

What if the Bible is true?

Right now, before you read any further, stop and define to yourself in a few words your purpose in life. Perhaps you have clear ideas about your life goals and values. On the other hand, you may not have felt a need to think about your personal motivations, or you may have a feeling that your life has no purpose. Likely, one of the reasons you decided to ask for this course was to find out what answers the Bible can offer you.

“What’s the use?”

Have you ever heard the expression, “There’s nothing new under the sun”? It comes from the first chapter of Ecclesiastes, verse 9.

Solomon, the philosopher-king of Israel in the tenth century before Christ, wrote Ecclesiastes towards the end of his life. Solomon is known as Israel’s wisest and richest king. Yet he used his God-given wisdom and riches to seek personal satisfaction away from God. Ecclesiastes, found in the Bible just after Psalms and Proverbs, gives some of his reflections on the alternatives he tried.

Although its message is almost 3,000 years old, this fascinating book is very up-to-date. Read through the first two chapters and you’ll see that the twentieth century, with its advanced technologies and high standard of living, presents the same basic choices Solomon faced. Like this ancient king, you can devote yourself to learning, wealth, pleasure or fame. You can base your life on self-fulfillment, a political cause, a philosophical view — or, the word of God.

But how can you be sure you are making the right choice?

Solomon became disillusioned and frustrated that he had wasted so much of his life on dead-end alternatives. He came to realize that, in the final analysis, all human pursuits are in vain:

“Vanity of vanities...vanity of vanities, all is vanity.”

Ecclesiastes 1, verse 2

Solomon speaks of the “despair” caused by the “vanity”, or futility, of his pursuits (chapter 2, verse 20). He states that the end of human pursuits is death and extinction. He has no illusions of an immortal soul; human beings die just like animals and return

to nothingness:

“All go to one place; all are of the dust, and all turn to dust again.”

Ecclesiastes 3, verse 20

To put this verse into context, you may want to read the whole passage: Ecclesiastes 3, verse 19 to the end of the chapter.

Ecclesiastes presents a world view a lot like those modern thinkers honest enough to accept the implications of their atheism: without God, life is “absurd” there is no ultimate meaning for the individual or for the world. What you see is what you get.

Nevertheless, Solomon knew a viable alternative. There is a God and to those willing to give their lives to Him He offers a part in His wonderful plan.

Solomon’s conclusion— a respect (or reverent “fear”) of God and commitment to His way offer the solution to this vanity, this haunting realization that life without God has no purpose.

“Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man.”

Ecclesiastes 12:13

Modern science— discovering more mysteries

It’s easy to understand why many assume science has all the answers. Even fifty years ago, people didn’t dream of the conveniences we take for granted today. Science has dazzled the world with instant communication, wonder drugs, space exploration, and tremendous amounts of information condensed onto tiny computer chips.

The ‘80s ushered in the Information Age. Phenomenal growth of knowledge continues, yet no one can honestly claim to completely understand even a small part of the physical universe.

In fact, twentieth century scientists have uncovered so many unexplainable mysteries that a meeting of the world’s top scientists formally stated “the rational mind cannot fully understand reality.”

Modern physics is based on the idea the universe is unpredictable. Matter does not necessarily behave in a way that makes sense according to logical rules. Scientists realize that the deeper they look, the more they find that they cannot explain.

Where to look for Truth

Uncertainty. No absolutes. Absurd. The rational mind cannot fully understand. These are the catchwords of today’s leading scientists and philosophers.

Where does this leave you? Is it possible for you to know the ultimate purpose of life on earth? Is there an ultimate purpose?

The Bible clearly reveals God’s purpose for this earth and how you can be a part of His plan. What’s more, it gives you evidence that God has been and still is active in human affairs— and strong reasons to believe in His promises.

The words of this unique book have been transmitted to the present with amazing accuracy over a period of literally thousands of years.

Moreover, the Bible stands apart from other sacred writings because it is factual. No mythical heroes or vague speculations. Just real people, real events and a message that makes sense.

Seeing things God’s way

The Bible challenges you to change your perspective, to focus your mind in a new way and view the world

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through the word of God.

Think of the soul-searching the apostle Paul must have gone through when he suddenly realized that Jesus had in fact risen from the dead! If Jesus appeared to you, thus confronting you with irrefutable evidence he is alive today, would you react like Paul? Would the experience completely change your perspective on life?

For Paul, the change was profound. This man so well versed in “the wisdom of the world” saw that the most advanced human knowledge is mere foolishness in the sight of an all-knowing, all-powerful God. There is irony in his words to the church at Corinth:

“Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world?...For the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.”

1 Corinthians 1:20, 25

You may find it helpful to read the whole first chapter of 1 Corinthians, which is in the recommended readings.

What does Paul mean by “the foolishness of God” in the above passage?

To answer this, consider some Bible teachings which many people would deem “foolish”, or incredible. Numerous Bible passages reinforce these ideas, although the shaded chart at the top of page 3 gives only two references for each.

example, the history of the Jews.

Facts about life and death. Facts about what God has in store for this world, and for you.

The Bible is a message to you from your Creator, a vitally important message.

Approach it with an open mind and a prayerful attitude. Let it help you become God-centered in your thoughts, your motivations and your actions.

The Bible gives you solid answers about the future. It can give your life direction and purpose. And the deeper you look, the more convinced you will become.

Reliable, factual— and true!

Bible teachings stand apart from many commonly held beliefs.

Indeed, the Bible itself stands apart from other books. It is God’s message, and it is based on facts. Facts that cannot be explained away. Fulfilled prophecies — to take one

Human thought and God’s word— some issues

COMMON VIEWS	BIBLE TEACHING	REFERENCES
•God will not intervene in world events.	•Jesus Christ will soon return to this earth.	•Matthew 24:30; Revelation 22:20
•Science will someday solve the world’s problems, or else humanity will destroy itself.	•Jesus will become the ruler on earth of this entire world and his kingdom will last forever.	•Isaiah 9:7; Luke 1:30-3
•People are basically good.	•Humanity is basically sinful.	•Jeremiah 17:9; Romans 3:9, 23
•The soul continues to exist after death.	•When you die you cease to exist altogether.	•Genesis 3:19; Ecclesiastes 9:10
•When you die your soul goes to heaven or hell, or you are reincarnated.	•God gives you the opportunity to be bodily raised from the death and to have eternal life.	•Romans 2:6,7; I Corinthians 15:52, 53
•Your first commitment is to yourself.	•Put God first and look to His word as your guide for living.	•Deuteronomy 6:4-6; Matthew 22:36-40

Recap

The Bible offers a message that makes sense, that can transform your life and give it direction and that is TRUE.

Recommended Bible Readings

Ecclesiastes 1,2,3 and 9; 1 Corinthians 1; Romans 12; Colossians 3