



Introduction

THROUGH THE BIBLE by Zac Poonen has just been published. This monumental work of 1024 pages is a result of Zac Poonen's personal walk with God and his personal study of the Bible for over 50 years. This is NOT a *'theological'* study but a *'Life application'* study. This commentary on all 66 books of the Bible shows that every single book of the Bible is interesting and has a message for us today. It deals with key aspects of the Christian life and speaks more to the heart than to the head.

Table of Contents

THE OLD TESTAMENT

GENESIS: *Beginnings*

1. Creations
2. Two Men Who Listened to Satan
3. Two Men Who Walked With God
4. Babylon
5. Jerusalem - Abraham and Melchizedek
6. The Life of Isaac
7. The Life of Jacob

8. The Life of Joseph

Exodus: *The Nation of Israel is Born*

1. Redemption from Egypt
2. Israel in the Wilderness
3. God's Laws
4. The Tabernacle
5. The Parts of the Tabernacle
6. Three Levels of Christian Living

Leviticus: *The Holiness of God*

1. The Five Offerings
2. Holiness and Health
3. The Cleansing of Lepers
4. The Seven Feasts

Numbers: *Israel's Wilderness Wanderings and Warfare*

1. Order and Organisation
2. Various Laws
3. Wanderings and Murmurings
4. Rebellion Against God
5. Moses Punished
6. Balaam - A Warning

DEUTERONOMY: *Repetition of the Law and Review of God's Dealings*

1. Looking Backward
2. Looking Upward
3. Looking Forward
4. Repetition
5. Qualifications for Leadership
6. A Fresh Repetition of God's Laws
7. When God Blesses Us With Wealth
8. False Prophets
9. Various Laws

JOSHUA: *Possessing the Land*

1. The Old Man and the Flesh
2. Why God Punishes
3. Entering the Life of Victory

4. Rahab
5. Joshua the Leader
6. Victory, Defeat and Deception
7. Joshua's Final Days
8. *Approximate Dates of Israel's Patriarchs*

JUDGES: *Backsliding and Deliverance*

1. The Importance of Good Leaders
2. Modifying God's Commands
3. Seven Cycles of Backsliding and Thirteen Judges
4. Women Leaders
5. Gideon and His Army
6. Samson and His Failure
7. Whatever was Right in Their Eyes

Approximate Dates of Ministry of Israel's Judges

8. God's Sovereign Choice
9. The Choice Ruth Made
10. The Field of Boaz
11. Why God Chose Ruth
12. The Kinsman Redeemer

1 SAMUEL: *The Last Judge and the First King*

1. The Birth of Samuel
2. Listening to God
3. Samuel as a Prophet
4. Samuel's Failure as a Father
5. Praying for Others
6. King Saul - A Man Who Started Well
7. Why Saul Failed
8. David - The Man After God's Own Heart
9. Victory in Private and in Public
10. David's Trials

11. Israel - Prophets & Kings

2 SAMUEL: *The Reign of David*

1. David's Attitude to Saul
2. Waiting For God's Time
3. Vengeance Belongs to God

4. Man's Way and God's Way
5. David's Great Fall
6. God's Discipline
7. Absalom's Rebellion
8. Last Days of David

1 KINGS: *The Kings of Israel and Judah*

1. David's Last Days
2. Solomon's Initial Years
3. Two Women and a Baby
4. Solomon's Backsliding
5. The Divided Kingdom
6. Elijah and His Ministry

2 KINGS: *Corruption in Israel and Judah*

1. Elisha Takes Over from Elijah
2. Elisha's Miracles
3. The Jar of Oil
4. A Child Raised from the Dead
5. Naaman and Gehazi
6. Other Miracles by Elisha
7. Assyria attacks Israel and Judah

1 CHRONICLES: *The Preparation for the Temple*

1. David's Mighty Men
2. David's Preparations for the Temple

2 CHRONICLES: *The Temple Built and Destroyed*

1. King Asa's Good Beginning and Later Failure
2. Other Kings of Judah

EZRA: *The Remnant that Returned*

1. The Return under Zerubbabel
2. The Construction of the Temple
3. The Return and Reformation Under Ezra

NEHEMIAH: *Completing the Work in Jerusalem*

1. Jerusalem's Broken Wall and Burnt Gates
2. The Beginning of Nehemiah's Ministry
3. Opposition from the Enemy
4. Revival

ESTHER: *God in the Background*

1. The Danger the Jews Faced
2. The Victory of the Jews

JOB: *The Problem of Suffering*

1. A Godly Man
2. Satan's Discussion with God
3. Three Hedges Around God's People
4. Satan Enters Through the Third Hedge
5. Four Preachers
6. Job's Self-Righteousness
7. Elihu's Comments
8. God's Questions to Job

PSALMS: *Trusting God and Worshipping Him*

1. The First Book - The Righteous and the Wicked
2. The Second Book - An Oppressed People Delivered
3. The Third Book - The Temple and God's Throne
4. The Fourth Book - Israel and Other Nations
5. The Fifth Book - Praise and Worship
6. *Authors of the Psalms*

PROVERBS: *Words of Wisdom*

1. The Beginning of Wisdom
2. Guidance
3. Guidelines for Godliness

ECCLESIASTES: *The Vanity of Worldliness*

1. The Emptiness of Everything on Earth
2. Proof that All is Empty
3. How to Live in this World
4. Worldly Wisdom Exemplified

SONG OF SOLOMON: *The Bridegroom and the Bride*

1. Beginning of Love
2. Growth of Love
3. Mature Love

ISAIAH: *Prophecies of Judgement and Comfort*

1. Prophecies of Judgement (*Chapters 1 to 27*)
2. Prophecies of Judgement and of Blessing (*Chapters 28 to 35*)

3. Hezekiah's Deliverance from the Assyrians and from Sickness
4. Prophecies of Comfort (*Chapters 40 to 66*)
5. Prophecies of Deliverance (*Chapters 40 to 48*)
6. Prophecies of the Messiah (*Chapters 49 to 57*)
7. Prophecies of the Future (*Chapters 58 to 66*)

JEREMIAH: *God's Last Warning to Judah*

1. Jeremiah's Call
2. A Call to Repentance
3. Jeremiah's Conversations With God
4. Christ and the New Covenant
5. The Fall of Jerusalem and Thereafter

LAMENTATIONS: *The Weeping Prophet*

1. The Sad State of God's People
2. A Call to Return to the Lord

EZEKIEL: *The Departure and Return of God's Glory*

1. God's Unexpected Call to Be a Prophet
2. Ezekiel's Visions
3. A Man Under Authority
4. Why God's Glory Departed
5. False Prophets Denounced
6. Judgement on the Nations
7. The New Covenant Life and the Church

DANIEL: *Restoration Begins with a Man*

1. One Uncompromising Man
2. Faith in God's Power
3. An Uncompromising Remnant
4. Daniel's Continued Faithfulness
5. Prophecies About the Future

HOSEA: *Spiritual Adultery and God's Unchanging Love*

1. Hosea's Training
2. Israel's Spiritual Adultery
3. The Judgement of God
4. The Love of God for Israel

JOEL: *The Day of the Lord*

1. The Present Judgement

2. Repentance Precedes the Outpouring of the Spirit
3. The Coming Day of the Lord

AMOS: *Privilege Brings Dangers and Responsibility*

1. Judgement
2. Why Israel was being Judged
3. Visions of Judgement and Promises of Restoration

OBADIAH: *Pride and Its Results*

1. The Judgement of Edom
2. The Restoration of Israel

JONAH: *God's Love for All Nations*

1. Jonah's First Commission
2. Jonah's Second Commission

MICAH: *Corrupt Leaders and God's Authority*

1. God's Judgement on Samaria and Judah
2. The Coming of the Kingdom and the King
3. God's Controversy With His People

NAHUM: *God's Anger and Vengeance*

1. God's Determination to Destroy Nineveh
2. The Reason for Nineveh's Destruction

HABAKKUK: *The Conflict and Triumph of Faith*

1. The First Question
2. *God's Answer*
3. The Second Question
4. *God's Answer*
5. Habakkuk's Praise

ZEPHANIAH: *The Severity and Goodness of God*

1. Judgement in the Day of the Lord
2. Salvation in the Day of the Lord

HAGGAI: *Encouragement to Do the Lord's Work*

1. First message - Complete the Temple (1:1-15)
2. Second Message - The Temple Will Be Glorious (2:1-9)
3. Third Message - The Obedient Will Be Blessed (2:10-19)
4. Fourth message - Zerubbabel Will Be Honoured (2:20-23)

ZECHARIAH: *The 'Revelation' of The Old Testament*

1. Zechariah's Visions

2. Zechariah's Messages
3. Zechariah's Burdens

MALACHI: *Form Without Power*

1. The Burden of the Lord
2. The Backslidden Leaders of Israel
3. Qualities of True Servants of God
4. God's Servants and Marriage
5. God's Servants and Money
6. The Remnant in the Last Days

THE NEW TESTAMENT

MATTHEW: *Jesus Christ - The Promised Messiah*

1. The Kingdom of Heaven and the Church
2. The Birth of Jesus
3. The Three Temptations
4. The Sermon on the Mount
5. Appreciation and Encouragement
6. Sheep Among Wolves
7. John the Baptist in Prison
8. Revelation and Rest
9. Seven Parables of the Kingdom
10. The Church that Jesus Builds
11. More Parables
12. Christ's Second Coming
13. The Great Commission

MARK: *Jesus Christ - The Son of God*

1. Learning and Following
2. Doing His Father's Will
3. Jesus Loved People
4. Denouncing the Traditions of Men
5. Three Types of Christians
6. The Kingdom of God Coming With Power
7. The Seriousness of Sin
8. Faith

LUKE: *Jesus Christ - The Spirit-Filled Man*

1. The Ministry of the Holy Spirit
2. The Remnant in the First Century
3. The Birth and Baptism of Jesus
4. Miracles and Teaching
5. Women Who were Blessed
6. Enlarged Hearts to Bless Others
7. Parables With a Message
8. Disciples and Backsliders
9. Teaching on Money
10. Christ's Second Coming
11. The Last Supper and the Crucifixion

JOHN: *Jesus Christ - The Eternal God*

1. Grace and Truth
2. Come, See and Follow
3. The First Sign
4. No Condemnation
5. Doing the Will of God
6. Improving Quality and Decreasing Quantity
7. The Truth Shall Make You Free
8. Dead to the World and Alive to God
9. Greater Works
10. The Coming of the Holy Spirit
11. God Loves Us as He Loves Jesus

ACTS: *The Birth and Outreach of the Church*

1. The Baptism in the Holy Spirit
2. The Birth of the Church
3. Working Two By Two
4. The Sin of Ananias and Sapphira
5. Stephen - Full of God's Grace and Power
6. Saul's Conversion
7. Cornelius - A Non-Jew Who Feared God
8. Old Covenant and New Covenant Prophets
9. First Missionary Outreach
10. Churches Planted and Elders Appointed

11. Balance of Grace and Truth

12. Led By the Holy Spirit

13. Paul's Imprisonment

ROMANS: *The Full Gospel of God*

1. Good News for Sinners

2. The Gospel is the Power of God

3. The Guilt of the Religious Man

4. The Clearest Definition of Sin

5. Justification

6. The Blessings of Justification

7. When We Come Under Grace

8. Three Spiritual Marriages

9. The Law of the Spirit

10. God's Sovereignty, Righteousness and Faithfulness

11. What Should Our Response Be?

12. Accepting One Another in Christ's Body

1 CORINTHIANS: *The Local Church - And Its Functioning*

1. Paul's Appreciation and Instructions

2. The Word of the Cross

3. Converts or Disciples?

4. True Servants of Christ

5. The Spirit of the World

6. Glorify God in Everything

7. Run Away from Immorality

8. A Mature Christian

9. Warnings and Guidelines

10. Gifts to Build Christ's Body

2 CORINTHIANS: *The Treasure in an Earthen Vessel*

1. A Ministry that Comes Through Afflictions

2. Restoration and Forgiveness

3. Seeking to Please God Alone

4. New Covenant Servants

5. The Glory of Christ in an Earthen Vessel

6. An Ambition to Please God Alone

7. Ambassadors of the Universe's Greatest Super-Power

8. Money and God
9. Our Thought Life and Devotion to Christ
10. Paul's Trials and Thorn
11. Twelve Marks of an Ambassador of Jesus Christ

GALATIANS: Freedom from the Law

1. The Difference Between Law and Grace
2. The Ministry of Paul
3. The Gospel Brings Freedom
4. Faith - Not Works
5. Justification and Sanctification
6. A Life Led By the Spirit
7. Examining Our Work

EPHESIANS: In Christ - A Heavenly Life On Earth

1. In Christ
2. Spiritual Blessings in the Heavens
3. The Holy Spirit and Revelation
4. Resurrection Power
5. A Heavenly Life on Earth
6. Unity in the Body of Christ
7. Growth in the Body of Christ
8. Home Relationships
9. Spiritual Warfare

PHILIPPIANS: Having the Attitude of Christ

1. Treasuring God's Word and His People in Our Heart
2. Trials Turn to Blessings
3. Freedom from Selfishness and Pride
4. Everything Outside of Christ is Rubbish
5. Strength for All Things in Christ

COLOSSIANS: Christ in You - The Hope of Glory

1. Jesus - God and Man
2. Filling Up the Sufferings of Christ
3. Mysteries of Godliness
4. Jesus' Triumph Over Satan
5. Shadow and Reality
6. Being Peaceful and Thankful

1 THESSALONIANS: *A Church Ready for Christ's Return*

1. True Repentance and Faith
2. Paul's Example in Serving the Lord
3. Love in Human Relationships
4. Christ's Return in the Clouds
5. Final Exhortations

2 THESSALONIANS: *Dangers in the Last Days*

1. The Rise of the Antichrist
2. Final Exhortations

1 TIMOTHY: *The Church and Its Shepherds*

1. How God Prepares a Man for the Ministry
2. What to Pray for
3. Women's Ministry in the Church
4. Qualifications for Elders
5. The Great Mystery of Godliness
6. Be an Example by Your Life
7. Some Practical Instructions

2 TIMOTHY: *A True Servant of God and His Ministry*

1. Keep the Fire Burning
2. Uphold God's Standards
3. Characteristics of a True Servant of God
4. Final Exhortations

TITUS: *Elders - And What they Should Teach*

1. Working Together Despite Differences
2. Godliness
3. Qualifications for Elders
4. Hygienic Doctrine
5. Concluding Exhortations

PHILEMON: *Compassion for a Converted Slave*

1. A Plea for Onesimus
2. Focusing on God's Calling

HEBREWS: *Jesus - The Mediator of a Better Covenant*

1. Jesus - As a Man
2. Jesus Needed Grace
3. The Evil of Unbelief

4. The Piercing Word of God
5. Soulish or Spiritual?
6. Life's Biggest Problem
7. Jesus Learnt Obedience
8. Growing to Maturity
9. Can We Fall Away?
10. Jesus Our High Priest
11. The Glorious New Covenant
12. Jesus Our Perfect Offering
13. A New and Living Way
14. Heroes of Faith
15. Following Jesus - Our Example

JAMES: *True Faith Will Produce Good Works*

1. Temptation and Sin
2. The Sin of Partiality
3. The Tongue is a Fire
4. Friendship with the World
5. Practical Exhortations

1 PETER: *The True Grace of God*

1. Faith Tested by Fire
2. Spiritual Growth
3. Submission to Authority
4. Suffering Unjustly
5. Various Exhortations
6. Keep Fervent in Your Love
7. God Gives Grace to the Humble

2 PETER: *Godliness and False Teachers*

1. Partaking of God's Nature
2. False Teachers - Sexual Sin and Love of Money
3. The Promise of Christ's Coming

1 JOHN: *Light and Love - Life and Fellowship*

1. The Primary Truth
2. Eternal Life and Fellowship
3. No Darkness in Him
4. Three Stages of the Christian Life

5. Purifying Ourselves
6. Obedience, Love and Christ's Humanity

2 JOHN: *Jesus Christ Came in the Flesh*

1. Walk in Love and Truth
2. Jesus Christ in the Flesh - Our Spiritual Dictionary
3. Abide in the Teaching of Christ

3 JOHN: *A Bad Elder and a Good Elder*

1. Deception of the Prosperity Gospel
2. God's Work and Money
3. A Warning Against Rebellion

JUDE: *Contend Earnestly for the True Faith*

1. True Faith and True Grace
2. Jealousy, Covetousness and Rebellion
3. God Needs Men
4. Rooted and Grounded in the Love of God

REVELATION: *The Final Triumph*

1. A Revelation for Bondslaves of God
2. A Brother and a Fellow Partner
3. Seven Churches
4. Come Up Here
5. The Lion is a Lamb
6. Seals Being Opened
7. Silence in Heaven
8. The Woman and the Dragon
9. Two Beasts
10. The Followers of Jesus
11. The Bride of Christ
12. Babylon and Spiritual Harlotry
13. The Thousand-Year Reign
14. The New Jerusalem

Why God Gave Us the Bible

Before studying God's Word, we must understand why God gave it to us. It is possible to study the Bible for the wrong reasons - and I think a lot of Christians do just that. We must study the Scriptures for the same purpose that God gave it.

When I was considering this study through the whole Bible, and was trying to look into the heart of God, the verse that came to my mind was: "**God so loved the world that He gave His Son, that whoever believes in Him should never perish.**" (*John 3:16*). The primary purpose with which God gave us the Scriptures was that all people might know that He loves them so intensely that He sent His Son to save them from the grip of sin and bring them into fellowship with Him. In God's heart there is a great desire that no one should be ruined by sin and perish.

Let us keep that in mind as we study God's Word. Even if there are matters in the Word that we cannot fully understand, let us pray, "Lord, we want to understand Your heart, even if we don't understand the meaning of everything in Your Word."

We must pray as we study the Scriptures that we will understand what is in the heart of God. We can get so taken up with little details as we study, that we miss seeing the heart of God. God reveals His heart in His word

But God's purpose does not stop there-just like the construction of a building does not stop with laying the foundation. We read in *2 Timothy 3:16,17*: "*All Scripture is inspired by God (God-breathed) and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; that the man of God may be adequate (perfect), equipped for every good work.*"

God breathed into this book, exactly as He breathed into Adam. If God had not breathed into Adam, Adam would have been just a pile of dust; and any book that God has not breathed into is also a pile of dust.

God's Word has been given to us:

1. *To teach us*, to show us the right path.
2. *To reprove us* and rebuke us. We need strong rebukes to be preserved in the pathway of godliness.
3. *To correct us* when we go astray, to direct us into the right path.
4. *To train us* in righteousness. It is a training manual.

So we see that God's Word has been given to us to change our character, so that we can become godly men and women.

The ultimate goal is "*that the man of God may be adequate*" - perfect and complete. Like a glass of water filled to the brim, our character is to be rounded off, balanced and complete. We are to be anointed and equipped to serve God, so that we can do every good work that God has planned for us. That is the purpose of Scripture.

So if you study the Bible, *you must study it for these reasons.*

The Holy Spirit alone can teach us God's Word. The same Holy Spirit Who taught the apostles in the 1st century, seeks to teach us in the 21st century too. That is how I studied the Scriptures from the time I was born again in July 1959. I have never been to a Bible-school or Bible-college. The Holy Spirit taught me God's Word, as I spent many hours studying it. When Jesus walked with two disciples to Emmaus, He "*opened the Scriptures to them*". That is what He wants to do for us today, as we walk with Him. Those disciples found that their "*hearts burned within them when the Lord opened the Scriptures to them*" (*Luke 24:32*). That is what will happen to our hearts too, when the Holy Spirit opens the Scriptures to us today.

The truths that God reveals in His Word can never be boring, because Jesus is *never* be boring. If we walk with our Lord and listen to Him, our hearts will burn within us - because we will see the glory of Christ in the Word.

Under the old covenant, people meditated on God's *written* Word. But now we meditate on *the Word made flesh*, our Lord Jesus Christ (*John 1:14*). Now we see the glory of Jesus as we meditate on the Scriptures (See *2 Corinthians 3:18*). A man who looks at that glory constantly will be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, and will always be fruitful. Even in old age he will bring forth fruit (*Psalms 1:3; 92:14*). That is the will of God for each one of us.

Proverbs 25:2 says, "*It is the glory of God to conceal a matter, and the glory of kings to search it out.*" Gold and diamonds are found deep down, many thousands of feet beneath the earth's surface. It is the same with the Scriptures - its riches are concealed deep within. We are kings in Christ and our glory is to find those hidden treasures in God's Word.

Jesus once said, "*I thank You Father that You have hidden these things from the wise and the intelligent and have revealed them to babes*" (*Matthew 11:25*). We don't have to be clever to understand the Scriptures, but we must have clean, humble, trusting hearts, like an infant. It's our *heart* condition and not our *intelligence* that determines whether we understand God's Word or not.

God's Word gives us *promises to believe* and *commands to obey*. It has words to rebuke us, and words to comfort us as well.

Unless we make the Bible our final authority in all matters relating to our faith, we will be tossed about here and there, until our faith itself is lost.

We are told by the psalmist that God has magnified His Word above all His Name (*Psalm 138:2*). To reject or ignore it therefore, or to treat it lightly, is to end up with immeasurable loss. But to reverence it is to discover a door into untold riches.

So with those words as an introduction, let us begin our study of the Word of God.

Bangalore

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Zac Poonen

Genesis: Beginnings

The word '*Genesis*' means "*beginning*". In this book, we read about the beginning of creation, the beginning of man, the beginning of sin in the human race, the beginning of redemption, the beginning of the two streams of religiosity and spirituality, the beginning of Babylon, the beginning of Jerusalem, and the beginning of counterfeit religion and true religion.

The Scriptures begin with the words, "*In the beginning God.*" That's how it must be in our life every day. God must be in the beginning of everything in our lives, not man. In every area of our life - in our goals and our ambitions, in everything - God must be first. And wherever God finds a man or woman who will put Him first in every area of his/her life in business, in finances, and daily life - there will be no limit to what God will do in and through such a person.

Creation

In *Chapter 1*, we have a description of creation. Notice two different words that occur in this chapter - '*created*' and '*made*'. There is a difference between these two words. God *created* the earth (*1:1*), but He *made* the firmament (*1:7*). He *created* man (*1:27*), but He *made* the beasts of the earth (*1:25*). '*Made*' refers to something made from what already existed, whereas '*created*' refers to something that never existed before.

In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. That *may have been* millions and millions of years ago - we don't know. When the heavens and the earth were created by God through His spoken word (*Hebrews 11:3*), He made them perfect. Nothing that God creates is ever imperfect. How then did the earth become empty, dark and shapeless (*1:2*)?

God never creates anything empty, dark and shapeless. It *became* like that because something happened between *verses 1 and 2*.

The angel Lucifer fell and became the devil. That was when sin first came into the universe. That is not mentioned at this point, because the Bible was not written for angels, but for man. That's why the creation of man is mentioned in the first chapter, and the fall of Lucifer is mentioned only much later (in *Isaiah 14* and *Ezekiel 28*).

What we read of in the rest of Chapter 1 is the re-making of that corrupted, spoilt, dark, empty earth. And by the time you come to the end of the chapter, it has become a beautiful earth once again. God Himself could look at it and say, "It is **very** good."*

Chapter 1 has a message for all of us. Satan has come into the human race too and made man exactly as mentioned in *verse 2* - empty, dark and shapeless. We have lost the image of God. God did not create Adam like that. Adam was created perfect. But the devil came in and ruined man. And God had to begin to *re-make* man.

God is in the business of remaking ruined humanity today. It doesn't matter how shapeless, dark or empty you are. *Chapter 1* teaches that God can remake you. He can make you so perfect that you will finally reflect His likeness perfectly, and God Himself will be able to certify about you, "*Very Good*". That is the message of the very first chapter of the Bible. But how did this change take place? If you understand how it happened, the same thing can happen in your life too.

Every day God spoke *His word*. He said something the first day. And He said something the second day. Every day He spoke. That's what you need to see in the very first chapter of the Bible - that our God is a living God Who speaks. If you want to be transformed, the most important thing you need is to hear God speaking to you. "*Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.*" (*Matthew 4:4*). That's how God planned for man to live. And so if we don't listen to His voice daily, we will not be transformed.

We have to develop the habit of listening to God. God speaks every day. But most believers do not listen to Him. Even those who read the Bible every day don't *listen to God*. Listening to God is not the same as reading the Bible. You can read the Bible like you read a storybook or study it like a chemistry book - and never hear what God is trying to say to your heart. The other thing we see here is that the *Spirit of God* moved on the face of the waters (*1:2*). After you hear God speak, you must allow the Holy Spirit to move upon you. Only then can you be transformed. We see the Holy Spirit working along with God's Word right from the beginning. Only the Holy Spirit can change man. It was the combined working of *God's Word* and of the *Holy Spirit* that brought change and beauty to that chaotic earth.

The great need in Christendom today is for balance. Many believers emphasise the study of the word of God, but do not emphasise dependence on the Holy Spirit equally. If you study the word of God without the Holy Spirit's enabling, you will be as dry as a bone and just as dead. Others emphasise the ministry of the Holy Spirit and neglect God's Word and thus get sidetracked into emotionalism, which they mistake for the Spirit's workings. Like steam engines that have gone off the rails (of God's Word), they blow their whistles furiously and make a lot of noise, but they are stuck in the mud and make no progress, because they do not allow the word of God to guide them.

So we see that we can get correction and instruction in righteousness in order to be perfect in the very first paragraph of the Scriptures.

In *1:4*, we read that "*God separated the light from the darkness*". This separation is repeated on the fourth day (*1:18*). This is a very important thing, and that is why it is repeated. When God created the light, He didn't want the darkness mixed up with it and that was why He made a separation.

Many people imagine that all division must be from the devil. But here we read that the first person to make a division was God Himself. Light can have no fellowship with darkness. When light comes into our hearts, the very next thing God that wants to do in our lives is to separate us from all that is darkness. In *2 Corinthians 4:6* we have a Divine commentary on the creation of light. There we are told that this was a picture of the light of the gospel of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ coming into our hearts. Then two chapters later, in *2 Corinthians 6:14-17*, we are told of the necessity of separating ourselves from all darkness. The world is full of darkness, and there must be nothing of the world in our hearts. When Christians don't separate from the darkness, confusion is the result.

When God placed the sun and the moon in the middle of the skies, again He separated the light from the darkness (*1:18*). On both occasions, we read that "*God saw that it was good.*" Only when you are separated from all that is of darkness can God say, "*It is good*", not otherwise. Many who have received the light have not separated themselves from the darkness. That is why they have so many problems in their Christian life.

Man was created on the sixth day. The beasts of the field were also created on the same day, just before Adam (*verse 24*). Those beasts were made from the same dust that man was made from. Only one thing distinguished man from those beasts: *God breathed into man*. It is only the Spirit of God in man that lifts him above the level of animals. From this we learn that if we stop living by the Spirit of God, we will sink to the level of animals very

soon! God made man from the dust to teach him that he was worth nothing apart from the breath of God.

God kept the seventh day as a day of rest. That was the *seventh* day for God, but it was the *first* day for man. Man was created towards the end of the sixth day and so his very first living day was a day of rest. God was trying to teach man thereby that he must fellowship with God first before going out to work for Him. Adam and Eve were to work in the garden of Eden only after they had spent a day in fellowship with their God. That is the Divine order for man: *Fellowship first and then service*. In the beginning God *Himself* - then God's *work*. We forget that order to our peril. This was why God taught Israel to respect the Sabbath so strictly. Today, there remains a Sabbath rest for God's people to live in (*Hebrews 4:9*).

In 1:28 God told Adam and Eve to "*be fruitful and multiply*." How did He expect them to do that? Obviously by having a sexual relationship. It was God Who created the sexual function and told man to use it to produce children. The sexual function in man was also included in what God finally called "*Very good*" (1:31). So we see that sex in marriage is something that God himself has termed "*Very good*"? *Sex is very bad outside of marriage, but very good inside it*. There are many Christians who think that sex is a dirty thing even in marriage and therefore imagine that they can be holier if they are not married. This is un-Scriptural.

When God created man He blessed him (1:28). He told him not only to be fruitful, but also to subdue everything under him and to rule over everything. So we see that God created man to be a ruler, not a slave. God created man to be an overcomer who has everything under his feet. In *Genesis*, we read of God's desire for man to *rule*. And in *Revelation*, we read of God's desire for man to *overcome* (*Revelation 21:7*). That was God's original will for man, and He finally finds a few who fulfil His plan and become overcomers. God's purpose for you is to rule over everything. He wants you to rule over sin in your life, over your anger, your lusts and your passions. He wants you to put them all under your feet. God never created you to be a slave. He created you to be a conqueror and a ruler. And that can come about only when God *blesses you* (as we read in 1:28).

Notice in *Chapter 1*, that God examined each day's work and certified it as good. (God did not say that on the second day, because Satan who had been cast down by God was permitted to dwell in the second heaven). We too should allow God to examine our work each day, to see whether it meets with His approval.

In *Chapter 2*, more details are given about the creation of man. We see there that God gave man three gifts - a marriage *partner* (Eve), a *home* to live in (Eden) and a *work* to do (as a

gardener). These are the three things that many young people are seeking for today. God was interested in providing all three for Adam and He is interested in providing all three for His children today. Adam didn't even have to ask God for them. God Himself saw Adam's need and provided him with them. God knows your need of a marriage partner, a house and a job too. If you walk with Him, He will provide you with these and other needs too.

In 2:11, 12, it says that the gold in Eden was *good!* It is only in the presence of God, that gold is good. Away from Him, gold is a snare and can be a curse.

In 2:19, 20, we read that God brought the beasts to Adam - and Adam gave them all names. Then we read these words: "*But for Adam there was not found a helper suitable for him.*" That phrase seems to indicate that when Adam saw each of the animals having a partner, he wondered whether he could have one of them as a partner!! The lion had its lioness, the elephant had its partner, the cat had its partner, and so on. Adam looked at them one by one and rejected them one by one, because none of them corresponded with his own nature. And when Adam had rejected all of them, God said, "All right, I will make a helper for you." He then caused a deep sleep to fall on Adam and made a wife for him.

There is a spiritual application to this: If you are a child of God, and are looking for a marriage partner, God may first allow some pretty girls (or handsome men) to come by you, who do not have the same Divine nature that you received when you were born again. He will test you through them to see whether you will choose one of them as your partner. If you do, you will miss the one God has planned for you. Honour God and obey His word that says, "*Don't be unequally yoked with unbelievers*" (2 *Corinthians 6:14*) - and He will give you His very best.

Notice this: After God saying that "*It was good*" six times in 6 days (1:4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25), He suddenly said, "*It is NOT good*" (2:18). It was not good *for Adam to be alone*. Then, after He had made Eve, He says, "*It is VERY good*" (1:31). That is the difference that a happily married couple made to God's creation!

In 2:24, we read something that all married people need to pay heed to: "*When a person gets married he must leave his father and other and cleave to his partner.*" This is not referring primarily to leaving one's parents physically (although that may also be necessary), but to being detached from them emotionally. Once a person is married, his marriage-partner must be far more important to him than his parents. A married couple must make their family-decisions in consultation with each other and not in consultation with their parents. I wish I could go up and down India proclaiming this important message to all married couples. There will be many more happy marriages in our land, if every married person obeyed this

command. Here is a commandment given by God, even before sin came into the world. *It is in fact the very first commandment written in the Bible for us.* Why did God put this as the very first commandment in Scripture? Because He Who ordained marriage knew the vital importance of this step. Yet many married couples have not understood its importance.

Two Men Who Listened to Satan

In *Chapters 3 and 4*, we read of two men who listened to the Devil - Adam and Cain. We can learn some lessons from how each of them fell a prey to Satan's wiles.

When God sent Adam into Eden, He did not send an angel with him to check up on him. Why? Because it is only when we *are not being watched*, that God can test our heart's attitude. He tests us when no one else is around. Adam and Eve were by themselves and could sin without being observed by any created being.

There were thousands of trees with beautiful fruit in Eden. The tree of life was there too, that would have brought them eternal life. But Adam and Eve did not choose any of these. They went for "*knowledge*". They rejected life and chose knowledge - exactly like man does today.

If you had a choice between Bible knowledge and life, which would you choose? I'm sure you will all give the right answer: "*Life.*" But test yourself: Do you study the Bible to get knowledge or to obey God? If you study the Bible in order to get knowledge, you are going to the tree of knowledge too. And the knowledge of good and evil will only bring death. God wants us to know good and evil through a living connection with Him, and not by study of the Scriptures alone. If we have the knowledge of good and evil without a living connection with God, we will go astray. That was how Adam died - he got the knowledge of good and evil without a living connection with God. Our knowledge of good and evil must come through the Holy Spirit telling us what is right and wrong, moment by moment. Any other way of knowing good and evil will only bring death.

The devil told Eve that she could be like God (3:5). Jesus came with a message that sounded very similar. But it was totally different. Whereas Satan told Eve that she could be like God *in knowledge, authority and power*, Jesus tells us that we can be like God *in humility, purity and love*. Which of these two messages do most people desire? Alas, even most believers hanker after the former!! But it is thus that we can distinguish between the voice of the devil and the voice of Jesus. Temptation is very subtle. The devil is a deceiver. His counterfeits look just like the genuine thing on the surface.

When the devil was tempting Eve he was also insinuating that God didn't really love her. If God loved her (Satan implied), God would have allowed her to eat from this beautiful tree. That's the way Satan tries to get into our hearts as well - by making us doubt God's love.

Jesus told Peter, "*Satan has decided to sift you and has asked God for permission to do so*" (*Luke 22:31*). God gave Satan that permission, just like God had given Satan permission to sift Adam and Eve in Eden. The Lord told Peter, "I am praying for you that when you are sifted, your faith will not fail" (*Luke 22:32*). Jesus did not pray that Peter would not fall, but that even if he fell, he would still believe that God loved him. That is faith.

In the hour of trial and temptation, even if we fall, if we still have faith in the love of God, we have triumphed. Even if your prayer is not answered or something you wanted was not given to you, even if you have to go through some deep trial like Job's, where your children die and your property is lost - don't ever doubt the love of God. That is true faith.

What does it mean to live by faith? It means to constantly assert (no matter what happens) that God loves you. It was such a faith in his father's love that brought the prodigal son back home. He knew that even though he had done a lot of wrong things and messed up his life, his father still loved him. So he went back to his father.

The tree of knowledge of good and evil looked so attractive! It was God Who had made it so attractive because only when it was attractive could Adam and Eve be tested as to whether they would choose God Himself above His beautiful creation. In every temptation, what we essentially face is this: *Are we going to choose the Creator or His creation?* The temptation could be a pretty woman or gold or some other created thing. Even when seeking the honor or approval of men, the alternate choice is the approval of God. Which do you want? We sin when we choose the created thing above the Creator. We overcome when we choose the Creator above all His creation. It is as simple as that. Yet most people in the world (including believers) fail this test daily.

We either worship God's creation - a beautiful face or gold or some man's approval - or we consider all of this as garbage compared to God Himself. To the overcomer, the beauty of Jesus and His approval are far more valuable than anything He created. If you were to make just this one choice in every decision in life, you will be a man of God. You will be a woman of God. You will know God and His Word in a personal way - better than any man can teach you. Make that choice in every temptation and say, "Lord, I choose You above all created things." That is the secret.

What was Adam's sin? Was it just that he ate of the fruit of the tree that was forbidden? No. It was more than that. In 3:17, God told him, "*You listened to the voice of your wife.*" Is it a

sin to listen to the voice of one's wife? Yes, if it leads to disobeying God. God had made Adam the head of his home. But he did not exercise his authority as the head. He saw his wife talking to the devil and he just stood there listening to the conversation and made no effort to stop her. He should have put his foot down and said, 'Come away, Eve. Don't listen to him.' There are many husbands like Adam today. They are not the head in their homes. Adam sinned when he did not assert his headship.

God is a good God. He cursed the serpent and the ground, but He did not curse Adam. There we see the tremendous love of God. God killed an animal to cover Adam and Eve. That was the first death on earth. An innocent animal was killed as a sacrifice for Adam's sin, and that animal's skin was used to make garments to cover the nakedness of Adam and Eve (3:21). That was a picture of what God would one day do on Calvary's cross, allowing His Son to die so that His righteousness may clothe us.

Before man sinned, there was no flaming sword in front of the tree of life. Adam could have gone to it and eaten of it and received eternal life. But God put a flaming sword in front of that tree after man sinned. Today, if you want to partake of that tree, you have to let the sword fall upon your flesh. We don't have to be punished for our sins now, because that sword fell upon Jesus on Calvary. But that sword must fall on our flesh today. As Paul said, *"I am crucified with Christ... and I live."* (*Galatians 2:20*). When we are united with Jesus on the cross, that sword falls on our flesh and we can partake of eternal life. There is no other way to life. This sword guards this tree even today.

Notice some of the words that God spoke to Adam as the punishment for his sin - *curse, sorrow, thorns, sweat, dust, death* (3:16-19). All these words are found in the suffering and death of Jesus on the cross. Jesus took all of this upon Himself, so that we can be totally free from the punishment that was put upon Adam in Eden.

We see that as soon as Adam's fellowship with God was broken, his fellowship with his wife was broken too. The proof of this is seen in the fact that he begins to accuse her. Whenever you begin to accuse others, it proves that your fellowship with God is broken. When you are in fellowship with God you don't accuse others. You judge yourself. It is Satan who is the Accuser of the brethren.

In *Chapter 4*, we read of another man who listened to the devil - Cain. *Eve gave birth to Cain, and said, "I have created a man with the help of the Lord" (4:1)*. A human birth was a miracle at that time, for Cain was the first person to be born into the world as a living soul. And Eve said, "God made a man. And I made a man too!! I have created a man out of my own body." It was a spirit of pride that manifested itself there: *"I made, I created. God helped me a little, but I did it."* And her son Cain grew up with that wrong spirit.

Cain and Abel came to present their offerings to God. If you read 4:4 carefully, you will discover that it does *not* say there (as some imagine) that God accepted Abel's offering and therefore accepted Abel. No. It says, "The Lord had regard for Abel (first) and(then) for his offering"- not the other way around. Similarly, it was not because the Lord rejected Cain's offering that He rejected Cain. No. He rejected Cain first and therefore He rejected his offering too. The Bible says, "*The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord,*" no matter how good the sacrifice may be (*Proverbs 21:27*). Cain was a wicked man, and that was why God rejected his offering.

When Cain was angry, God came to warn Cain that he was in danger. In Eden, God came seeking Adam and now He comes seeking Cain. God is always the One Who comes seeking for fallen man. Jesus came into the world seeking for fallen man too. God is the One Who comes seeking for us every time we backslide or go astray. That is a great encouragement to us. God came and warned Cain, but Cain did not take heed to that warning. He allowed the sin that was crouching at the door of his heart to come inside and destroy him.

Jealousy is the first sin mentioned in the Scriptures, after man was put out of Eden - jealousy of a younger brother who was more blessed by God. Whenever you see someone younger than you more blessed and more anointed by God than you, be careful that you don't become jealous of him, lest you go the way of Cain.

Notice what God said to Cain now: "*You are cursed*" (4:11). Why did God curse Cain but not Adam? In Adam's case, God cursed only the ground, but not Adam. The reason is that when Adam sinned, he hurt only himself. But when Cain sinned, he hurt somebody else as well. When you commit a sin like smoking or drinking, you destroy your body, but you hurt only yourself. But when you gossip, you hurt another person and that sin is therefore more serious. But how many Christians believe that gossiping is worse than smoking? The sins that hurt other people are much more serious in God's eyes than those sins that hurt only you. That is why Cain was cursed. So, take it seriously whenever you hurt another person.

God said to Cain (4:10), "The voice of your brother's blood is crying out to Me from the ground." That person's blood, whose reputation you spoilt by gossiping, is crying out to God. It will never stop crying out until you confess your sin to God and ask Him to forgive you and until you confess your sin to the person you gossiped against and ask him to forgive you too. Otherwise, your sin will keep on crying out to God until the day of judgement.

When Cain was punished he said, "*My punishment is too great to bear!*" This is the language of people who go to hell. They don't say "My sin is very great". They only say, "My punishment is very great." Are you more disturbed by your sin or by its punishment?

Through the answer to that question, you can discover whether you are a godly man or an ungodly man. An ungodly man is worried about the punishment he is going to get, whereas a godly man is heartbroken by his sin.

Cain went away from the presence of the Lord and his children became like him. One of his sons became a murderer. They married many wives. They made musical instruments to entertain themselves. There we see the beginning of rock music and the entire entertainment world. This is what happens to children, when their fathers go away from the Lord (4:16-24).

In Cain and Abel, we see the beginning of two streams - the religious stream and the spiritual stream. Cain was not an atheist. He was a deeply religious man. He was the forerunner of the Babylonian system of counterfeit religion. Abel was the forerunner of all godly men. Jesus referred to Abel as a righteous man (*Matthew 23:35*). Cain was *religious*, whereas Abel was *spiritual*.

Two Men Who Walked With God

We have seen two examples of men who walked with the devil - Adam and Cain. Now consider two men who walked with God - Enoch and Noah.

In *Chapter 5*, we read the expression '*and he died*' eight times. But right in the middle of that chapter, we read of one who did not die at all!! That was Enoch. He walked with God and God took him to heaven alive. That is a picture of resurrection life in the midst of death. Enoch was a man who lived in resurrection power, overcame death and was taken up to heaven - a picture of a godly church living in the midst of spiritual death, overcoming by resurrection power and finally being raptured.

Enoch was probably a godless man for the first 65 years of his life. But at 65, he got a son. He named the boy "Methuselah", by Divine revelation. "*Methuselah*" means "*At his death, the waters will come forth.*" That seems to indicate that God gave Enoch a revelation when his son was born. God told Enoch that when that son died, the world would be judged by a flood of waters. That revelation of judgement came first to Enoch and not to Noah. So he named his son Methuselah.

Now when you have a baby, you don't know how long he will live. So every time Methuselah was sick, Enoch would have wondered whether the time for judgement was near. Can you imagine a baby having a name that means, "*At his death the flood will come*"? Each time you called him, you would be reminded of judgement. And that fear of God's judgement made Enoch walk with God and realise that the things of eternity were

more important than the things of time. That was the crisis that made Enoch walk with God every day for the next 300 years.

The Bible says, "*The world will pass away*" (*1 John 2:17*). If we believe that, we too will realise, as Enoch did, that the things of eternity are more important than the things of time. God's tremendous longsuffering with man is seen in the fact that He allowed Methuselah to live longer than any other human being - 969 years. For 969 years, whenever people heard Methuselah's name, they heard a message of judgement to come. But the people rejected the message. It was not only Noah who preached about this judgement. Enoch preached it for 300 years too and Methuselah preached it by his name for another 669 years.

Noah also walked with God and preached about judgement for the last 120 years of Methuselah's life. Enoch and Methuselah did not know the details of the flood as clearly as God later revealed to Noah. But they knew that some type of judgement connected with a flood of waters was going to come when Methuselah died.

Jude tells us that Enoch prophesied judgement against all the ungodly people of his time (*Jude 14, 15*). Enoch was a prophet and he walked with God. Adam was 622 years old when Enoch was born, and died at the age of 930 (5:5-23). So Enoch must have known Adam for 308 years. I can imagine that Enoch must have often asked Adam about how things were in Eden where Adam himself had once walked with God. And Enoch must have had a great longing to walk with God himself. Enoch became the first man to prove that one could walk with God outside Eden too. Even after sin came into the world, man could walk with God.

I've met a lot of great preachers in my life, but I have met very few who walk with God. But it is those few who produced a longing in my heart from my younger days, to walk with God myself.

Methuselah's grandson was Noah. And Noah lived with Methuselah for 600 years. He must have asked Methuselah many times about how Enoch had walked with God. Into Noah's heart came a longing to walk with God himself. We read in 6:9 that Noah also walked with God. As Noah walked with God, God revealed His purpose of judgement to him.

It was the truth of *judgement against sin* that God revealed to the first two people who walked with God (in Scripture). And Enoch and Noah faithfully preached that message, even though no one believed them. *Every true prophet of God since then has also preached the same message: God will judge believers and unbelievers for their sins.*

Enoch and Noah are the first two preachers mentioned in the Bible and they both walked with God. Would to God that every preacher since then had done the same.

God told Noah to build the ark and Noah immediately began to build it. He did not ask God who was going to pay for the ark. If he had asked God that, God would have told him, "You have to pay for it yourself of course."

Have you ever heard God tell you that you must pay for the expenses of *His* work from *your own pocket*?" Noah's in the last days too - men who like the apostle Paul support themselves and serve the Lord.

People must have asked Noah how the animals would come into the ark. Noah knew that that was God's business and not his. And God brought the animals inside supernaturally. Noah only did what he was supposed to do - build the ark. He left all other matters with God. We too have to do only what God has told us to do. We can leave all the impossibilities with God.

Finally we read that God shut the door (7:16). It was God who shut the door of the ark, not Noah. God will also shut the door of salvation one day when the time is up for entering God's kingdom.

The ark is a picture of Christ and of His Body, the church. It must have been inconvenient living inside the ark, just like it can be in the church! In the church, we have to mingle with people who are different from us, and many of them may rub us the wrong way at times. But even if the ark was not convenient, it was *the only safe place on earth at that time*. So is the church today. I am happy to be in the church, even if there are difficult people in it. I hope you are happy too. That's why we invite people to join us.

When the flood was finally about to subside, Noah sent a crow and a dove out of the ark - a picture of the *flesh* and the *Spirit*. The crow never came back. The crow found the dead bodies of men and animals and was delighted at the feast that all that provided for it. Similarly, those who live according to the dictates of their flesh find the world a very enjoyable place. But the dove came back very quickly. And that is how it is with those who live according to the Spirit. They never feel at home in the world and always long to come back to the fellowship of God's people in the church.

After Noah came out of the ark, the first thing he did was to build an altar to the Lord on which he offered a sacrifice of thanksgiving (8:20). That example of putting God first and offering Him our worship and thanksgiving is a good example for us to follow at all times. Noah however was not a perfect man. He got drunk one day and lay naked in his tent. His son Ham saw him and reported this to his brothers. Because Ham dishonored his father thus, a curse came upon him. Shem and Japheth however walked backwards and covered their father's nakedness. Therefore, they were blessed. There is an important message here

for us. This is the first place in Scripture where we read of God punishing a son and his seed for dishonoring his father. It is a serious matter before God, when we disrespect authority. When you see a weakness in your father or in a man of God, don't expose his nakedness to others, as Ham did, unless you want to get a curse upon yourself. Be like Shem and Japheth and cover it. "*Love covers a multitude of sins*" (*1 Peter 4:8; Proverbs 10:12*). Noah blessed Shem and Japheth with the blessing of *fellowship* saying, "*May God enlarge Japheth, and let them dwell in the tents of Shem*" (9:27). We too must build fellowship with those who live together and cover each other's sins. Only such believers can build the church of Jesus Christ.