distinguish themselves from these Progressive Christian “Evangelicals.”

Postmodernism has taken the world by storm, especially in the more wealthy countries. It basically says that you can be a “Christian,” or a Muslim, or a Hindu, or whatever you want, as long as you don’t say your religion or worldview is the only truth. They pride themselves on tolerance, but in reality they are only tolerant of those who are Postmodern in their outlook. This has led to the Postmodern era, which began in full around twenty years ago. There is a lot of truth within other religions and worldviews, but as complete worldviews they are all false. And every individual true Christian person; family; church; denomination; movement; or branch; is wrong on certain things, some more than others. But Biblical Christianity, which is today best known as Conservative Evangelicalism, is the only true worldview because it alone proclaims the true Jesus as He has revealed Himself in the Bible.

If you are a new Christian and you are an American, you honestly probably have no idea how Postmodern you are in your thinking. I discussed this briefly in my essay on addressing heresy. I had no idea how much I was influenced by Postmodernism when I first came to know Jesus. My parents were not Postmodern in their thinking, but merely being raised attending public schools in the late 80’s and 90’s in America, I didn’t even realize how much I was being indoctrinated. At first, trying to allow Jesus to eradicate this philosophy from your soul will be terribly painful. But, you must submit to Him. Do not come to the Bible expecting Jesus to affirm your beliefs. Do not come to the Bible and say, “I think God is saying this to me.” That is not how true Christianity works. God is saying to you what He actually wrote in the pages of the Bible. God does not exist to affirm you or me in our thinking. He will radically change the way you think and believe. Jesus is king, you are not. I am not. When you talk to others, don’t say, “I have come to

know Jesus and He works for me, and I think He could work for you. But, if He doesn't work for you, I'm still cool with you." I understand how loving, tolerant, and natural such language will seem at first, but you are saying to this person, "You still get to be king. You don't have to submit to king Jesus." Jesus is servant to no one.

Now, I'm not saying you should become a nasty and harsh street preacher or Bible thumper. Please, please don't! Always be gentle and kind. And you don't always have to say something at all. Often, only listen and love people. But when the time is right and God is nudging you to say something, you need to tell the truth. It's ok to say something like, "I understand how hard some of my new beliefs are to swallow. I'm still trying to fully swallow them. I'm not in any way trying to judge you and believe me, I don't think I'm better than you. But I've come to see that Jesus is God and He wrote the entire Bible, even the parts that still don't totally make sense to me as an American. But I do now know those things to be true, and He is the only way to be saved and fulfilled. If you don't want to believe that, I'm not going to push that on you, but that is the truth and I hope you will seek the truth." And if someone really presses you, I recommend following the advice I give in my essay "Tips for Witnessing."

Conclusion

My sincere hope is that this book has sparked in you a desire to know God's word better. If this is the case, I encourage you to proceed to the second book of this series and study it along with the Bible carefully. At the very least, I hope this book has sparked a curiosity about the Bible, which I hope will lead to you coming to know God through His word. If that is the case, I would also encourage you to move forward to the second book of this series. May God be with you!

Appendix: A Short Confessional Presbyterian Catechism

Question: What is the ultimate purpose of humans?

Answer: To bring God glory, and enjoy God for all eternity.

Question: How many Gods are there?

Answer: There is only one true God.

Question: How do we primarily have a relationship with God?

Answer: By praying to God and reading His perfect word, the Bible.

Question: What is God like?

Answer: He is a perfect, infinite, spirit. Even though He is spirit, He can manifest Himself in created things.

Question: Is God Triune?

Answer: Yes, the one true God exists in three persons.

Question: Who are these three persons?

Answer: The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

Question: What are the main things God does?

Answer: Predestination, creation, and providence. Predestination was God's choice as to how He was going to orchestrate all of history, especially choosing His people. Creation refers to God bringing everything into being. And providence refers to God actually bringing about His predestined plan.

Question: What has God created?

Answer: Everything that exists other than God Himself.

Question: Did God create the angels?

Answer: Yes, and around one third of them fell and became Satan and the demons.

Question: What is the most important part of providence?

Answer: God saving His chosen people so that they can have a relationship with Him.

Question: What do people need to be saved from?

Answer: God's anger and punishment towards their sin.

Question: What is sin?

Answer: Breaking God's commandments, His law.

Question: How does God save His people?

Answer: By Jesus' death on the cross.

Question: Who is Jesus?

Answer: He is the Son, the second person of the Trinity, made human.

Question: So God changed into a human?

Answer: No, the Son added a human nature to Himself, so Jesus is one person with two natures, His God nature and His human nature.

Question: How does Jesus' death on the cross save us?

Answer: He was punished in our place on the cross.

Question: Did Jesus pay for the sins of every individual person?

Answer: No, only for His people.

Question: Did Jesus rise again?

Answer: Yes, and then He ascended into heaven, where He is now.

Question: How do we receive salvation?

Answer: By trusting in Jesus alone. When we do this, God forgives us of all of our sins, and we enter into an intimate and eternal relationship with Him, where He becomes to us far above all else.

Question: So Christians don't do good works?

Answer: That is incorrect. When God saves us when we trust in Him, the Holy Spirit also changes us so that we want to follow His commandments.

Question: Can a Christian ever lose his or her salvation?

Answer: No.

Question: What is the gospel?

Answer: It is the good news of salvation that we are to preach to all people, and God's chosen people will receive it.

Question: What are God's main commandments?

Answer: Only worship God; love God far above all else, even when we are suffering in His name; believe what God says; learn about God from the Bible as His disciples; only pray to God in Jesus' name; as Christians, repent and confess your sins to God as your Father (not as your judge; you confess your sins to God as your judge when you are first saved); proclaim the gospel; be humble, but courageous; do not make idols; do not engage in witchcraft or superstition; do not be worldly; do not get drunk/high/smoke (other than the occasional cigar or pipe); treat your body well; treat the earth well (but be careful not to overly exalt the earth); keep yourself and your possessions clean and well kept (be a good steward); do not take the Lord's name in vain (this includes all of His titles); do not use bad language; rest and worship God on the Sabbath; go to church on the Sabbath as much as possible; use your spiritual gifts; observe the sacraments; honor your parents and those in authority unless they tell you to do something sinful; do not kill or be violent (which includes abortion, euthanasia, and suicide); spouses must love each other deeply; husbands must love their wives like Jesus loves the church; wives must respect and submit to the authority of their husbands, and they must manage their households well; immodesty, lust, fornication, adultery, pornography, polygamy, homosexuality, bisexuality, transgenderism, incest, bestiality, any sexual acts or thoughts outside of marriage (marriage is between one man and one woman and

Christians are only supposed to marry Christians), are all outlawed; do not divorce; have children and raise them to be Christians unless God specifically calls you not to get married and have children; do not steal; be honest and fair in all of your dealings with others; do not lie; keep your vows, but make vows rarely; don't be greedy and be content with what you have; work hard; give as much as you can to the church and other people (especially the poor); love people as much as you can, especially God's people; forgive others (especially fellow Christians) sincerely from the heart when others ask for forgiveness; in light of all of God's commands and all He has done for us, the Christian should have faith, hope, and love in all things; keep an eternal focus and be filled with joy in the Lord!

Question: What is the church?

Answer: The people of God.

Question: What are the two sacraments today?

Answer: Baptism and the Lord's Supper.

Question: Should babies be baptized?

Answer: Yes, the babies of true Christians should be baptized.

Question: Is Jesus coming back?

Answer: Yes, and at that time He will send all unbelievers that have ever lived to hell for all eternity (including Satan and the demons), and all believers that have ever lived will live with Him on the new earth forever.