

# *Welcome to "Understanding the Bible"*

## Unit 1

## THE BIG ISSUE

### A Panoramic View of the Bible

#### **Many Documents - One Book.**

In the Bible there are 66 documents written by over 40 authors over more than 1,500 years. They vary in style and content yet there is one fascinating theme. Their subject matter extends from before everything was created to after the whole universe is annihilated.

#### **Two Parts - One Whole**

It has two sections: the Jews sacred writings which Christians call the Old Testament (OT for short) and the Christian sacred writings called the New Testament (NT).

The Old Testament documents were written from about 1,400 BC to about 400 BC

The New Testament documents were written later, from about 30 AD to about 70 AD.

This course is designed to help you to understand both the Old Testament and New. Quotations will be our own renditions, unless otherwise stated. If a quotation is significantly different in your Bible please let us know the translation you are using and the reference.

#### **References**

The books of the Bible have been given names and divided up into chapters and verses to help us to find where passages are. This is done by giving the name of the book, then the chapter

then the verse in that order. If there is more than one book of the same name, the book number is given first. Book names are usually shortened to the first two or three letters. The names of the books of the Old and New Testaments are usually listed at the beginning of the Bible. The New Testament Books are sometimes listed again at the beginning of the New Testament.

References will always be in this sequence: **book number, abbreviated book name, chapter number, a colon, verse/s.** Additional chapters and verses are separated by commas.

1Cor.15:24-28, 51-58 is the 1st. letter to the Corinthians, chapter 15 verses 24 to 28 and verses 51 to 58. Be careful to distinguish Jn.3:16 from 1.Jn.3:16. Jn.3:16 is The Gospel of John chapter 3 verse 16. 1.Jn.3:16 is John's 1st. letter chapter 3 verse 16. Since there is only one book named Philemon and since it has only one chapter, Phm.4 is the letter to Philemon **verse 4** - not chapter 4. In older Bibles a letter is called an epistle.

#### **Setting the Scene**

The Bible is like an unfolding drama but it is not written as fiction. It states everything as fact. This unit sets the scene before going into the pace of the action. The following units proceed through the drama to its completion.

There are two realms – the physical and the non-physical. The drama is taking place in the non-physical realm and being played out in the physical realm<sup>1</sup>. The main character is God. He is not physical – He is spirit<sup>2</sup>.

God is almighty<sup>3</sup>, all-knowing<sup>4</sup>, impartial<sup>5</sup>, totally sinless and altogether good<sup>6</sup>. He has always existed. Only God has no beginning<sup>7</sup>. He made all the universes and everything in them from nothing<sup>8</sup> He created all the angels. They are spirit

(not physical) but they have sometimes appeared as human beings<sup>9</sup>. God made absolutely everything there is<sup>10</sup> and in all this He has a purpose. To understand the Bible we need to understand this purpose.

God created Adam and his wife Eve - the first man and woman. Adam was a perfect man and Eve was a perfect woman. God gave them an idyllic environment. There was no sin, no disease, no death. Everything was absolutely perfect. Adam and Eve lived in perfect harmony with God.

Tragically one arrogant angel leads a rebellion. He is called "Satan", meaning "antagonist" <sup>11</sup> and his followers are called "demons" or "devils". He constantly strives to thwart God. Yet, despite all the turmoil that ensues, there are always the few who implicitly love and trust God - and are sure that He will fulfil His purpose - come what may.

#### **Intrigue and Sedition**

God provided Adam and Eve with every kind of fruit and vegetable for food but made one restriction - They were not to eat the fruit of a tree called "the tree of the knowledge of good and evil". God said that if they disobeyed Him they would "begin to die" - death would set-in.

Satan put it to Eve that God lied and was devious. Satan wanted Eve to distrust God and to persuade Adam to disobey God.<sup>12</sup>

Satan is also known as "the devil", meaning "the slanderer".<sup>11</sup> He accuses God of being dishonest and unjust. This is called "The lie".<sup>13</sup> However, God is honest, just and good. This is "the truth".<sup>14</sup>

How God accomplishes His purpose despite Satan's persistent intrigue underlies the whole drama of the Bible. There are many clues but the pieces only fall into place towards the end.<sup>15</sup>

**God's Strategy**

Adam and Eve did fall into Satan's trap. But even before God created anything He knew what Satan would do. God already had His contingency plan in place.<sup>16</sup> Here, right at the beginning of the Bible, we have the first clue. God informed Satan that **the woman's seed**.<sup>B</sup> would win the contest. God told Satan "**It is He who will crush your head...**". That would be the crises point. Then the purpose of it all would become fully obvious - to those who trusted God.

The words - "**her seed**"<sup>A</sup> tell us that His birth would take place without a man being involved. From then on Satan tries to forestall the birth of that male child. **But when would the woman's seed be born and how would He defeat Satan?** Right at the beginning, the Bible student is challenged to search for - **when** and **how**?

**The Sequence of Events**

The Old Testament records predictions about, and events leading up to, the child's birth and life.

The New Testament records the birth of that male child, and how He vindicated God's integrity, restored the status quo<sup>17</sup>.

**Reading Matter**

Before answering the questions, please read in the Bible – Genesis chapters 1 to 3.

**Notes:-**

- A) Thousands of years before scientists knew women had "seeds" (eggs) God mentions it.
- B) We will be using the phrase **the woman's seed** a lot, for the predicted male child.

**For more detail on the "the woman's seed" ask for our free leaflet:- "THE SEED OF THE WOMAN".**

**Questions:-**

1. Why did Eve want the forbidden fruit ? <sup>18</sup>
2. Why did Adam accept the forbidden fruit?
3. How did Adam and Eve's sin affect their personal friendship with God? <sup>19</sup>
4. What kind of person is Satan?

**Useful References:-**

- 1 Eph.6:12, Job 1:6 ff.
- 2 Jn.1:18, Jn.4:24, 1.Tim.6:16, 1.Jn.4:12
- 3 Mk.14:36, Rev.19:6
- 4 Heb. 4:13, 1 Jn.3:20
- 5 Rm.2:11, 1 Ptr. 1:17
- 6 Nm.23:19, Ps.34:8, 52:1, Rm.2:4, Jms.1:13, 17
- 7 Deut.33:27
- 8 Neh.9:6, Acts 14:15, Heb11:3
- 9 Heb.13:2
- 10 Ps.33:6-9, Jn.1:1-3, 10 & 14, Col.1:16-17
- 11 Rev.12:9, 20:2
- 12 1 Tim.2:14
- 13 Jn.8:44 "speaks the lie"
- 14 Jn.14:6, 18:37, Rev.15:3
- 15 Rm.16:25, Eph.1:9-10, 3:3-11, Col.1:26-27, 1Tim.3:16
- 16 Rm.8:29, Eph.1:4, Rev.13:8
- 17 Jn.17:25-26, 1 Cor.15:24-28, Rev. 15:3-4, 19:2,6
- 18 Gen.3:6, 1 Jn.2:16
- 19 Isaiah 59:2

**Send any queries to:-**

**Please include your name and address and state the unit and question with each query.**

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[The Beginning]**