

LIFE'S BIG PICTURE

AS TOLD IN SCRIPTURE

If you are in the dark when it comes to the Bible, and you'd like to get the big picture concerning what God has to say about your life, then this booklet is for you.

[Except for the footnotes, 100% of the text is taken directly from the Bible.]

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INTRODUCTION

The Bible, as no other book, speaks directly to our hearts and souls. If true, its message is both comforting and terrifying—comforting for those who embrace its message of love and forgiveness, terrifying for those who reject it. I invite you to read along with me. As you will see, the Bible has some awesome things to say. I have tried pick passages which show God's big overall scheme for mankind, and more specifically for you and me. Read these passages prayerfully, meditatively and allow God to speak to you. What you will be reading is 100% from the Bible, except for the few clarifying words I place in brackets [].

HOW IT ALL BEGAN

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.¹ So God created man in his own image . . . male and female.² God saw all that he had made and it was very good.³ The Lord God planted a garden in the east, in Eden, and there he put the man he had formed.⁴ And the Lord God commanded the man, "You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil."⁵ . . . "You will not surely die," the serpent said to the woman. "For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good from evil."⁶ . . . the woman . . . took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband . . . Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked.⁷ . . . the Lord God banished [them] from the Garden of Eden.⁸

The Lord saw how great man's wickedness on the earth had become and that every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time . . . his [God's] heart was filled with pain.⁹ But Noah found favor in the eyes of the Lord.¹⁰ So God said to Noah, "I am going to put an end to all people.¹¹ . . . make yourself an ark.¹² . . . I will establish my covenant with you . . . You are to bring into the ark two of every living creature¹³ . . . I will send rain on the earth for forty days and nights; and I will wipe from the face of the earth every living creature I have made.¹⁴ . . . The flood waters came. . . Everything on dry land . . . died.¹⁵

GOD BEGINS ANEW

. . . God blessed Noah.16

[Many years later] . . . The LORD . . . said to Abram [Abraham], “I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; . . . I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.”17

The LORD your God has chosen you [Jewish descendants of Abraham] out of all the peoples on the face of the earth to be his people, his treasured possession. The LORD did not set his affection on you and choose you because you were more numerous than other peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples. But it was because the LORD loved you and kept the oath he swore to your forefathers . . . Know therefore that the LORD your God is God; he is the faithful God, keeping his covenant of love to a thousand generations of those who love him and keep his commands. But those who hate him he will repay to their face by destruction . . . 18

When you enter the land the LORD your God is giving you, do not learn to imitate the detestable ways of the nations there. Let no one be found among you who sacrifices his son or daughter in the fire, who practices divination or sorcery, interprets omens, engages in witchcraft, or cast spells, or who is a medium or spiritist or who consults the dead. Anyone who does these things is detestable to the LORD, and because of these detestable practices the LORD your God will drive out those nations before you.19

THINGS START TO GO WRONG

If only you had paid attention to my commands, your peace would have been like a river, your righteousness like the waves of the sea. . . “There is no peace,” says the LORD, “for the wicked.”20 Seek the LORD while he may be found; call on him while he is near. Let the wicked forsake his way and the evil man his thoughts. Let him turn to the LORD, and he will have mercy on him, and to our God for he will freely pardon. “For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways,” declares the LORD. “As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts . . . so is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it.”21

Now this was the sin of your sister Sodom [Israel]: She and her daughters were arrogant, overfed and unconcerned; they did not help the poor and needy. They were haughty and did detestable things before me . . .”22 When I say to the wicked, ‘O wicked man, you will surely die,’ and you do not speak out to dissuade him from his ways, that wicked man will die for his sin, and I will hold you accountable for his blood . . . Say to them, ‘As surely as I live, declares the Sovereign LORD, I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that they turn from their ways and live. Turn! . . . Why will you die . . .?’23

Surely the arm of the LORD is not too short to save, nor his ear too dull to hear. But your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden his face from you, so that he will not hear.24

I prayed to the LORD my God and confessed: “O Lord, the great and awesome God, who keeps his covenant of love with all who love him and obey his commands, we have sinned and done wrong. We have been wicked and have rebelled; we have turned away from your commands and laws. We have not listened to your servants the prophets, who spoke in your name . . . Lord, you are righteous, but this day we are covered with shame . . . O LORD, we and our kings, our our princes and our fathers are covered with shame because we have sinned against you. The Lord our God is merciful and forgiving, even though we have rebelled against him; we have not obeyed the LORD our God . . . Therefore the curses and sworn judgments [cf. Deuteronomy 28-30] written in the Law of Moses, the servant of God, have been poured out on us, because we have sinned against you . . . The LORD did not hesitate to bring the disaster upon us, for the LORD our God is righteous in everything he does; yet we have not obeyed him.”25

GOD WRITES HIMSELF INTO HIS OWN STORY AND BECOMES ONE OF US

The LORD himself will give you a sign: The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son and will call him Immanuel [which means *God with us*].²⁶ God sent the angel Gabriel . . . to a virgin . . . The virgin's name was Mary.²⁷ The angel answered [Mary], "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son Of God.²⁸ Joseph . . . took Mary home as his wife. But he had no union with her until she gave birth to a son. And he was given the name Jesus.²⁹

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of men . . . He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God . . . born of God. The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.³⁰

". . . I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless is is born again . . . You should not be surprised at my saying, 'You must be born again.' The wind blows wherever it pleases. You have heard its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit."³¹ For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son. This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that his deeds will be exposed. But whoever lives by the truth comes into the light . . ." ³²

"Moreover, the Father judges no one, but has entrusted all judgment to the Son, that all may honor the Son just as they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father, who sent him. I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life."³³ "

. . . nor does his word dwell in you, for you do not believe the one he sent. You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify about me, yet you refuse to come to me to have life."³⁴ "The work of God is this, to believe in the one he has sent."³⁵

"All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never drive away . . . For my Father's will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day."³⁶ "My teaching is not my own. It comes from him who sent me. If anyone chooses to do God's will, he will find out whether my teaching comes from God or whether I speak on my own."³⁷ "I told you that you would die in your sins; if you do not believe that I am the one I claim to be, you will indeed die in your sins."³⁸

"So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed . . . I am telling you what I have seen in the Father's presence."³⁹ "The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full . . . I lay down my life—only to take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again."⁴⁰ My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand . . . I and the Father are one."⁴¹ I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?"⁴²

Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me. In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also

may be where I am . . . I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me . . . Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father . . . If you love me, you will obey what I command. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever—The Spirit of truth.”⁴³

“I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing . . . If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not be guilty of sin. Now, however, they have no excuse for their sin. He who hates me hates my Father as well.”⁴⁴

“I came from the Father and entered the world; now I am leaving the world and going back to the Father.”⁴⁵ “Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent . . . My prayer is not that you [God] take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one . . . Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth.”⁴⁶

THE DEATH OF JESUS CHRIST

Then the detachment of soldiers with its commander and the Jewish officials arrested Jesus . . . Then Pilate took Jesus and had him flogged . . . So the soldiers took charge of Jesus. Carrying his own cross, he went out to a place of the Skull (which in Aramaic is called Golgotha). Here they crucified him, and with him two others—one on each side and Jesus in the middle.”⁴⁷

But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed. We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all . . . For he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.”⁴⁸

The soldiers also came up and mocked him. . . One of the criminals who hung there hurled insults at him: “Aren’t you the Christ? Save yourself and us!” But the other criminal rebuked him. “Don’t you fear God,” he said, “since you are under the same sentence? We are punished justly, for we are getting what our deeds deserve. But this man has done nothing wrong.” Then he said, “Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.” Jesus answered him, “I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise.”⁴⁹

HE’S ALIVE!

He said to them, “How foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Did not the Christ have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?” And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself.⁵⁰ . . . While they were still talking about this, Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, “Peace be with you.” They were startled and frightened, thinking they saw a ghost. He said to them, “Why are you troubled, and why do doubts rise in your minds? Look at my hands and my feet. It is I myself! Touch me and see; a ghost does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have.”⁵¹

A week later his disciples were in the house again, and Thomas was with them. Though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you!” Then he said to Thomas, “Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe.” Thomas said to him, “My Lord and my God!” Then Jesus told him, “Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.”⁵²

By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain. For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Peter, and then to the Twelve. After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers at the same time, most of whom are still living . . . If there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. And if

Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith. More than that, we are then found to be false witnesses about God, for we have testified about God that he raised Christ from the dead . . . if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins . . . For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive.⁵³

“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” After he said this, he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight. . . “Men of Galilee,” they [angels] said, “why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven.⁵⁴

MAKING SENSE OF IT ALL

. . . for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified [declared innocent] freely by his grace [an undeserved gift] through the redemption [purchase] that came by Christ Jesus. God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood.⁵⁵ Blessed are they whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man whose sin the Lord will never count against him.⁵⁶ But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God’s wrath through him!⁵⁷ Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! . . . God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.⁵⁸

I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better. I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is like the working of his mighty strength, which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come.”⁵⁹ For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast. For we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.⁶⁰

All this is evidence that God’s judgment is right, and as a result you will be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which we are suffering. God is just: He will pay back trouble to those who trouble you and give relief to you who are troubled, and to us as well. This will happen when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven in blazing fire with his powerful angels. He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the majesty of his power on the day he comes to be glorified in his holy people and to be marveled at among all those who have believed.⁶¹

For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.⁶² For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form . . .⁶³ Since then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.⁶⁴ For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever.⁶⁵

And the Lord's servant must not quarrel; instead, he must be kind to everyone, able to teach, not resentful. Those who oppose him he must gently instruct, in the hope that God will grant them repentance leading them to a knowledge of the truth, and that they will come to their senses and escape from the trap of the devil, who has taken them captive to do his will.⁶⁶

All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work. In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who will judge the living and the dead, and in view of his appearing and his kingdom, I give you this charge: Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction. For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths.⁶⁷

But there were also false prophets among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you. They will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the sovereign Lord who bought them—bringing swift destruction on themselves . . . For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but sent them to hell, putting them into gloomy dungeons to be held for judgment; if he did not spare the ancient world when he brought the flood on its ungodly people, but protected Noah, a preacher of righteousness, and seven others; if he condemned the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah by burning them to ashes, and made them an example of what is going to happen to the ungodly . . . the Lord knows how to rescue godly men from trials and to hold the unrighteous for the day of judgment . . .⁶⁸

First of all, you must understand that in the last days scoffers will come, scoffing and following their own evil desires. They will say, “Where is this coming he promised? Ever since our fathers died, everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation.” But they deliberately forget that long ago by God's word, the heavens existed and the earth was formed out of water and by water. By these waters also the world of that time was deluged and destroyed. By the same word the present heavens and earth are reserved for fire, being kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men. But do not forget this one thing, dear friends: With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day. The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance. But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness.⁶⁹

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness . . . Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For everything in the world—the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does—comes not from the Father but from the world.⁷⁰

How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him . . . We are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.⁷¹ And so we know and rely on the love God has for us. God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in him. In this way, love is made complete among us so that we will have confidence on the day of judgment . . . There is no fear in love, but perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love.⁷²

And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life. I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know that you have eternal life. This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. And if we know that he hears us—whatever we ask—we know that we have what we asked of him.⁷³

“I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either one or the other! So, because you are lukewarm—neither hot nor cold—I am going to spit you out of my mouth. Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in [to him] and eat with him and he with me.⁷⁴

Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake: some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt.⁷⁵—Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. Earth and sky fled from his presence, and there was no place for them. And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books. The sea gave up the dead that were in it and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them, and each person was judged according to what he had done. Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. The lake of fire is the second death. If anyone’s name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.⁷⁶

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.⁷⁷ Therefore, since the promise of entering his rest still stands, let us be careful that none of you be found to have fallen short of it. For we also have had the gospel [good news] preached to us, just as they did; but the message they heard was of no value to them, because those who heard did not combine it with faith . . . Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts.⁷⁸

Thus ends the reading of God’s word. I encourage you to read and re-read these passages. Look them up. Read them in context. Once you begin to fully realize that you are a sinner before the eyes of a holy God, that you are in need of a savior, you will appreciate the tremendous sacrifice Christ made in dying for your sins in order to make salvation possible. Will you believe? Will you receive Jesus Christ? He stands outside the door of your heart knocking. Quietly humble yourself, and in your own words, confess your sins to him, asking Him to forgive you and to live within your heart.—Once you do this, try to find a church where you can grow and be spiritually fed. Not all churches are the same. Check around. Ask God to lead you to one that honors Him, where Scripture and the salvation message are preached with integrity, and where you sense the love and presence of Christ.—Peace!

For additional help over the internet, I highly recommend the following organizations. Contact them for additional Christian literature to aid you in your growth as a new believer.

- Billy Graham Evangelistic Assoc.:** <http://www.graham-assn.org>
- Campus Crusade For Christ:** <http://www.ccci.org>
- Fellowship Of Christian Athletes:** <http://www.gospel.com.net/fca/>
- Freedom In Christ Ministries:** <http://www.ficm.org>
- Great Commission Ministries:** <http://www.greatcommission.org>
- Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship:** <http://www.ivpress.com>
- Josh McDowell Ministries:** <http://www.ccci.org/josh/>
- The Navigators:** <http://www.gospelcom.net/navs/>
- Youth For Christ:** <http://www.gospelcom.net/yfc/>

Log onto <http://www.gospelcom.net> for addresses of other Christian organizations and resources.