

What's
All
This
/
Hear
About
Christianity?

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LESSON ONE

Unlocked Mysteries

Deuteronomy 30:19b

Well, it is 8:00 a.m. and time for us to get started. At Vernondale Christian Academy we begin each day in the “Berean” way, mining the depths of Scripture to extract its spiritual resources and precious deposits of knowledge, wisdom and truth.

But first, we'd better take a moment to allow your instructor to introduce him or herself to you and establish what the expectations are for this school year...

Sweet, now that that is over, you'll undoubtedly discovered that your teacher is extremely excited about this year, partly because of the fact that you will be studying the Word of God.

You see, the Creator of this entire universe has things He wants us to know, and how foolish it would be for us to ignore them! That's what the Bible is: **A message from God himself.** There is no information in this world more important to know than what is written on its pages. So, each morning we will begin by memorizing and discussing a new Bible verse.

Our first memory verse will be Deuteronomy 30:19b, which your teacher will now practice with you, just a little bit at a time, section by section or phrase by phrase, until you can say the whole thing by memory. Use the version of the Bible specified by your instructor. Or if no translation is available, memorize the following:

I am offering you life or death, blessings or curses. Now, choose life! Then you and your children may live. – Deuteronomy 30:19b

In case you hadn't noticed, we live in a fallen world, meaning that it's not how God planned it, made it, or wants it to be. And the reason we live in a fallen world is because of a choice that was made a long time ago.

Actually, that's really what life is all about—**life is all about making the right choices**. And the most important choice we have to make is **whether or not we will trust, believe and have faith in God**.


For example, in Genesis 1:29 the Lord clarified all the good that He provided for mankind, and having done so, He called on Adam and Eve to conduct themselves in accordance with His directions, warning them of the dire consequences that would result if they chose to go their own way. (Feel free to read the passage for yourself, if you like.)

But, rather than believe God, Adam and Eve chose to believe the devil, and it was that decision which set all of creation on the destructive course that led to the conditions in which we find ourselves today. (Your instructor may wish to elaborate on the many tragic events—past, present and future—that are a reality in this world.)

Nonetheless, God gives each one of us the same choice. Will we believe Him, or will we believe the lies we are told by the devil, in whatever form he disguises himself. (That's right. Like the snake in the garden, Satan rarely comes to us openly, in his true form. He is usually in some type of disguise that, on the surface, would make us feel silly to acknowledge as being him.)

We see this same pattern again in the 24th chapter of Joshua, where God recounts the many mighty and gracious acts He performed on behalf of the Israelites, proving His gracious nature and His faithfulness in keeping His promises. He then calls on Israel, through his servant Joshua, to commit themselves, of their own free will, to be faithful and obedient to Him. As Joshua puts it, *"... choose today whom you will serve... but as for me and my family, we will serve the Lord."*

And finally, this theme is most plainly articulated in the 30th chapter of Deuteronomy, verses 15 through 19, where God says, *"Now listen! Today I am giving you a choice between prosperity and disaster... life-and-death... blessings and curses. I call on heaven and earth to witness the choice you make. Oh, that you would choose life; that you and your descendents might live! "*



So, it's clear that God wants us to enjoy all the many blessings He has provided for us. But, the choice between a good and happy life or a disobedient and miserable one is ultimately ours to make.

It's a very simple choice, but don't confuse simple with easy. Anyone with even half a brain would choose blessings over curses. Yet, many people make poor choices all the time. Why is that?

Well, after thinking long and hard about why it is so difficult to choose God's ways over our own, the following five reasons come up again and again:

1. Pride
2. Impatience
3. Laziness
4. Greed
5. Distrust

Let's take a closer look at each of these, one at a time, beginning with pride.

The first impediment to a happy, satisfying life is our thinking we know better than God, which is the ultimate sin of pride. We make the mistake of believing we *deserve* the things we want—that we are *entitled* to have our way.

This includes people who know they are doing wrong, but do it anyway. They have an "I can do whatever I want" attitude. They've got an outlook that says "Don't tell me what to do and what not to do," and it is demonstrated in their belligerent, self-willed, defiant, rebellious behavior.

Following pride is impatience. Not only do we want what we want, but we want it now. God knows the best time to give us the things that we would like to have, but we don't want to wait.

After inpatients, there is laziness. Not only do we want what we want, and want it now, but we do not want to have to work too hard for it. God is interested in our growth. One of His desires is to strengthen us. But, we would rather get what we want the easy way. We will take shortcuts; even it



requires us to do what we know is not best.

And then you have greed. Not only do we want what we want, want it now, and don't want to have to work too hard for it, but whatever we get is never enough.

God will give us the right amount of things, in portions that are best for our ultimate good. But, we are quintessential pleasure seekers. We want more, and more, and more... We will eat food until it makes us sick, miserable or overweight. We will drink certain substances until our bodies are poisoned or our internal organs are destroyed. We will take a drug to the point of overdose. And on, and on, and on it goes...

Finally, the ultimate reason we choose our way over God's is that we don't truly trust Him, believe Him or have faith in Him. We are afraid that if we do not watch out for ourselves, we will not get what we want. We do not believe He is really there protecting us, and so we are afraid if we do not take care of ourselves, some type of harm will come to us. We do not really believe that God is in complete control, orchestrating everything for our ultimate good, so we try to orchestrate thing for ourselves.

You know, God told the Israelites not to eat certain foods and to stay away from certain people, and perhaps there are certain foods God is encouraging you not to eat; certain places He is telling you not to go; or certain people He is telling you not to befriend...

When an individual makes poor choices, his or her life becomes like a bridge that weakens slowly over many years—unseen—but then suddenly collapses all at once. No doubt, your teacher can provide you with a long list of actors, entertainers, politicians, or other rich, famous and powerful people who seemed to have it all, but whose lives were suddenly destroyed because of the poor choices they made over a period of years.

The thing about choosing to have faith in God by believing in His word and trusting in His son Jesus Christ is that it is one choice you will never live to regret.

UNLOCKED MYSTERIES

LESSON 1 **The Most Important Thing in Life ♦ Review Questions**

Directions: Read each question carefully. Then respond with the best answer, keeping in mind the information you discussed with respect to today's memory verse.

1. What is the Bible?

2. Write today's memory verse:

3. When it comes right down to it, life is ultimately all about what?

4. What is the most important choice we have to make while we are on this planet?

Answers

1. The Bible is a message from God, telling us things that are important for us to know.
2. “I am offering you life or death, blessings or curses. Now, choose life! Then you and your children may live.” Deuteronomy 30:19b
3. Life is all about making choices.
4. The most important choice we have to make is whether or not we will put our faith in God by believing His Word and trusting in His Son as our personal Lord and Savior.

Before you continue to the next subject on today's schedule, make sure you can answer the four questions from page nine precisely, without referring to your notes or reviewing the text.



LESSON TWO

Why Study Christianity?
Creator
of the Universe

Why study Christianity?

At Vernondale Christian Academy one thing we resolve to never do is waste our students' time. And clearly, if God does not exist, studying Christianity would be just that—a fantastic waste of time.

So, before going any further, we need to set the record straight. If God is real, there ought to be a compelling body of evidence establishing that fact, which we, as conscientious educators, could readily point to in justifying teaching this course.

There are those who would claim that God is, at best, a figment of wishful thinking—a primitive, superstitious myth. But, anyone *sincerely* investigating the claims of Christianity through objective rules of evidence, eyewitness testimony, historical documents, scientific discoveries, and experiential psychological observations (if he or she is brutally honest) must conclude that in the end, the preponderance of facts attesting to the validity of Christianity requires an individual to exercise more faith to continue believing in atheism than to acknowledge the Lord Jesus Christ as Messiah.

We realize that this is a pretty bold statement, and that we had therefore better be ready to back it up. That is exactly what the next three lessons are all about. Don't take our word for it! Investigate everything we say for yourself and draw your own conclusions.

We are confident that, when all is said and done, if you are a fair minded young person, you too will recognize that whether or not you decide to receive Him as your personal Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ was and is a real historical figure, the Son of God, who is Himself an actual Spiritual Being, the Creator of the universe, and the Cornerstone of Christianity.

Romans 1:20

As mentioned during yesterday's lesson, there is no information that is more important to know than what is written in the Bible.

Moreover, at Vernondale Christian Academy, we do not credit students as having mastered a given skill or concept until they receive three consecutive scores of 80% or above and are able to verbalize the information. This means that if you are now unable to recite yesterday's memory verse or identify the five reasons it is so difficult to choose God's ways over our own, you will need to go back and review.

You should also now have an answer to the question: What is life all about? Of course, we said that life is all about making the right choices, and the most important choice we have to make while we are here on this planet is whether or not we will put our faith in God by believing His Word and trusting in his son, Jesus Christ, as our personal Lord and Savior.

Unfortunately, the world has always believed the deceiver. People have always taken sides with the liar, Satan, and joined him in his long war against God. God lays it all out in the book of Romans...

In verse 18 of Chapter 1, God informs us that the truth about Him is obvious. The fact that God is a personal, moral Being who has established right and wrong is obvious because of the fact that He has created us in His image, as people, endowed with a sense of morality and a moral conscience that forms the very fabric of our lives.

The truth that there is a Creator, a first cause for this massive effect called the universe is obvious because rationality is built on cause and effect and ultimately leads us back to the first cause.

However, mankind suppresses that truth. Verse 19 says, "That which is known about God is evident within them, for God made it evident to them." He did that by giving us reason, but we attempt to smother it.

Nonetheless, we can rationally go back to the fact that there had to be a first cause, which leads directly to God. In the words of John Mac Arthur:

"We can look at the creation of the world and see His invisible attributes. We can look at creation and we know that God is powerful. We can look at creation and we know that God is intelligent beyond comprehension. We can look at creation and know that the mind of God is so massively and vastly and infinitely complex as to be absolutely incomprehensible to our puny brains. We can look at creation and we can know that God loves beauty and order. We can look at creation and see that God has a delicate touch, at the same time God has a powerful, almost overbearing, touch that can kill and crush. We can see so much about His attributes, His goodness, which are manifest in the rain and the sunshine and the food we enjoy and the beauty of the world around us. We can see it in the love that He's poured into life and the wonder of romance and the blessing of children and the exhilarating joy of adventure. We can see that God is a God of beauty and kindness and goodness."

So much can be known about His eternal power and divine nature that verse 20 says if we *don't* see God in this and if we *don't* come to recognize Him for who He is, we are without excuse.

And so we read in verse 21, "Even though they knew God, they don't honor Him as God, nor do they thank Him for His creation, but they become empty in their speculations."

Man trades in God for a stupid speculation called evolution. "And then their foolish hearts become dark, and they profess themselves to be wise," awarding each other Ph.D.'s and writing books when they are actually fools...fools with a garbled, impossible, incoherent, irrational explanation for life. They call it wisdom, God calls it folly.

God is not honored when scientists give nature the credit for creation, when they give random chance the credit for the complexity of the universe, the complexity of the smallest microcosm of creation or when they give evolution the credit for mankind.

The creation is not intended to point you back to a one-celled thing in some primordial soup. It's intended to point you back to God and it's intended to show you everything about the mind of God and nothing about some imaginary evolutionary process empowered by chance. God is honored and God is glorified when we give Him the credit for all of it.

And therefore, verse 23 says, "They literally steal the glory of the incorruptible God." They turn from the incorruptible God, the supernatural God, the God who is bigger than His creation, who is outside His creation; and in God's place they substitute an image in the form of corruptible man and birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures. They worship the creation instead of the creator, verse 25 says they exchange the truth of God and they believe the lie—Satan's lie that perpetuates the long war against God—and they worship and serve the creature. That's what evolutionists do. They literally believe that the creature is the creator.

But, you know, this is exactly what Romans says. They threw wisdom away and accepted stupidity and folly because their foolish heart was darkened, their speculations were empty and futile and useless because they had turned their backs on the only rational explanation for anything, which is God, because they don't want God crowding them with His moral standards. They worship the birds and the animals and they serve the creatures rather than the Creator who is blessed forever, amen.

And so, you know what? God gave them up. He gave them up to every kind of sin that He lists in verse 28 to 32. That's the way it goes, they just plunged into the depth of horrible iniquity. That's the real story of where evolution comes from. It's part of the long war against God. And if there were enough space we could provide volumes of writing from evolutionists who give such blasphemous and mocking statements about God. But, there's no real need to that here.

In Hebrews chapter 11, a familiar verse, it says "By faith..." That is the only way, not by empirical analysis. By faith we understand." In other words, you have to believe the Bible. "By faith we understand that the worlds were prepared by the Word of God, that God spoke and everything was created, now listen to this, "so that what is seen was not made out of things which are

visible." Now there is an absolute statement that totally discounts evolution. What you see in the created world was not made out of some other material. Rather, everything you see in God's created universe was made by Him out of nothing. And that's exactly what it says in the book of Genesis. So even though it all points to God, when all is said and done, it takes faith to believe.

Still, common sense, as well as basic scientific laws and principles, actually lend more credence to the biblical account of creation than they do to any so-called "scientific" or naturalistic theory or explanation.

First of all, as already mentioned, there is the law of cause and effect, which states that in order to have any kind of physical effect; you're going to first need some type of sufficient, pre-existing cause. And since the most widely accepted paradigm throughout the scientific community is that the universe did indeed have a definite beginning, it *must* have had an adequate, prior existing cause.

Secondly, one of the most fundamental ontological commitments in the history of science is the metaphysical principle that: out of nothing, nothing comes. So, the universe had to be created by something. However, whatever it was couldn't have been physical because for it to be anything material, matter would have had to have subsisted before it even existed—which is nothing but utter nonsense.

Moreover, the first law of thermodynamics states that, under normal circumstances, matter and energy can be neither created nor destroyed. That means matter and energy had to have been created under *unnatural* circumstances. In other words, whatever created matter, energy, space and time had to be something *supernatural!*

If that weren't enough, the second law of thermodynamics holds that without the interference of some outside force, things will naturally move from order to disorder—going from organized to disorganized.

Therefore, to say that the physical universe exploded into existence out of nothing, even though something cannot come from nothing, and then proceeded to break the second law of thermodynamics by going from disorder to order,

simply by random chance, altering its chaotic arrangement into a highly complex, delicately balanced universe in which a myriad of parameters having an infinite range of possibilities just so happen to set every single value for approximately 200 different variables within the extremely narrow range that would permit life to exist on Earth; and that all of this happened without anything we know of bringing it about—to believe *that* takes far more faith than believing in the God of the Bible.

You see, Yahweh, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, as He is described in the Bible, meets every single one of the preconditions that science indicates should characterize whatever brought this universe into being, even though the Bible was “published” long before the above-mentioned laws and principles were ever articulated.

In that God is almighty; He is a more than powerful enough cause for everything. Since He is eternal, He existed long before the universe. Because He is spirit, He transcends matter, energy, space and time. And given that He is all knowing, He has the intellectual capacity to arrange the world exactly as it needed to be arranged in order to support life on our planet.

Consequently, in assessing the most plausible explanation for how the universe came to be, the most reasonable alternative is the one supported by the laws and principles of science itself: that in the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. And yet... ultimately...it is by faith that we believe.

Notwithstanding, Romans 1:20 is still correct...

For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse.

Review

To summarize the previous two pages: Since one of the most fundamental metaphysical principles is that nothing comes from nothing, either the universe was created or it is eternal.

Given that the consensus among scientists today is that the universe had a definite beginning, we have to rule out the position that it always existed.

Now, according to the law of cause and effect, provided the universe came into being, it must have also had an adequate, prior existing cause. But, the world is physical, so whatever that prior existing cause might have been, it could not have been material.

Yet, the first law of thermodynamics holds that, under natural circumstances, matter and energy cannot be created. So then, the preexisting nonmaterial cause that created matter had to be supernatural as well.

And finally, the second law of thermodynamics would seem to indicate that an outside force was intervening throughout the whole process.

So then, you have a preexisting, nonphysical, supernatural, tremendously powerful intervening force responsible for creating the world. Now, if that doesn't sound like God to you, then exactly what *does* it sound like?

For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse. — Romans 1:20



LESSON THREE

Untitled

Prophecy

Okay then, let's assume for the moment that God really did create the universe. Who's to say that He's also responsible for authoring the Bible?

Our answer is: prophecy.

The prophecies in Scripture are messages spoken by men who claimed to be repeating, under the Holy Spirit's influence, words God inspired them to say. And when it comes to Old Testament prophecy, God wasn't kidding around.

In the 8th chapter of Deuteronomy, verse 20, God says that, "...the prophet who speaks a word presumptuously in My name which I have not commanded him to speak, or which he speaks in the name of other gods, that prophet will die." (Such men were to be stoned to death.)

So, false prophecy was no joking matter in God's eyes.

And though mediums, spiritists, clairvoyants and others may occasionally make remarkable predictions, they do so with only about 60% accuracy at best—never with the total accuracy God demands of true prophets. For in the next two verses (Deuteronomy 8:21-22) God goes on to say, "You may be wondering among yourselves, 'How can we tell the difference, whether it was God who spoke or not?' Here's how: If what the prophet spoke in God's name doesn't happen, then obviously God wasn't behind it; the prophet made it up."

So then, clairvoyants such as Jeanne Dixon and Edgar Cayce fail to measure up to the biblical standard set by God. The Lord leaves no room for error.

On the other hand, unlike any other book ever written, the Bible accurately foretells specific events, in detail, sometimes centuries before they occur—far ranging projections of future events that are characterized by the highest degree of specificity and historical accuracy. Approximately 2500 prophecies appear in the pages of the Bible, and about 2000 of them have already been fulfilled—without error.

Obviously we can't list all 2000, but just to give you a couple of examples...in the 9th chapter of Daniel (verses 25 and 26), you can read where the prophet proclaimed, over 500 years before Jesus' birth, that Israel's future Messiah would begin his public ministry 483 years after the issue of a decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem.

That decree was finally issued by Persia's King Artaxerxes in 458 B.C. and, just as prophesied, Jesus began his ministry in Galilee 483 years later, at about 26 A.D. Amazing!

Another example is the instance in which the prophet Isaiah foretold that a conqueror would not only destroy the seemingly invincible Babylonian empire, but would also subdue Egypt along with most of the rest of the known world. Isaiah even went so far as to provide the king's name—Cyrus—and added that he would let the Jewish captives in his territory go free without any ransom payment.

Believe it or not, Isaiah made this prophecy 150 years before Cyrus was even born! It was another 30 years after that before Cyrus performed the first of these feats, and of course, he eventually went on to perform them all.

What's more, at the time Isaiah gave this prophecy, the Jews were still free. They weren't taken captive until 80 years later!

No, it is statistically preposterous to say that these 2000 specific, detailed prophecies could have been fulfilled merely through chance, educated guess, or deceit. The odds of hundreds upon hundreds of

prophecies all being fulfilled merely by chance is simply astronomical. In fact, biblical prophecy is so accurate that this point was once popular among skeptics as evidence against the Bible's validity.

The argument went like this: The prophecies are too accurate and therefore had to have been written after the events already took place. The writers simply edited the text to make it look like the predictions were written beforehand.

Unfortunately for these critics, the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls made them look silly, proving conclusive proof that the events prophesied in the Bible truly did occur after their predictions.

God said Babylon would fall and it did. He said Tyre would fall and it did. He said Jerusalem would fall and it did. He said Messiah would come and He did. He said Messiah would be born in Bethlehem and He was. He said Messiah would be slaughtered and He was.

In light of the overwhelming weight of evidence offered by the prophecies in scripture, it is incredible that, knowing the authenticity and hysteroscopy of the text, skeptics still reject what the Bible claims for itself: that it was inspired by a Supernatural Being who knows the past, the present and the future—God Almighty.

Then why deny God?

"Well," you may ask, "if the evidence that God is real is so overwhelming, why do people still deny his existence?"

That's a good question. The Bible itself answers it best...

The first chapter in the book of Romans tells us that God's anger is kindled as mankind's acts of wrongdoing accumulate and as people try to put a shroud over the truth. It indicates that the basic reality of God is plain enough. All we have to do is open our eyes and there it is! By taking a long and thoughtful look at what God has created, people have always been able to see what their eyes as such can't see: eternal power, for instance, and the mystery of His divine being. So, as far as God is concerned, nobody has a good excuse.

From God's perspective, the problem is not a lack of evidence. The Bible tells us that people know God perfectly well. Nonetheless, they don't treat them like God and refuse to worship him, trivializing themselves into silliness and confusion so that there is neither sense nor direction left in their lives.

They pretended to know it all, but are illiterate regarding life. They trade the glory of God, who holds the whole world in his hands, for ridiculous fairytales like evolution, claiming that goop turned into primitive organisms, which turned into monkeys, who turned into people.

So God said, in effect, "If that's what you want, that's what you get." It wasn't long before pigpens were living in a pigpen as it was, smeared with filth, filthy inside and out. And all this because we have traded the true God for gods we ourselves made up and worshiped instead of the God who made us—the God who blesses us.

The Bible then says that worse followed. Refusing to know God, people soon didn't know how to be human either—so now women don't know how to be women, and men don't know how to be men. Sexually confused, they abuse and defiled one another, women with women, men with men—all lust, no love. It's easy enough to see how they're paying for it—emptied of God and love, godless and loveless wretches.

Still quoting the Bible...

Since they didn't bother to acknowledge God, God quit bothering them and let them run loose. And then all hell broke loose: rampant evil, grabbing and grasping, vicious backstabbing. They made life hell on earth with their envy, wanton killing, bickering, and cheating. Look at them: mean-spirited, venomous, fork-tongued God-bashers. Bullies, swaggerers, insufferable windbags! They keep inventing new ways of wrecking lives—stupid, slimy, cruel, cold-blooded. And it's not as if they don't know better. They know perfectly well they're spitting in God's face. And they don't care—worse, they hand out prizes to those who do the worst things best!

This is the way God sees it. So, the reasons some people are atheists is not a lack of evidence. According to God, it's other than that. They know there is a just and righteous God, and consequently, deep down in their hearts, they have an expectation of judgment—a judgment they are desperately trying to escape.

The second chapter of Romans says that even outsiders who have never heard of God's law follow it more or less by instinct, confirming its truths by their obedience. They show that God's law is not something alien, imposed on us from without, but woven into the very fabric of our creation. There is something deep within us that echoes God's yes and no, right and wrong. Our response to God's yes and no will become public knowledge on the day God makes his final decision about every man and woman.

So, it is exactly as the apostle Paul said: The light came into the world and men hated the light and they loved the darkness because their deeds are evil and they want to cover them over—dismiss them as not really being wrong at all. So, in order to find solace they turn to the inventions of their own making rather than the Creator, to find some kind of comfort in whatever they can. Whether it be atheism, Darwinian evolution, or what have you.

CHAPTER 2

A Pathognomonic Message

Okay then. Let's assume that there really is a God and it is He that wrote the Bible.

What is it that He wanted to say to us?

Well, from the very first chapter God makes it clear that His original intention was for us to forever experience the pleasure of living in and caring for a lush, luxurious paradise, with everything in its place, all processes operating faultlessly, and each animal guided by instincts suited to its makeup and environment. Mankind had a personal, face-to-face relationship with God, and all that God made was answering to the plan His eternal wisdom had conceived—that is, until mankind said, “No!”

Not only the Bible's first chapter, but the last chapter also affirms that God's original plan was for mankind to enjoy a perfect friendship with God as His steward over the earth, ruling over a perfectly formed world. Just as the Genesis 1 speaks of our supposing to be masters over all life, the fish of the sea, the birds in the sky, wild animals, small animals and all the livestock; Revelation 22 also refers to God's people reigning “forever and ever.”

So the good news is that God's plan has not changed. At a future date that He has already chosen God is going to replace this corrupted world with a “new heaven and a new earth” free of the current turmoil—a world where people will no longer be separated from God.

But, just as God gave Adam and Eve a choice, He does the same with us. In Genesis 2:16-17 we read, “And Jehovah God commanded the man, saying, ‘Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat: but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, you will not eat of it: for in the day that you eat thereof you will surely die.’” Thus God introduced “free will,” a precept still at work in our experience with respect to accepting or rejecting His authority and right to rule.

You see, in the above Scripture the Lord clarified all the good that He provided for mankind, and having done so, He called on Adam and Eve to conduct themselves in accordance with His directions, warning them of the dire consequences that would result should they chose to go their own way.

It’s just not all that complicated, folks. God wants us to know that life is all about making choices. And the most important choice is whether or not we are going to trust God. It’s no different with us that it was with the original man and the original woman.

In the second chapter of Genesis, in verses 9 and 17, we discover that We are never given a reason for the one prohibition God placed upon Adam (see Genesis 2:9 and 17). Nonetheless, it was clear that death was to be the punishment of disobedience. It’s likely that before eating of the fruit from the forbidden tree, the couple was innocent, with no objective moral awareness, and that a positive command like this was not only the simplest and easiest, but the only trial to which Adam and Eve’s fidelity could be exposed.

It was a test of obedience by which our first parents were to be tried, whether they would be good or bad, obey God or break his commands. And we face the same test. It’s like, for the time being, during the time we are here on the earth, we are serving a period of probation as enemies of God. But, when we die, the probation period is over. Thus, what we choose now will determine our eternal destiny.

That's right. It’s not all that complicated. Through the Bible God informs us that life, in large part, is all about making choices, and the most important choice we have to make is whether or not we will trust God. You see, He's telling us that: “You don't make it people. You come miserably, woefully short of the standard for my kingdom. If you want to be with Me you have to be perfect because I'm not going to put up with the kind of mess you all have down there on

earth. But unfortunately, you are NOT perfect and there is nothing you can do about it. You deserve to be separated from me for all eternity. But, that was not my original plan and it is not my ultimate desire, so here is what I'm going to do. I'm going to solve your sin problem for you so that you can still be with me in paradise. But, since you can't do it on your own, you're going to have to accept my help. You're not going to get in it on whatever terms *you* want to offer because, like I said, they are not acceptable. There's another way...to realize that you can't make it. You are going to have to accept what *I'm* offering. That's the only way.

Your theology is inadequate. Your religion is inadequate and your approach to life is inadequate. You need someone to wash away your sin, purify you, give you a new nature fit for my kingdom. That somebody is my Son, Jesus Christ.

It's a pathognomonic message. We've got a disease and there is only one cure. Until and unless we take the antidote, we are quarantined, separated from God because He will have nothing to do with it. If we refuse the cure, we will be separated from God forever.

Eternal punishment is not so much an arbitrary law as it is the result of necessarily following in the very nature of things. The punishment of sin is sin, and the reward of holiness is holiness. God can lay no worse punishment on ungodly men than to give them up to themselves. If you want to be separated from God, who is love, light and good, then so be it. That means spending eternity where there is no love, light or good, which only leaves darkness, suffering and pain.

The solemn lesson derived from this revelation is to be converted now during this short "probation" period, or else remain unconverted forever.

We see this same pattern again in the 24th chapter of Joshua, where God recounts the many mighty and gracious acts he performed on behalf of the Israelites, proving his gracious nature and His faithfulness in keeping his promises. He then calls on Israel, through his servant Joshua, to commit themselves, of their own free wills, to be faithful and obedient to Him. As Joshua puts it, "... choose today whom you will serve... but as for me and my family, we will serve the LORD."

And finally, this theme is most plainly articulated in the 30th chapter of Deuteronomy, versus 15 through 19, where God says, “Now listen! Today I am giving you a choice between prosperity and disaster...life and death...blessings and curses. I call on heaven and earth to witness the choice you make. Oh, that you would choose life; that you and your descendents might live!”

So it's clear that God wants us to enjoy all of the many blessing He has provided for us. But, the alternatives of a good and happy, or a disobedient and miserable life are ultimately ours to choose.

Rather than trust God, Adam and Eve chose to believe the devil, and that decision set all of creation on the destructive course that has led to the conditions in which we find ourselves today.

(The devil never comes to us openly—in his true form. It's always in some form that we would consider to be ridiculous to think that it is the devil.)

Will we be like Adam? Will we trust the lies of the devil, in whatever form he disguises himself today, over the truth of scripture, or will we believe God?

The Bible ends in the same way it begins, making it clear that God want us to live in an uninterrupted continuance of a life characterized by the fullness of joy and perpetual vitality, in a paradise of God free from every taint, enjoying a personal, face-to-face relationship, and reigning forever and ever.

So, why would we reject it?

In that I am convinced following God leads to blessings while going our own way ultimately results in curses, I've thought long and hard about why it's so difficult to choose God's way over our own. It seems to me that there are basically five reasons:

1. Pride
2. Impatience
3. Laziness
4. Greed

5. Distrust

Let's take a closer look at each of these, one at a time, beginning with pride.

The first impediment to a happy, satisfying life is our thinking we know better than God, which is the ultimate sin of pride. We make the mistake of believing we *deserve* the things we desire. We like to have our own way. We simply want what we want.

This includes people that know they're doing wrong, but do it anyway. They have an "I can do whatever I want" attitude. They've got an outlook that says "Don't tell me what to do and what not to do." They always have to have their own way and it comes out in belligerent, self-willed, defiant, rebellious behavior.

Following pride is impatience. Not only do we want what we want, but we want it now. God knows the best time to give us the things that we'd like to have, but we don't want to wait.

After impatience, there is laziness. Not only do we want what we want, and want it now, but we don't want to have to work too hard for it. God is interested in our growth. One of His desires is to strengthen us. But, we'd rather get what we want the easy way. We will take shortcuts; even if it requires us to do what we know is not best.

And then you have greed. Not only do we want what we want, want it now, and don't want to have to work too hard for it, but whatever we get is never enough. God will give us the right amount of things, in portions that are best for our ultimate good. But, we are the ultimate pleasure seekers. We will eat food until it makes us sick, miserable or overweight. We will drink alcohol until it poisons our blood or destroys our internal organs. We will take drugs until we overdose. We will smoke until it gives us cancer or emphysema, and we could go on, and on, and on.

Finally, the ultimate reason we choose our way over God's is that we don't *really* trust, believe, and have faith in Him. We're afraid that if we don't watch out for ourselves, we won't get what we want. We don't believe He's really there protecting us, and so we're afraid if we don't take care of ourselves, some type of

harm will come to us. We don't really believe that He is in complete control, orchestrating everything for our ultimate good. And that's too bad.