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REASON & REVELATION
A Monthly Journal of Christian Evidences
JUNE 2021 • VOL. 41 • NO. 6

3 THINGS TO LEARN FROM ATHEISTS

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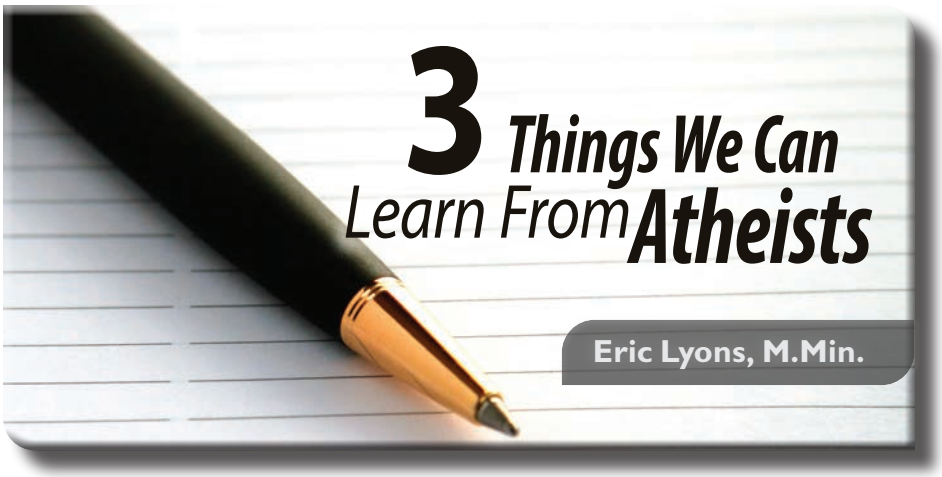

3 Things We Can Learn From Atheists

Eric Lyons, M.Min.

GOD'S people have always been in the learning business. While "fools despise wisdom and instruction" (Proverbs 1:7), "the heart of the prudent acquires knowledge, and the ear of the wise seeks knowledge" (Proverbs 18:15). Christians are primarily interested in learning from God, His Word (Psalm 119), and from those who imitate Christ (1 Corinthians 11:1). However, we can also learn some valuable lessons from unbelievers,[1] including those who contend an all-powerful, all-knowing Creator God does not exist.

#1—ATHEISTS RIGHTLY POINT OUT HOW UNLOVING AND COWARDLY CHRISTIANS ARE WHO DO NOT EVANGELIZE

PENN Jillette is a famous comedian, actor, and entertainer, as well as a very outspoken atheist. In 2010, he made a five-minute personal video about a kind gentleman who handed him a Bible after one of his shows. Jillette said: "I believe he knew that I was an atheist. But he was not defensive and he looked me right in the eyes.... He was really kind, and nice, and sane... and talked to me and then gave me this Bible."[2]

Although many (perhaps most) atheists do not want to be approached with the Gospel, Jillette went on to say:

> I don't respect people who don't proselytize. I don't respect that at all. If you believe that there is a Heaven and a Hell, and people could be going to Hell or not getting eternal life or whatever, and you think it's not really worth telling them this because it would make it socially awkward... how much do you have to hate somebody to not proselytize? How much do you have to hate somebody to believe that everlasting life is possible and not tell them that?[3]

The fact is, Jillette was simply using logic in drawing this conclusion: If Christians believe what they say they believe about eternal life and eternal death (Matthew 25:46), then they will teach the Gospel to others in a kind, loving, Christ-like manner.[4]

#2—ATHEISTS CORRECTLY CALL OUT THE HYPOCRISY OF PRETEND CHRISTIANITY, BUT THEY ILLOGICALLY CONCLUDE THAT PRETEND CHRISTIANITY JUSTIFIES A REJECTION OF THE REAL THING

ONE atheist was reported to have said a few years ago: "We hear an awful lot from conservatives in the Bible Belt and on the TV about how we all should be living. Certainly a culture that teaches the conservative religious values of the Christian right must have clean living written all over it. And lots of ripe fruit from their morally superior lives abounding. It doesn't. Far from it. People that talk the loudest may be the ones walking the slowest. Joining its history of Biblically correct bigotry and discrimination, it is an area with the highest divorce, murder, STD/HIV/AIDS, teen pregnancy," etc.[5] The fact is, many people who call themselves Christians do not walk in the light of the Lord, but sadly stroll in the devil's darkness.

Consider one example. In 2014, 86% of Alabamians claimed to be Christians.[6] In Montgomery, the state's capital city of about 200,000 people,[7] the proverbial phrase "you'll find a church on every corner" rightly portrays this city of over 250 churches.[8] Sadly, in 2015, this "Christian city" was statistically crowned "the most sexually diseased city in the nation."[9]

Indeed, atheists should call out such blatant hypocrisy on the part of many "Christians." In fact, they are doing what Christian parents, preachers, and Bible teachers **should be** doing continually—warning those who claim to be Christians not to live in sin, including any kind of sexual sin.[10] No doubt, hypocrisy runs wild in "Christian America" today[11] in part because (a) so many churches seem more interested in social gatherings and entertainment than preaching on sin and salvation,[12] and (b) most churches appear too politically correct to address specific sinful situations in their midst, which only exacerbates the problems in churches across the country (cf. 1 Corinthians 5:1-13).

Still, for all the disheartening hypocrisy among the religious today, just as a counterfeit $100 bill does not prove that genuine $100 bills do not exist, counterfeit Christianity is not a logical reason to reject authentic Christianity. Neither Cain's unacceptable religious sacrifice nor his murder of Abel

made true worship and service to God illogical. What's more, neither Judas's thievery nor his betrayal of Jesus made the religion of Jesus invalid. God condemns hypocrisy (Matthew 5:20), but He gives everyone sufficient evidence to know the Truth and obey it (John 8:32)—to follow the evidence where it leads and to become real, genuine Christians, like Peter and Paul, Philip and Phoebe, and Aquila and Priscilla.

#3—ATHEISTS CORRECTLY POINT OUT THE ILLOGICAL, BLIND FAITH OF MANY "CHRISTIANS," BUT THEY FAIL TO ACKNOWLEDGE THAT ATHEISM (NOT CHRISTIANITY) IS BASED UPON "BLIND FAITH"

In his book *The End of Faith*, atheist Sam Harris addressed beliefs and the importance of evidence and reason. He was especially critical of Christians, saying:

> Tell a devout Christian that his wife is cheating on him, or that frozen yogurt can make a man invisible, and he is likely to require as much evidence as anyone else, and to be persuaded only to the extent that you give it. Tell him that the book he keeps by his bed was written by an invisible deity who will punish him with fire for eternity if he fails to accept its every incredible claim about the universe, and he seems to require no evidence whatsoever.[13]

Sadly, Harris's words seem to accurately describe many (perhaps most) who profess to be Christians. Rather than being real truth seekers and evidence followers, many are "Christians" because of mere feelings, emotions, preferences, and traditions. Atheists rightly call out such illogical, evidence-less faith. "That's how I was raised," or "I just feel it in my heart" are not real reasons to be a Christian (or anything else for that matter). To claim to be a Christian for irrational, mere feel-good reasons is unreasonable, unbiblical, and unChristlike. The fact is, God has always expected man to be reasonable, just as the prophets, the apostles, and Jesus were reasonable (1 Samuel 12:7; John 5:31-47; 10:37-38; Acts 26:22-25; 2 Peter 1:16). [For proof that reason and divine revelation go hand-in-hand, be sure to read *Is Christianity Logical?* available from Apologetics Press.[14]]

While atheists correctly point out the illogical, blind faith of many Christians, the truth is, the evidence actually **disproves** atheism and supports **genuine Christianity**.[15] If, as the First Law of Thermodynamics indicates, in nature, matter and energy are neither created nor destroyed, then a Universe could not create itself from nothing.[16] Thus, if naturalistic atheism is true (and at one time absolutely nothing existed),[17] then there should be absolutely nothing today. Yet, here we are—an entire Universe, which is perhaps the greatest evidence for the existence of God. Indeed, matter demands a Maker. The existence of intricate, self-replicating life demands an original life Giver.[18] Complex, functional design in nature demands a Designer, not an accidental explosion of a tiny ball of matter.[19] Intelligence in the material realm demands an intelligent Creator (i.e., intelligence does not arise from dust, dirt, rocks, water, or mud, much less from "nothing"). The Bible's supernatural attributes demand a supernatural Author.[20] And the historical, miracle-working, resurrected-from-the-dead Jesus Christ demands a supernatural explanation.[21]

CONCLUSION

It can be helpful for atheists to point out any flaws in those who claim to be Christians. The truthful, logical criticisms of others combined with humble hearts can lead to necessary repentance and renewed dedication to our Creator, Savior, and Judge (Luke 13:3,5; Acts 2:38; 17:30-31). Let's just be sure not to "throw the baby out with the bathwater." While faithful Christians are still imperfect (1 John 1:5-10; 5:13), and while phony, hypocritical Christians have always been with us, such flaws are in no way a logical argument against the Flawless One (1 Peter 2:21-24), His Word, and the need to be faithful members of His Church.[22] In fact, the evidence will lead any honest, good-hearted, seeking soul to this conclusion (Proverbs 8:17; Luke 8:4-15).

ENDNOTES

1 Recall how Jesus told the parable of the unjust steward in hopes of His hearers learning an important lesson (Luke 16:1-8)—seemingly that if an unrighteous man is willing to take drastic measures to prepare for his physical future, how much more should the righteous be willing to do in preparation for eternity?

2 Penn Jillette (2010), "A Gift of a Bible," https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6md638smQd8.

3 Ibid.

4 After all, Jesus' main purpose was "to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10). "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners" (1 Timothy 1:15). Jesus sent His apostles out with this same commission (Mark 16:15-16), and the early Church "went everywhere preaching the word" (Acts 8:4). Evangelizing is simply the natural response to having Christ-like, *agape* love for mankind.

5 James Veverka as quoted in B.A. Robinson (2000), "U.S. Divorce Rates for Various Faith Groups, Age Groups, & Geographic Areas," http://www.religioustolerance.org/chr_dira.htm.

6 Kay Campbell (2015), "How Alabama's 'Religious Landscape' Has Changed since 2007," https://www.al.com/living/2015/05/us_religious_landscape.html.

7 "Montgomery, AL Population" (2021), World Population Review, https://worldpopulationreview.com/us-cities/montgomery-al-population.

8 According to www.churchfinder.com/churches/al/montgomery.

9 Kym Klass (2015), "Montgomery Rated Most Sexually Diseased City in Nation," July 27, https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/2015/07/27/

montgomery-rated-sexually-diseased-city-nation/30722091/.

[10] Consider the many warnings that Paul made to various first-century churches about sin, including repeated admonitions about refraining from all manner of sexual immorality: Romans 1:24-32; 1 Corinthians 5:1-7:9; Galatians 5:19-21; Ephesians 5:1-14; Colossians 3:1-11; 1 Thessalonians 4:1-8.

[11] The leading cause surely being the breakdown of the home, even among so many who claim to be Christians.

[12] This is not a criticism of Christian fellowship and social gatherings, which are extremely important to the life of the Church. However, the preaching of the saving-from-sin Gospel of Christ (in all its power—Romans 1:16) must not take a back seat to anything in the life of God's people.

[13] Sam Harris (2005), *The End of Faith* (New York: W.W. Norton), p. 19.

[14] https://store.apologeticspress.org/products/is-christianity-logical?_pos=1&_sid=a38615988&_ss=r.

[15] For a brief, 100-page survey of evidences for God, the Bible, Jesus, and true belief in Jesus, see Eric Lyons and Kyle Butt (2017), *Reasons to Believe* (Montgomery, AL: Apologetics Press), https://store.apologeticspress.org/collections/books/products/apbkkbel0003.

[16] For more information, see Jeff Miller (2013), *Science vs. Evolution* (Montgomery, AL: Apologetics Press), pp. 19-39, https://store.apologeticspress.org/collections/books/products/apbkjm001.

[17] Atheistic cosmologist Stephen Hawking stated on national television in 2011, "**Nothing** caused the Big Bang" ["Curiosity: Did God Create the Universe?" (2011), *Discovery Channel*, August 7, emp. added].

[18] See Jeff Miller, pp. 61-110.

[19] See Dave Miller, ed. (2017), *Does God Exist?* (Montgomery, AL: Apologetics Press), pp. 62-126, https://store.apologeticspress.org/collections/books/products/apbkdm007.

[20] See Kyle Butt (2007), *Behold! The Word of God* (Montgomery, AL: Apologetics Press), https://store.apologeticspress.org/collections/books/products/apbkkb0004.

[21] See Kyle Butt and Eric Lyons (2006), *Behold! The Lamb of God* (Montgomery, AL: Apologetics Press), https://store.apologeticspress.org/collections/books/products/apbkkbel03.

[22] See Dave Miller (2007), *What the Bible Says About the Church of Christ* (Montgomery, AL: Apologetics Press), https://store.apologeticspress.org/collections/books/products/apbkdm0018.

Concubines?

Dave Miller, Ph.D.

[**EDITOR'S NOTE**: The following 4 articles are taken from the newly released book *Hidden Meanings Buried in the Bible*.]

ENGLISH-SPEAKING peoples understand the term "concubine" to refer to an unmarried sexual partner—a "mistress." Standard English dictionaries bear out this common usage. For example, *Merriam-Webster* defines the word as "a woman with whom a man cohabits **without being married**: such as (a) one having a recognized social status in a household below that of a wife; (b) mistress." The *Cambridge Dictionary* has: "a woman who, in some societies, lives and has sex with a man she is **not married to**, and has a lower social rank than his wife or wives." Therefore, the term in current English usage stresses the fact that a concubine is **not married** to the man with whom she is sexually active. In view of this understanding of the term "concubine," one might mistakenly conclude that God endorsed such behavior in Bible history. After all, the Bible informs us that Solomon had 700 wives and 300 concubines (1 Kings 11:3).

In contrast, the Bible use of the term reflects a different meaning. A "concubine" in antiquity was, in fact, a wife. What distinguished her from other wives was the fact that she was of lower birth, sometimes even occupying a slave status. Bible scholars recognize this fact. For example, the *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* explains the term *pilegesh*: "A concubine was a true wife, though of secondary rank.... Thus, the concubine was not a kept mistress, and did not cohabit with a man unless married to him."[1] Professor of Oriental Languages, Biblical Archaeology and Dogmatics in Vienna, Johann Jahn, explains: "[A]lthough this connexion [*sic*] was in fact a *marriage*, and a *legitimate* one, it was not, nevertheless, celebrated and confirmed by the ceremonies [of the higher ranking wife]."[2] English classical scholar Francis Newman noted: "A concubine, in ancient times, was only a wife of *inferior rank*, and the union was just as permanent as with a *wife*."[3] M'Clintock and Strong state that "concubine" "denotes in the Bible not a paramour, but only a female conjugally united to a man in a relation inferior to that of the regular wife.... Concubinage therefore, in a scriptural sense, means the state of cohabiting lawfully with a wife of second rank."[4] Biblical scholar, linguist, and Christian apologist, John Haley, adds his voice to the same point: "Moreover, a 'concubine,' in those days, was not simply a kept mistress, as the word might now imply, but was a *wife of lower rank*, who was wedded with somewhat less than the ordinary formalities."[5]

In a country where social status and barriers are of minimal concern, it is difficult for us to grasp the magnitude of the chasm that existed between classes in ancient cultures, a chasm that stayed with a

person throughout life regardless of advancements along the way. Hence, even if a woman of lower social rank married a man of higher social rank, she could still be treated with disrespect as "second class"—though fully a wife.

A good example of the true nature of concubinage is seen in the outrageous and gruesome experience of the Levite during the Dark Ages of Jewish history in Judges 19. A resident of the Tribe of Ephraim, he married a woman from Bethlehem of Judah. She is identified as a "concubine." Without recounting the details of the chapter, it is noteworthy to observe that the Levite is identified as the "husband" of the concubine (vs. 3). Her father is identified as the Levite's "father-in-law" (vss. 4,7,9) and the Levite is his "son-in-law" (vs. 5).

In the case of Solomon, the meaning of "concubines" is suggested in the very text where they are mentioned:

> But King Solomon loved many **foreign women**, as well as the daughter of Pharaoh: women of the Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Sidonians, and Hittites—from the nations of whom the LORD had said to the children of Israel, "You shall not **intermarry** with them, nor they with you. Surely they will turn away your hearts after their gods." Solomon clung to these in love. And he had seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines; and **his wives** turned away his heart (1 Kings 11:1-3).

Observe three indicators in the text that aid in understanding the distinction between wives and concubines. First, we are told that Solomon loved many "foreign women"—and the countries of origin for these women are noted. Solomon is not specifically condemned for **loving** the women—but for **marrying** them. Second, the reason for the prohibition is that such foreign women would make him receptive to their false gods. Sure enough, the text states that "his **wives** turned away his heart." But those who are specifically mentioned as the foreign women/wives are the 700 wives and 300 concubines. Why mention the concubines **at all** if they were not participants in the religious subversion of Solomon **by his wives**?

Third, observe the grammar of verse 3. In the NKJV, a comma occurs both before and after the term "princesses." The word "princesses" is describing the word "wives" in contrast with the "concubines"—who were **not** princesses. In other words, the distinction being made is not between wives vs. non-wives. The distinction being drawn is between wives of noble birth vs. wives of low birth. Several English translations help to clarify this factor:

> CSB/ESV/GNV/HCSB/MEV: "He had seven hundred wives **who were princesses** and three hundred who were concubines."
>
> CEB: "He had seven hundred **royal wives** and three hundred **secondary wives**."
>
> CJB: "He had 700 wives, **all princesses**, and 300 concubines."
>
> CEV: "Seven hundred of his wives were **daughters of kings**, but he **also married** three hundred other women."
>
> DRA: "And he had seven hundred wives **as queens**, and three hundred concubines."
>
> EHV: "He had seven hundred wives who held **the rank of princess** and three hundred concubines."
>
> GW/NOG: "He had 700 wives **who were princesses** and 300 **wives** who were concubines."
>
> ICB/NCV: "He had 700 wives who were from **royal families**. He also had 300 **slave women** who gave birth to his children."
>
> LEB: "He had seven hundred **princesses** and three hundred concubines."
>
> NET: "He had 700 **royal wives** and 300 concubines."
>
> NIV/NLT: "He had seven hundred wives of **royal birth** and three hundred concubines."
>
> NLV: "He had 700 wives, **kings' daughters**, and 300 women **who acted as his wives**."
>
> NRSV: "**Among his wives** were seven hundred **princesses** and three hundred concubines."

(cont. on p. 68)

Reason & Revelation is published monthly by Apologetics Press, Inc. Periodicals postage paid at Montgomery, AL. **Postmaster**: Send address changes to **Reason & Revelation**, 230 Landmark Dr., Montgomery, AL 36117; **ISSN**:[1542-0922] **USPS**# 023415.

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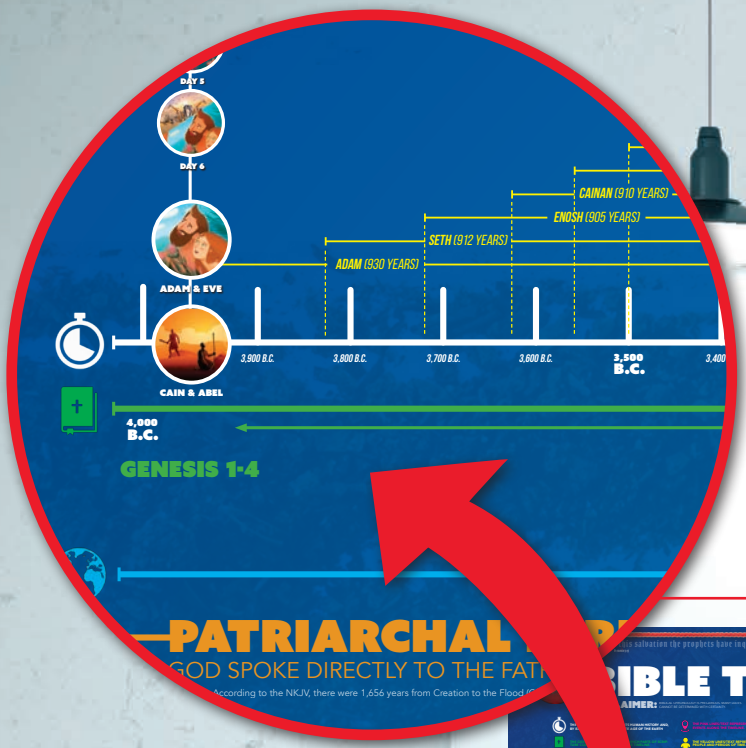

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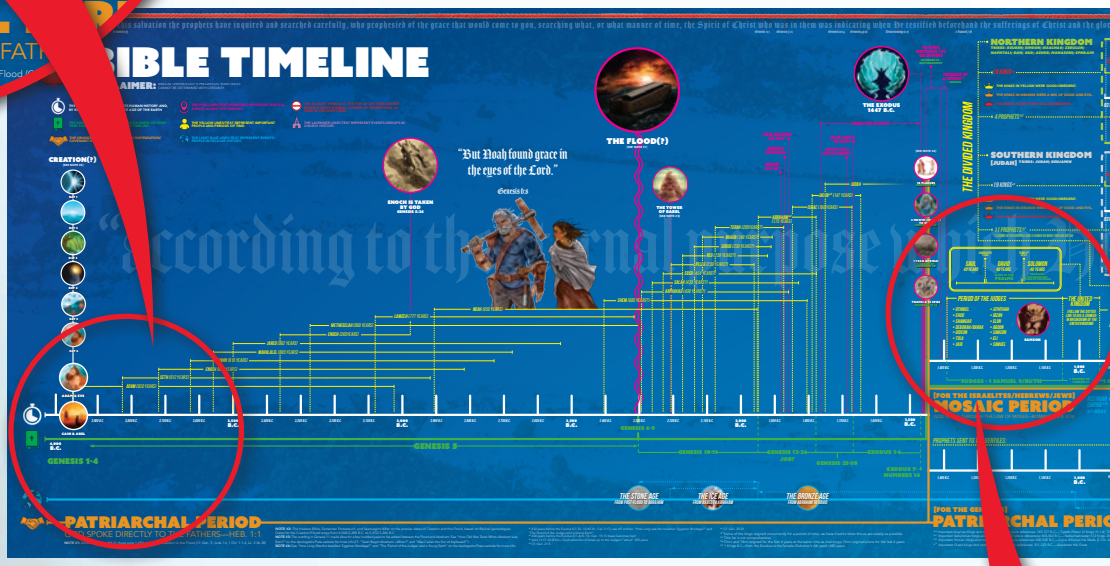

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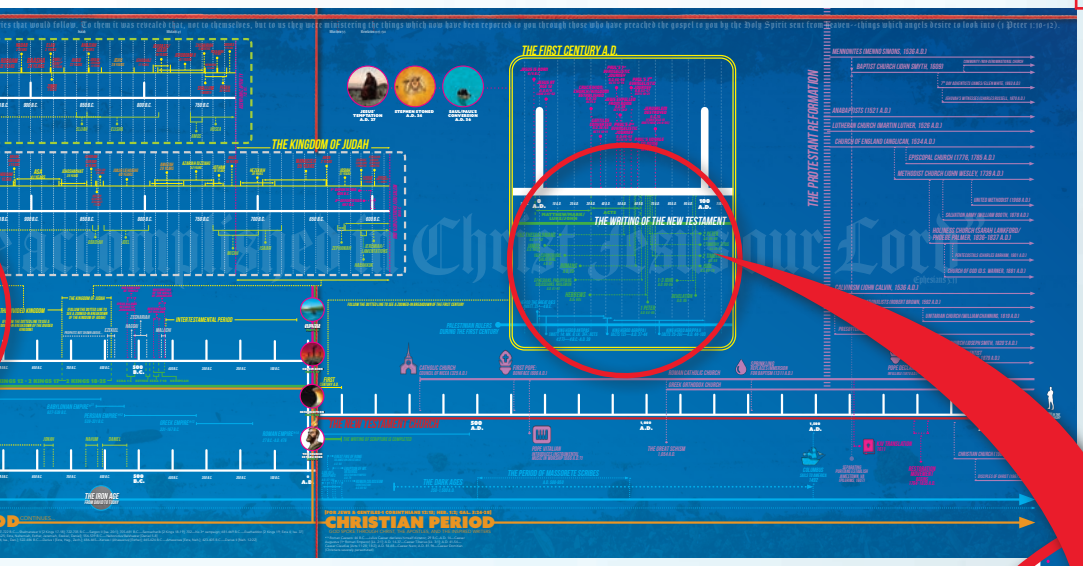

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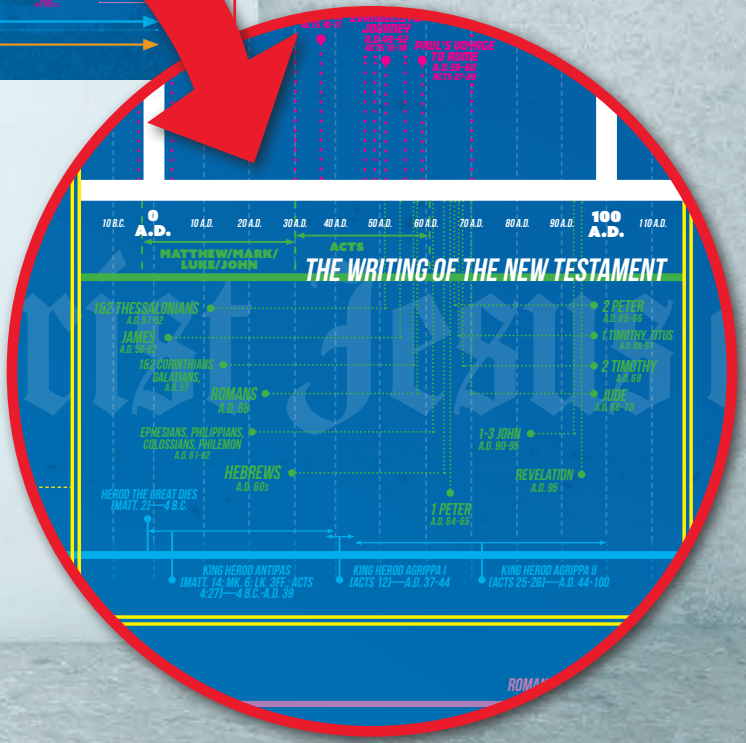

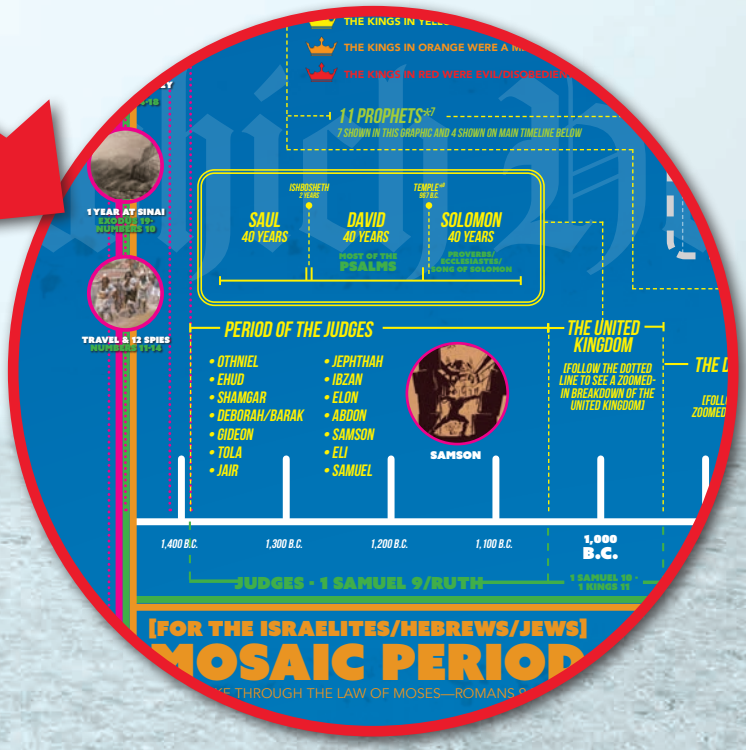

> WYC: "And wives **as queens** were seven hundred to him, and three hundred secondary wives."

Additional verses where "queens" and "concubines" are mentioned together, further implying the difference being simply one of **social** status, not **marital** status, include Song of Solomon 6:8-9 and Daniel 5:2-3,23.

Keep in mind that Hebrew had no technical term for "wife." The normal word for "woman" (*ishah*) did "double duty" so that only context can determine whether "woman" or "wife" is being noted. Observe that it makes perfect sense to understand 1 Kings 11:3 as referring to **all** of Solomon's foreign women. In fact, the word translated "women" in verse 1 is the plural form of "woman" (*nishah*), forms of which also occur in verses 3, 4, and 8. The word "concubines" is clearly intended to be included among the "foreign wives" who subverted Solomon's heart.

These facts are further substantiated by an incident in the life of King David. When his son Absalom mounted a coup to dethrone his father, he complied with the advice of his counsellor Ahithophel to publicly defile David's 10 concubines (2 Samuel 16:21-22). When David succeeded in foiling his son's coup and returned to Jerusalem, the Bible says:

> Now David came to his house at Jerusalem. And the king took the ten women, his concubines whom he had left to keep the house, and put them in seclusion and supported them, but did not go in to them. So they were shut up to the day of their death, **living in widowhood** (2 Samuel 20:3).

By definition, a "widow" is someone whose **husband** is deceased.[6] Though the concubines were still alive, David was treating them as if their **husband** (himself) was dead.

Of course, the teaching of the New Testament, and the accurate application of Christianity to society, results in the elimination of polygamy and concubinage, as well as all other objectionable social institutions that conflict with the character of Deity. Indeed, "Christianity restores the sacred institution of marriage to its original character, and concubinage is ranked with fornication and adultery."[7] Nevertheless, awareness of the biblical meaning assigned to the word "concubine" enables the English reader to understand that Bible characters who possessed concubines were not guilty of taking "mistresses," but were, in fact, married to them—and not merely engaging in extra-marital intimate relations.[8] In any case, the Bible does not sanction the practice of unmarried sexual partners.

ENDNOTES

1 Victor Hamilton (1980), "*pilegesh*," *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, ed. R. Laird Harris, Gleason Archer Jr., and Bruce Waltke (Chicago, IL: Moody Press), 2:724.

2 Johann Jahn (1832), *Biblical Archaeology* (New York: J. Leavitt), p. 165, italics and brackets in orig.

3 Francis Newman (1853), *A History of the Hebrew Monarchy* (London: John Chapman), p. 102, italics in orig.

4 John M'Clintock and James Strong (1968 reprint), *Cyclopaedia of Biblical, Theological, and Ecclesiastical Literature* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker), 2:459-460.

5 John Haley (1977 reprint), *Alleged Discrepancies of the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker), p. 295, italics in orig.

6 L. Koehler, W. Baumgartner, M.E.J. Richardson, & J.J. Stamm (1994-2000), *The Hebrew and Aramaic lexicon of the Old Testament* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, electronic ed.), p. 58; Francis Brown, S.R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs (1906), *The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2000 reprint), p. 48.

7 M'Clintock and Strong, p. 460.

8 Another example is seen regarding Keturah who is said to be Abraham's "wife" (Genesis 25:1) as well as his "concubine" (1 Chronicles 1:32) which, regardless of her rank, was nevertheless "a regular marriage"— H.C. Leupold (1950), *Exposition of Genesis* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker), p. 689.

Speaking Schedules

Kyle Butt		
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June 16	Scottsboro, AL	(256) 574-2489
June 26-27	Emerald Beach, FL	(850) 235-7992
Eric Lyons		
June 2	Elijay, GA	(706) 635-2950
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June 23	Birmingham, AL	(205) 988-5808
June 27-30	Memphis, TN	(901) 372-4449
Dave Miller		
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June 6	Montgomery, AL	(334) 264-2985
June 30	Birmingham, AL	(205) 440-3206
Jeff Miller		
May 30-June 5	Branson, Mo	(417) 334-3866
June 2	Birmingham, AL	(205) 988-5808
June 6-11	Oakman, AL	(205) 686-9079
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June 25-26	Sparta, MO	(417) 278-3977
June 30	Huntsville, AL	(256) 883-2960

Is God the Cause of Evil in the World?

Dave Miller, Ph.D.

BASED upon the rendering of Isaiah 45:7 in the KJV, ASV, and other translations,[1] skeptics have maintained that God is the author of evil. The verse reads: "I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and **create evil**: I the LORD do all these things." But is God the cause of evil in the world?

In order to answer that question, one must first define terms and, more specifically, ascertain the meaning behind the original word from which an English translation is taken. After all, the current state of English is such that we use the word "evil" to refer to spiritual, moral evil, i.e., sin or wickedness. But is that the meaning of the Hebrew word that lies behind the word "evil" in this verse?

As a matter of fact, the Hebrew word translated "evil" (*rah*) has various shades of meaning. It often has the meaning of distress, misery, injury, calamity, and adversity.[2] For example, consider its use in Amos 6:3—"Woe to you who put far off the day of **doom**" (NKJV). The NASB has "the day of **calamity**." Jeremiah 42:6 reads in the ESV: "Whether it is good or **bad**, we will obey the voice of the Lord our God." The NKJV has: "Whether it is pleasing or **displeasing**, we will obey the voice of the LORD our God." Isaiah 31:2 renders the word "disaster" in the NKJV: "Yet He also is wise and will bring **disaster**." In Micah 1:12 "good" is contrasted with "disaster."

Ahab complained to Jehoshaphat that the prophet Micaiah never prophesied "good" concerning him, but only "evil" (1 Kings 22:8,18). He was referring to the misfortune that came upon himself.[3] In the great admonition that Moses issued to the younger generation near the end of his life, he urged: "See, I have set before you today life and good, death and **evil**" (NKJV). The NASB rightly renders the verse: "See, I have set before you today life and prosperity, and death and adversity" (Deuteronomy 30:15). "Good" and "evil" here refer, not to sin or moral evil, but to "prosperity" vs. "**adversity**." The previous generation grumbled against Moses in the desert: "And why have you made us come up out of Egypt, to bring us to this **evil** place?" (Numbers 20:5). They did not mean that the desert was immoral or sinful. They meant it was a "wretched place" (NASB/NRSV), a "terrible place" (CJB/ISV/NIV), a "horrible place" (EHV).

The NKJV renders Job 31:29 as: "If I have rejoiced at the destruction of him who hated me, or lifted myself up when **evil** found him." A clearer rendering is: "If I have rejoiced at my enemy's misfortune or gloated over the **trouble** that came to him" (NIV). What did Jacob mean when he explained to Pharaoh "few and **evil** have the days of the years of my life been" (Genesis 47:9)? He used the word to mean "poor, not beneficial."[4] The CJB renders it: "they have been few and **difficult**." The NCV has: "short and **filled with trouble**." Many additional verses manifest similar meanings for *rah* that have nothing to do with sin, moral evil, or wickedness.

One final observation regarding Isaiah 45:7. Based on the way Hebrew parallelism functions, the verse itself offers assistance in defining its use of the word "evil." It is placed in antithesis to the word "peace." The opposite of "peace" is not moral evil or wickedness—but physical disturbance, trouble, and adversity. The same is true in verse 11:

> "Therefore **evil** shall come upon you;
> You shall not know from where it arises.
> And **trouble** shall fall upon you;
> You will not be able to put it off.
> And **desolation** shall come upon you suddenly,
> Which you shall not know."

Hebrew parallelism in this verse demonstrates that "evil" = "trouble" = "desolation."

Returning to verse 7, the NKJV reflects the parallelism nicely:

> "I form the light and create darkness,
> I make peace and create **calamity**;
> I, the LORD, do all these things."

God is not the author of evil. Intrinsic evil, by definition, refers to violations of God's will, i.e., sin (1 John 3:4). Sin is committed when human beings[5] exercise their free will and choose to transgress God's laws, thus committing evil. Humans are the source of evil in the world—not God.[6]

ENDNOTES

1. In addition to the KJV and ASV, these translations also render the Hebrew term "evil": BRG, DARBY, DRA, GNV, JUB, LEB, WYC, and YLT.
2. Francis Brown, S.R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs (1906), *The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2000 reprint), p. 948.
3. L. Koehler, W. Baumgartner, M.E.J. Richardson, & J.J. Stamm (1994-2000), *The Hebrew and Aramaic lexicon of the Old Testament* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, electronic ed.), p. 1252.
4. Ibid., p. 1250.
5. Satan and other angelic beings also chose to violate God's will (e.g., John 8:44).
6. God's allowance of suffering to exist in the world is likewise not evil. See Dave Miller (2015), *Why People Suffer* (Montgomery, AL: Apologetics Press); Dave Miller and Kyle Butt (2009), "The Problem of Human Suffering," Apologetics Press, https://apologeticspress.org/APContent.aspx?category=12&article=890&topic=330.

Was Jesus' Body "Broken"—Or Not?

Dave Miller, Ph.D.

ONE of the fascinating incidents that occurred while Jesus hung on the cross is reported by John:

> Therefore, because it was the Preparation Day, that the bodies should not remain on the cross on the Sabbath (for that Sabbath was a high day), the Jews asked Pilate that their legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away. Then the soldiers came and broke the legs of the first and of the other who was crucified with Him. But when they came to Jesus and saw that He was already dead, **they did not break His legs**.... For these things were done that the Scripture should be fulfilled, "**Not one of His bones shall be broken**" (John 19:31-36).

To account for the Roman soldiers excluding Jesus from the customary breaking of the leg bones of crucifixion victims,[1] John quotes the words of David in Psalm 34:19-20—"Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the LORD delivers him out of them all. He guards all his bones; not one of them is broken."

Despite this plain declaration regarding the bones of Jesus, in his directives to the Corinthians regarding the Lord's Supper, Paul explained:

> For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you: that the Lord Jesus on the same night in which He was betrayed took bread; and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, "Take, eat; this is My body which is **broken** for you; do this in remembrance of Me" (1 Corinthians 11:23-24).

Notice the tension, if not seemingly outright contradiction, that is created by the word "broken" when juxtaposed with John's quotation of Psalm 34:20 in John 19:36. How are these disparate remarks to be reconciled?

This alleged contradiction is easily dispelled by taking into consideration the transmission of the New Testament text. "Textual criticism" is the science of ascertaining the original wording of a text.[2] Since we do not have the original autographs that came from the hands of the inspired writers, we must examine the copies that have survived and "sort out" the differences between them. This pursuit has been in progress for centuries and has, in fact, accomplished its purpose. Abundant evidence exists by which one can know that the books of the Bible have been transmitted accurately through the centuries. We can be confident that the Bible has been adequately preserved from error and continues to serve the purpose God intends for it to serve.

It so happens that the term "broken" in 1 Corinthians 11:24 is a "textual variant"—an instance where manuscripts differ with each other. Some English translations include the word, while others do not. For example, those that keep "broken" include the KJV, NKJV, GNV, MEV, NLV, NMB, OJB, WEB, and YLT. Those that omit the word "broken" constitute the vast majority of English translations, including the ASV, ESV, NASB, RSV, NRSV, NIV, and many others. Why the difference?

Without going into technical detail, here are several observations that come from the manuscript evidence. First, while the external evidence for the inclusion of "broken" is varied and diverse, it is not as ancient as the evidence for omitting "broken." Second, generally speaking, when textual critics pore over manuscripts and their textual variants, they have discovered that the shorter reading is typically the original. The exclusion of "broken" is the shorter reading. Third, they have observed that the more difficult reading (i.e., difficult for the scribe to understand or reconcile) is generally the original. In this case, insertion of the word "broken" could have been due to the scribe's tendency to want to clarify, explain, or make sense of in what way Jesus' body was "for you."

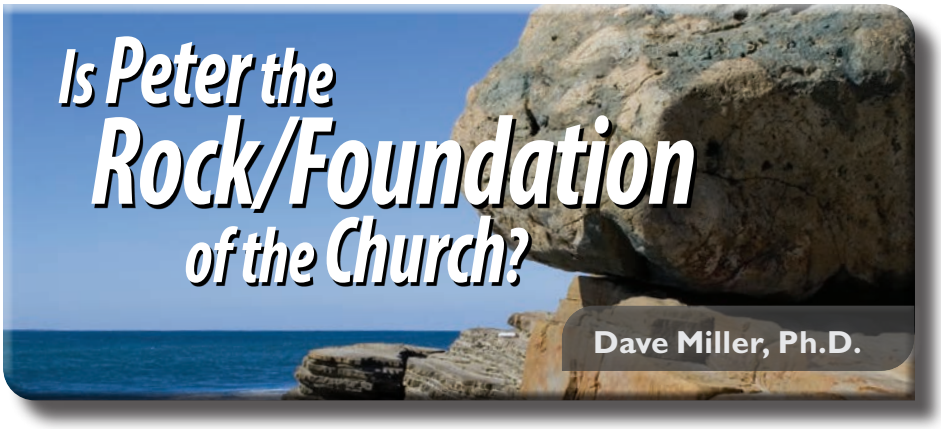
Fourth, verbal dissidence exists between the words "for you" and "broke" earlier in the same verse, suggesting that a copyist was unduly influenced by the presence of the earlier form of the word for "broken." We know that not one of Jesus' bones was broken on the cross—as forthrightly affirmed by John's inspired commentary on the actions of the Roman soldiers at the cross. If "broken" was originally included in Paul's letter, one must resort to making sense of the term. Did Paul intend to refer to the breaking or tearing of Jesus' skin? Or was he merely speaking metaphorically, using the concept of "broken" in the sense that Jesus was a broken man—having experienced extensive physical and mental torture? These possibilities—which arguably settle the issue of an alleged discrepancy—nevertheless seem unlikely.

Of course, nothing doctrinally significant is at stake with this textual variant—which is most certainly the case with the overwhelming majority of variants. But the external and internal manuscript evidence leans more to the conclusion that Paul originally wrote: "This is my body, which is for you." No contradiction exists between the words of John and the words of Paul.

ENDNOTES

1 For more on this custom, see Dave Miller (2020), *The Bible is From God: A Sampling of Proofs* (Montgomery, AL: Apologetics Press), pp. 61ff.

2 See Bruce Metzger (1968), *The Text of the New Testament* (New York: Oxford University Press).



Is Peter the Rock/Foundation of the Church?

Dave Miller, Ph.D.

SOME have suggested that Jesus established the Catholic notion of the papacy and that He declared that Peter would be the first pope, since He referred to Peter as the "rock." Read carefully the context:

> When Jesus came into the region of Caesarea Philippi, He asked His disciples, saying, "Who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?" So they said, "Some say John the Baptist, some Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets." He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" Simon Peter answered and said, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." Jesus answered and said to him, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven. And I also say to you that you are Peter, and **on this rock I will build My church**, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. And I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven" (Matthew 16:13-20).

Did Jesus intend to convey the idea that the church is built on Peter or that Peter was the **head** of the church?

The word for "Peter" in Greek is *petros* (masculine gender) and means a "stone."[1] In contrast, the word for "rock" is *petra* (feminine gender) and refers to "**bedrock or massive rock formations**, ***rock*** as distinguished from stones."[2] It is true that, assuming Jesus spoke Aramaic, the Aramaic word for both Peter and rock (*kepha*) are the same.[3] However, God did not inspire the writers of the New Testament to write His Word in Aramaic.[4] Rather, He inspired them to write in Greek—and the Greek text makes a clear distinction between *petra* and *petros*. Interestingly, so does the Latin Vulgate. Anticipating confusion, the Holy Spirit could have easily caused the same word to be used twice, or He could have had Matthew simply state that the Church would be built "on you."

Contextually, the "rock" upon which Jesus built His Church was the **truth** that Peter had just articulated: "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Matthew 16:16). This truth is, indeed, the great ledge-rock foundation of the Church. Both Christ's headship over the Church and His undergirding foundation are stated emphatically in the New Testament:

> And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be **head over all things to the church**, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all (Ephesians 1:22-23).

> And He is **the head** of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that **in all things** He may have the preeminence (Colossians 1:18).

> For **no other foundation** can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 3:11; cf. Ephesians 2:20).

In fact, Peter Himself forthrightly declared Jesus to be the "living stone" (*lithos*—1 Peter 2:4). He then applied Isaiah 28:16 and Psalm 118:22 to Jesus as the "chief cornerstone"[5] (1 Peter 2:6-7). And he also quoted Isaiah 8:14 and applied it to Jesus as well, indicating Him to be "A stone of stumbling and a rock of offense" (vs. 8). The Hebrew synonymous parallelism makes "stone" (from *lithos*) and "rock" (from *petra*) the same. Peter is clearly not the *petra* of Matthew 16:18. Rather, Jesus is—specifically, that He is the Christ, the Son of God.

ENDNOTES

1. Frederick Danker, et al. (2000), *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press), second edition, p. 809.
2. Ibid., emp. and italics in orig. See the use of *petra* to refer to such formations (as opposed to stones) in Matthew 27:60; Mark 15:46; Luke 8:6,13 (on the rock—ESV, NKJV, RSV, NIV, etc.). Also Exodus 17:6 and Numbers 20:7-8,10-11 and Paul's typological comparison to Christ as "that spiritual Rock" (1 Corinthians 10:4)—hardly a small stone. See also the use of *petra* in parallelism with *lithos* in Romans 9:32-33, as opposed to the use of *petros*.
3. In fact, Jesus bestowed the name "Cephas" on Peter (John 1:42) and Paul so referred to Peter in 1 Corinthians (1:12; 3:22; 9:5; 15:5; Galatians 1:18; 2:9,11,14). However, Jesus specifically alluded to *petra* as the foundation on which His church would be built.
4. The New Testament includes a few Aramaic words found in the following verses: Matthew 5:22; 6:24; 27:46; Mark 5:41; 7:34; 10:51; 11:9; 14:36; 15:34; Luke 16:9,11,13; John 1:42; 20:16; Acts 9:36,40; Romans 8:15; 1 Corinthians 16:22; Galatians 4:6.
5. The Greek has "head of the corner," with "head" being the Greek term *kephale*. Jesus is the "head"—not Peter.

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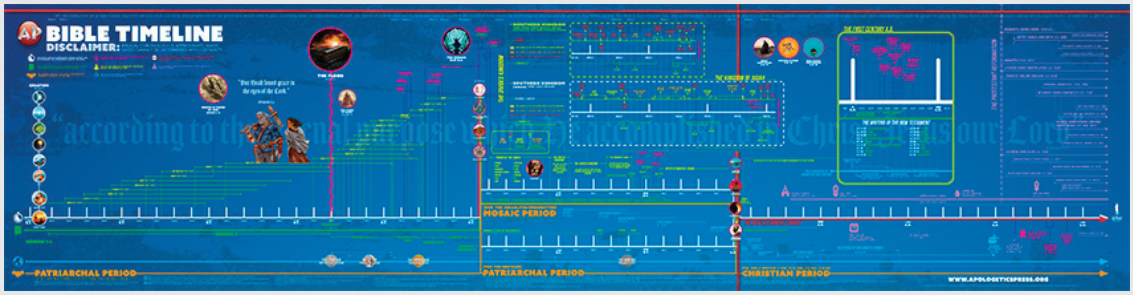
NOTE FROM The Editor

Newly Released AP Bible Timeline



For several years, Apologetics Press has desired to produce a Bible timeline that would enable students of the Word to get a sense of biblical chronology and its correlational relationship with world history. Finally, this intention has become a reality. The result is monumental—composed of three 24"x 36" posters that, when joined together, create a 24"x 94.5" biblical and historical timeline which spans from Genesis 1:1 to the present day.

Designed as a visual aid for teachers, parents, and personal evangelists, the AP Bible Timeline helps students place key Bible, Church, and historical events and individuals in their place in history, visually making the Bible come alive for visual learners. Here are some beneficial features of the timeline:

- One may see God's scheme of redemption unfolded from the Garden to Christ through the three dispensations of Bible history.
- The prophets and Israelite kings are situated in their proper places in history relative to key kings in secular history.
- The rise of denominationalism is depicted as it has unfolded over the centuries through the creation of many new churches that are distinct from the Church that Jesus Himself launched in Acts 2.

This visually stunning product is perfect for church classrooms and hallways. Students will be impressed by the fact that God revealed His religion and will for humans **in history**, **in time**. Indeed, God's providential presence is woven into the very fabric of world history.

Dave Miller

See Center Spread for More Details