

MEETING 1

THE POINTERS TO THE EXISTENCE OF GOD

▪ **Introduce**

People search for answers to their fundamental questions: “Who am I?” “Where do I come from?” “Why am I here?” “Where am I going?” The answers to many of these fundamental questions are found in the Bible. A famous scientist said, “There is an empty space in man, which only **God** can fill.” It is therefore very important to seek God.

▪ **Sharing in the group**

“Does someone whom we call ‘God’ really exist?”
Tell why you think that God does or does not exist?

▪ **Teaching from the Bible**

The ideas of people why they believe that God does or does not exist are based on mere human opinions and not on divine revelation. When people discuss natural science, they make use of a natural science book. Likewise, when we discuss the Christian Faith, we use the Bible. The Bible is God’s revelation and tells us to look at 5 things which point to the existence of God.

A. THE CREATION REVEALS THE EXISTENCE OF GOD

1. The possibility of creation.

Someone may say, “I think that the universe came into existence by its own power” (by evolution or an explosion).
Consider. “How could I believe that *Someone* has created the universe?”

• **The illustration of Newton.**

Newton was a great scientist who discovered that the planets and stars in the universe are held together by gravity. In order to illustrate this fact, he built a model of the solar system in his office. He showed this model to visitors and said, “If you believe that the universe came into existence by its own power, then you should also believe that a model of the solar system like this can come into existence by itself, because all the materials needed for this to happen are available in this office. All that is needed for that to happen again, is an observable evolution or explosion! However, if you believe that I (Newton) made (created) this model of the solar system, you should also be able to believe that the existing solar system and whole universe was made (created) by Someone we call GOD. The only difference is that the universe which God made is much greater and more wonderful than any model I can make.”

2. The great things that have been created.

Consider. Some facts about the stars.

Read Isaiah 40:25-26; (Job 11:7-8a; Psalm 19:1, Romans 1:20).

God challenges man to try to imagine his greatness and power. There is nothing on earth that can be compared to God’s greatness and power. Even the Himalaya Mountains are too small! There is nothing in the solar system that can be compared to God’s greatness and power. Even the sun is too small! What can help people to picture the greatness and power of God? People know of nothing that can be compared to God’s greatness and power. That is why everyone remains silent.

Then God points to the stars and invites man to consider who created the stars. The stars are a constant reminder of the greatness and power of God. Try to imagine the following:

▪ **The number of the stars¹**

On a clear and dark night a man can see about six thousand (6000) stars with his naked eye. Most of them belong to our galaxy, called ‘the Milky Way’, which contains about one hundred milliard (100 000 000 000) (11 zero’s) stars.

By means of the greatest telescopes man can see more than ten thousand trillion (10 000 000 000 000 000 000) (22 zero’s) stars and about one hundred milliard (100 000 000 000) (11 zero’s) galaxies like the Milky Way. Some stars have never been discovered, because since the creation their light has never reached the earth! The number of stars in the universe is so great that no one can count them in his whole lifetime.

▪ **The distances of the stars**

The only star in the solar system is the sun and it is the closest star to earth. The distance to the sun is 150 million kilometres. Just how far is that? Flying by plane to the sun at 1000 kilometres per hour would take you 17 years.

¹ million (British + American) = 1 000 000 (6 zero’s)
milliard (American: billion) = 1 000 000 000 (9 zero’s) (a thousand million)
billion (American: trillion) = 1 000 000 000 000 (12 zero’s) (a million million)
billiard (American: quadrillion) = 1 000 000 000 000 000 (15 zero’s) (a million milliard)
trillion (American: quintillion) = 1 000 000 000 000 000 000 (18 zero’s) (million million million)

The distances to the stars are so immense that scientists use 'a light year' to indicate the distance. Light is the fastest phenomenon known to man. The speed of light is about three hundred thousand kilometres (300 000) per second. That equals 7½ times around the earth in one second! 'A light year' is the distance light travels during one year. One light year equals a distance of nine-and-a-half billion (9 454 000 000 000) (9½ times 12 zero's) kilometres!

The moon is one and a third light second away. The planet Mars is 5 light minutes away. The sun is 8 light minutes away. The planet Pluto is five light hours away. The star closest to the solar system is 4.3 light years away. Flying by plane to this star would take four and a half million (4 644 000) years!

Our galaxy, the Milky Way, has a diameter of about hundred-and-twenty thousand (120 000) light years! The galaxy closest to our galaxy is called Spiral Nebula N-1. It consists of billions of stars and the distance to it is more than one million light years! The furthest stars are millions of light years separated from us! Astronomers estimate that the furthest measured distance in the universe is plus minus seventeen milliard (17 000 000 000) light years!

Man will never be able to comprehend the universe, let alone conquer the universe!

- **The sizes of the stars**

Our planet earth has a diameter of 12 756 kilometres. The diameter of the sun is 109 times that of the earth. There are stars that have a diameter 100 and even 1000 times that of the sun! The largest stars, the super blue giant stars, are so great that the planets Mercury, Venus, Earth and Mars could rotate with ease inside such a star!

If the diameter of the earth could be represented by 1 millimetre, then in comparison the diameter of the sun would be 11 centimetres and that of a super blue giant star 110 metres!

- **The greatness and power of God**

People can observe and study the stars with telescopes. But who created the greatest things in the universe known to man? The Bible reveals that God created the stars, controls their movements and even gives to each star a name (Isaiah 40:25-26)! God says "It is I who made the earth and created mankind upon it. My own hands stretched out the heavens; I marshalled their starry hosts" (Isaiah 45:12).

If man cannot fathom the number, the distances and sizes of the stars, how could man then fathom the existence, being (nature) and greatness of God? The existence of the stars point every night to the existence of a great and powerful God!

3. The small things that have been created.

Consider. Some facts about the human body.

Read Psalm 139:14. God has created the human body fantastic! God is the Creator of growth. The phenomenon 'growth' is a wonder! The human body grows and renews itself continuously. God is not only the Creator of the greatest things in the universe (the stars), but also of the smallest forms of life thinkable.

- **Cells in the human body.**

The human body consists of uncountable cells. One kilogram of body weight can contain up to 2 000 000 000 000 (12 zero's) cells! Each single cell contains tens of small power stations that produce all the energy in the human body. But in size, each power station is less than 1 micrometer (one thousandth of a millimetre)! These power stations are so small, yet capable of producing so much energy! The energy produced by this uncountable number of cells is used to manage all the functions of the human body and to enable man to work hard or to participate in energetic sports.

- **Lungs of a human.**

The human lungs consist of many tubes that end in air sacks. Scientists estimate that there are more than 600 000 000 such air sacks in your lungs. The wall of each air sack contains many tiny blood vessels that absorb the oxygen before it is transported to the rest of the body. The walls of the air sacks of one human being's lungs are so artfully folded together that if you could unfold them, they would form a surface as large as a football field! Imagine how God is able to fold skin containing blood vessels the size of a football field into such a small space as a human breast!

We can study the human body by means of the greatest microscopes. But WHO created the human body, which contain some of the smallest things in the universe? The Bible says that GOD created every human being in his mother's womb and that each human being is wonderfully made! If man still has not fathomed all the secrets of the human body, how can he fathom the Creator of the human body? The existence of wonderful human bodies point to the existence of an even greater Creator!

4. Knowing that the Creator exists.

Discuss. If you cannot see God, the Creator, how can you know that he exists?

- **The wristwatch illustration.**

You can see my wristwatch, but you cannot see the person who made it. Yet you know that he must exist somewhere in the world, because you can see what he made. In the same way, even though you cannot see God, the Creator, you know that he exists, because you can see his creation!

Summary. By studying the created universe, you can get to know the CREATOR of the universe. The universe reveals the power, beauty and order of the WORK OF GOD within creation.

B. THE BIBLE REVEALS THE EXISTENCE OF GOD

Jesus Christ says, “Heaven and earth *will pass away*, but *my words (the Bible) will never pass away*” (Matthew 24:35). Therefore, God’s words in the Bible are even more important than God’s works in the whole creation!

Consider. Some facts about God’s words, which are recorded in the Bible.

1. Facts concerning the contents of the Bible.

When you read the Bible, you will discover that every part is related to one great theme, namely, “God, who speaks and acts decisively in human history.” God begins the material universe, gives purpose to the material universe, saves the lost and broken people of this material universe and ends this present material universe. The Bible from beginning to end is inspired by God (2 Timothy 3:16-17)!

- The Bible describes *the beginning* of all things: It describes the beginning of the material universe and the beginning of the human race. It relates the beginning of the revelation of God and his will to man. It records the beginning of man’s sin and redemption. It describes the beginning of family life, man-made civilisation and the nations of the world.
- The Bible describes the meaning and purpose of existence: It describes how people should live, how families should function, how teachers should teach, how judges should judge, how politicians should rule, how businessmen should conduct their business, etc. etc.
- The Bible teaches why all people need salvation and how they can be saved. The Bible describes God’s salvation plan and salvation history.
- The Bible also vividly describes *the end* of all things: It describes the death of man and animals, the end of human history and the destruction of all human kingdoms, the final judgement of everyone and the renewal of the whole present creation.

Thus, the Bible has one theme, namely, “God, who speaks and acts decisively in human history.” God speaks and acts in order to reveal and execute his eternal plan with his whole creation. God’s plan includes the salvation of lost and broken people in the world.

The *one single theme* from beginning to end of the Bible points to just ONE AUTHOR directing the writing of the Bible!

2. Facts concerning the origin of the Bible.

- The Bible consists of 66 books.
- These books were written over a period of at least 1600 years, from about 1500 B.C. to about A.D. 100.
- These books were written by at least 40 different authors.
- These authors lived as far as 2500 kilometres apart from one another, from Babylonia in the East to Rome in the West.
- The authors wrote these books in the context of completely different languages (Hebrew/Aramaic and Greek) and completely different cultures (Eastern culture, Middle Eastern culture and Western culture).

When these 66 books were completed, they were compiled into one single book called *the Bible*, because of the unity and progression of its message. The Bible is one complete book with one single theme.

The *one single book*, written by so many different people living in so many different times and circumstances, points to just *one Author* directing the writing of the Bible!

3. Facts concerning the copying of the Bible.

Before the discovery of printing, books were copied by hand. What was done to ensure the faithful copying and transmission of the original Bible books, so that we can have confidence in God’s Word today?

- **Three groups of people contributed to the faithful transmission of the Hebrew text of the Old Testament through many centuries.**

They were “the Sopherim”, “the Talmudists” and “the Masoretes”.

“*The Sopherim*” were an order of “scribes” and “teachers of the law” which had its beginning under Ezra, the scribe, from about 457 B.C. to about 200 A.D. (Ezra 7:6,10; Nehemiah 8:13). For more than 600 years they were the official “Bible Publication Society” of that time. Their great achievement was to standardise a pure text of the Hebrew Bible by making sure that *every hand-written copy of an Old Testament book would conform to the standard text*. From about 100 B.C. they counted all the verses, all the words and all the letters (consonants) of each book of the Old Testament and wrote these figures at the end of each book concerned! In this way, anyone could check if he had a perfect copy of the Old Testament text before him or one with a mistake.

“*The Talmudists*” were “the transmitters of the interpretations” of the Old Testament books. They existed between 100 B.C. and 500 A.D. For 600 years they memorised the oral tradition and transmitted the written tradition concerning the interpretation of the Old Testament books. The mass of these “traditions” has been preserved in three collections, called “the Midrash”, “the Talmud” and “the Tosefta”. They are important, because they *contain many quotations from the Old Testament books*. These quotations help us to see that the Hebrew text we possess today is very accurate. The many years of transmission by hand did not change the standard Hebrew text!

“The Masoretes” were “the scholars who gave the final form to the Hebrew text” of the Old Testament books. They functioned between 500 and 950 A.D. The Hebrew script originally had only 22 letters and all of them were consonants. The vowels were added mentally when the Hebrew text was read. Only after 500 A.D. “points” were added to the text to represent the vowels. The Masoretes received the Hebrew text written only in these 22 consonants from the Sopherim and they inserted the vowels in the form of “points”. Thus they *ensured that every Hebrew word preserved its exact pronunciation and grammatical form*. They committed themselves to the accurate preservation of the Hebrew Old Testament books. They were more diligent and devoted to the accurate preservation of the Hebrew Old Testament books than any other endeavour to preserve ancient secular or religious literature in the history of human civilisation! They were so conscientious in their task that they did not even venture to make the most obvious corrections in the consonant text, but handed the ancient Hebrew consonant text down to us exactly as it came to them!

Conclusion. The faithful copying and transmission of the original Old Testament books was ensured by maintaining the standard text, by counting verses, words and letters and by never making any changes in the text.

• **The faithful copying of the New Testament manuscripts.**

The trustworthiness of the Greek New Testament is based on three facts:

The number of manuscripts. The most ancient historical books in the West we possess are from Herodotus and Thucydides and are from the 5th century B.C. While we only possess 8 manuscripts of each of these, we have 5000 manuscripts of the Greek New Testament, 1000 manuscripts of the earlier translations of the New Testament and 8000 manuscripts of the Latin translation of the New Testament! Thus the text of the New Testament has been preserved better than any other document of the ancient world!

The time interval between copies and their originals. The oldest historical books in the West, Herodotus and Thucydides, are from the 5th century B.C., but the oldest copies we have of them are from A.D. 900. While the time interval between the writing of these books and the date of their earliest extant (“still existing”) copies is 1300 years, the time interval between the New Testament originals and their oldest extant copies is only 250 years! Classical scholars of history do not doubt the authenticity of the text of Herodotus and Thucydides. The reliability of the New Testament text is many times greater!

The accuracy of the copies of the text. The greatest Epic in the West is “the Iliad of Homer”² and we possess 643 copies of it. Next to the New Testament, there are more extant copies of the Iliad than of any other book of ancient times. Both the Iliad and the Bible are considered “sacred” and both underwent *some changes in their text through copying*. But, while 764 lines of the 15 600 lines of the Iliad are questioned, only 40 lines of the 20 000 lines of the New Testament are questioned, that is 25 times less! Moreover, not one of these 40 lines or 400 words which are questioned in the New Testament Greek text affects either the doctrine or life of Christianity, because the doctrine and life contained in them are supported by other parts of the New Testament which stand above any doubt!

Conclusion: From the standpoint of literary evidence, the reliability of the New Testament Greek text is stronger than that of any other ancient written document in the whole world! Scholars are satisfied that we possess substantially the true text of the Greek New Testament³.

4. Facts concerning the completeness of the Bible.

The Bible is so complete that *throughout the centuries there has never been a need to change, to add to or to destroy its contents*. No other religious book can equal this!

• **The holy books of other religions.**

The holy books of Hinduism, Buddhism and Confucianism had many authors who lived in different times and who wrote very many holy books. However, these books are very *different in contents*. Their authors had so great a diversity of teachings and their doctrines have been amended so many times that it is impossible to unite all their doctrines into one unified system. Therefore, the Hindus, Buddhists and Confucianists do not have “a Bible”.

The holy book of Islam, called the Qur’an, came into being about 600 years *after* the Bible (between A.D. 609-632). One third of its contents consist of materials, which has been borrowed from the Bible⁴, but in a way that misunderstood the Bible. One third consists of repetitions. And one third consists of materials partly borrowed from Arab heathenism⁵, partly describing Mohammed’s relationships⁶ and partly giving political and ritual rules for his followers, which have been borrowed from different religions and sects. During the life of Mohammed, his words were mainly memorised and rehearsed.

The first collection of the Qur’an was probably made under Abu Bakr, the first “Caliph” or “successor” of Mohammed (A.D. 632-634).

² ‘Iliad’ means “a long story of martial arts, for example the epic poem of Homer

³ Novum Testamentum Graece van Eberhard Nestle en Kurt Aland

⁴ The Qur’an borrowed the Old Testament prophets, Pharaoh, Jews, the apostles of the New Testament, Gabriel, Mary, Jesus, the Last Day, etc.

⁵ The Arab goddesses: al-Lat, al-Uzza and al-Manat (Surah 53:19-30) and the Jinn (Surah 6:100; 34:41)

⁶ The wives of the prophet (Surah 33:28-52)

The second collection. Due to the fact that many of those who could recite verses from Mohammed from memory died in battles, Umar, the second Caliph (A.D. 634-644) commissioned Zayd-ibn-Thabit, one of Mohammed's secretaries, to collect "the recitations" (i.e. the Qur'an).⁷ One tradition says that Zayd collected it "not only from the hearts of men, but also from pieces of parchment, flat stones, palm leaves, shoulder blades, ribs of animals, pieces of leather and wooden boards".

The final collection. The collection of Zayd was almost certainly the basis of a completion of the text in A.D. 652 ordered by Uthman, the third Caliph (644-656). When *disputes arose as to the different readings* of the text, the dialect and reading of Mohammed's tribe (the Quraysh) was chosen. Four *standard copies* were placed at Medina, Kufa, Basra and Damascus. All variant readings of the Qur'an were deliberately destroyed!

The Qur'an:

- has but one man who "recited" the revelation (Mohammed)
- one man who "gathered and recorded" these recitations (Zayd) over a period of 23 years
- and one man (Uthman) who deliberately destroyed all variant readings of the Qur'an!

In comparison to this the Bible:

- has more than 40 writers inspired by the Holy Spirit
- who recorded the revelation of God over a period of more than 1600 years
- without changing a single letter!

• **The Bible has never been amended.**

Although there are variant readings among the hand-written copies of the Bible, they have never been deliberately destroyed. Moreover, these variant readings do not change any of the teachings of the Bible! Throughout the centuries, the teachings of the Bible have never been amended. For example:

The creation of vegetation. The Bible relates that matter was made, formed or ordered as follows: On the first day of creation, God made the light (energy). That points to the light of the sun and other heavenly bodies. On the second day of creation, God made the sky, which made a separation between the vapour moving above in the sky (the clouds) and the vapour condensed on the earth (the sea). Thus, a thick layer of clouds covered the earth. On the third day of creation, God separated the dry land from the sea, so that the continents and oceans of the earth were formed. Of course, God may have made use of the gradual cooling of the earth, that brought about the condensation of vapour into water and he could have made use of earthquakes that pushed mountains upwards into the air. *The Bible does not describe any details of how God created or how long it took to create.* By God's creative command, the earth produced all kinds of green plants and trees. The light of the sun, which shone through the clouds, and the water made the production of chlorophyll (leaf-green) possible. Scientists have discovered that light, oxygen and water are needed in photosynthesis to produce chlorophyll. Thus, scientists agree that *the process of creation* as described in the Bible is in accord with science. Scientists confirmed the truth of the Bible.

The creation in six days. The first page of the Bible relates how God "created" the universe inclusive the earth "in the beginning" (Genesis 1:1-2) and "completed" it in six creation days (Genesis 2:1). During the 18th century, some learned people said that Christians should tear this page out of their Bibles, because it was in conflict with science. But in our time an increasing number of scientists and cosmologists agree that the Bible is not in conflict with science.⁸

God *created energy, matter, space and time out of nothing* (Hebrews 11:3) and *created the final product through a process*. For example: First God *created matter out of nothing*. Then he *formed (fashioned) matter (clay) into the form of a man and breathed life into him* (Genesis 2:7). Finally he *built* a woman out of the side of man (Genesis 2:22).

God created "time" (years, seasons, *days* of 24 hours) as humans calculate time only on the fourth *day* of creation (Genesis 1:14). And Genesis 2:4 says, "... in the *day* the Lord God made the earth and the heavens" as if the whole creation of the universe was made in one day! Thus, every "*day* of creation" may have been a very long period. However, the famous scientist, Lawrence, proved that "time is dependent on speed." For example, if it were possible for a man to make a return trip to the planet Pluto with the speed of light, then he would take less than 11 *hours* to complete the journey. However, when he returns to earth, more than 12 *years* would have gone by on earth, because earth does not travel at the speed of light. Likewise, the time needed to create the universe is proportionately dependent on the speed with which God created! God, who created light by just speaking a word, could also have created the universe at the speed of light. Therefore, no man can calculate the duration of "*a day* of creation"!

Thus, it is not the Bible that needs to amend its record, but it is scientists who need to adjust their theories again and again to the true testimony of the Bible and change their theories about the Bible! The *once for all time completeness* of the Bible, points to just *one Author* directing the writing of the Bible!

Summary. Forty different prophets could only have produced one complete book with one main theme, without amending its teachings and without deliberately destroying any variant reading over a period of 1600 years if there was one Author

⁷ "Read!" (Surah 96:1-5). "Why is the Qur'an not revealed unto him all at once?" (Surah 25:32. "And (it is) a Qur'an that We have divided, that thou mayest recite it unto mankind at intervals, and We have revealed it by (successive) revelation" (Surah 17:106.

⁸ Read "The Fingerprint of God" by Hugh Ross

and Editor behind all these prophets! The Bible is so complete that nothing needed to be changed after its completion! The Bible is the book most sold and most read in the world. The existence of the Bible points to the existence of the Author and Editor of the Bible, namely God.

By studying the Bible, you can get to know the AUTHOR and EDITOR of the Bible.

The thoughts, feelings, will, WORDS and DEEDS of God in human history are revealed in the Bible.

C. JESUS CHRIST REVEALS THE EXISTENCE OF GOD

1. The incarnation of Jesus Christ.

Question. How do we know that Jesus Christ really existed?

- **The calendar-illustration.**

This part speaks about the incarnation of Jesus Christ. How do we know that he really came to this earth? How do people date ancient and modern history? What is the meaning of B.C. and A.D.? They mean “before Christ” (B.C. and “after Christ” (A.D.: “Anno Domini” means “in the year of the LORD”). Thus, Jesus Christ divides all human history into two parts and all modern dating is done with reference to Jesus Christ! The historians in the world would never have used a person who never existed in history to date the history of the world! The historians in the world acknowledge that Jesus Christ really existed!

In the ancient past many emperors and great kings have aspired to occupy this position in history. They destroyed all previous calendars and used all means to create a new calendar in which all dating referred to themselves. But their efforts were in vain. Their calendars were rejected and forgotten.

Why is human history recorded with reference to the birth of Jesus Christ? Why does Jesus Christ occupy the centre of human history? Why is Jesus Christ different to all the rulers and prophets in history? The Bible says, because Jesus Christ is the most unique Person who ever lived! Jesus Christ is “God who took on the human nature and lived amongst us”. *He entered his own creation and our human history in order to reveal to us who God really is and what God has done for us!*

2. Fulfilled prophecies about Jesus Christ.

Draw a time line on a board or paper. Moses (Deuteronomy) lived during 1450 B.C.; David (Psalms) during 1000 B.C.; Isaiah and Micah during 700 B.C.

Discover and discuss. Which predictions of the prophets concerning Jesus Christ were literally fulfilled?

- **His birth.**

More than 700 years B.C., Micah prophesied that Jesus Christ would be born in Bethlehem, a city in Israel (Micah 5:2; Matthew 2:1). More than 700 years B.C., Isaiah prophesied that Jesus Christ would be the son of a virgin and that his name would mean “God with us” (Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 1:20-23).

- **His life.**

More than 1450 years B.C., Moses prophesied that Jesus Christ would be a prophet who must be obeyed (Deuteronomy 18:15-19; Acts 3:22-23).

- **His death**

More than 1000 years B.C., David prophesied how Jesus Christ would die: his hands and feet would be pierced (with nails) (Psalm 22:16; Luke 23:33); people would divide his clothes among themselves (Psalms 22:18; John 19:23-24); people would surround him, scorn, mock, despise and insult him (Psalm 22:6-7; Matthew 27:39-44); and he would experience being forsaken by God the Father (Psalm 22:1; Matthew 27:46).

- **His salvation**

More than 700 years B.C., Isaiah prophesied why Jesus Christ would die on the cross: He said, “He was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him” (Isaiah 53:5-6; 1 Peter 2:24-25; Romans 4:25).

- **More than fifty predictions regarding Jesus Christ.**

The prophets made more than fifty predictions or prophecies about Jesus Christ hundreds of years before he was born. Maybe one or two of these predictions could have been fulfilled also in another person in history, but certainly not all fifty predictions! Jesus fulfilled all fifty predictions! Sixteen of these predictions were all fulfilled on one day, the day he was crucified! About no other person in history have so many predictions been made! No other person in history has literally fulfilled so many predictions! In order to fulfil only eight of such predictions, any person would have one chance out of a hundred milliard (100 000 000 000 000 000)(17 zero’s)! The significance of the fact that Jesus Christ fulfilled all fifty predictions is that it proves that Jesus Christ is *absolutely unique in the history* of the world and that he is *divine*. It is also evidence that there exists a divine mind behind the Bible and its predictions, that is, that the Bible is inspired by God. It is therefore evidence that God exists.

3. Jesus Christ revealed God.

Discover and discuss. Who is Jesus Christ?

What is said about Jesus Christ in the Bible passage below? Which aspects of God's character does Jesus Christ reveal?

Read the following Bible passages. What is said about Jesus Christ?

- John 1:1 and 14? (Jesus Christ is God and Man)
- John 1:3 and 9b? (Jesus Christ is Creator of the world and came into the world)
- John 1:18 and 4? (Jesus Christ is revealed God and God's character)
- John 1:4,9a and 5,10? (Jesus Christ is enlightened every man, but was not understood/recognized/acknowledged)
- John 1:11 and 12? (Jesus Christ was rejected by some and accepted by others)
- Mark 2:1-12? (God/Jesus has authority to forgive sins)
- John 5:21-24? (God/Jesus raises the dead and gives life)
- John 14:21,23? (God/Jesus makes God's love and presence a reality)

▪ **Who Jesus Christ is.**

God is the almighty Spirit, lives in an unapproachable light and is invisible (1 Timothy 6:16). However, Jesus Christ is *the visible revelation* of the invisible God (Colossians 1:15)⁹. He reveals God's being and glory (Hebrews 1:3). Words reveal and express thoughts. Jesus Christ is called "the Word" (John 1:1), because he reveals and expresses (reflects) the soul (being) and mind (thoughts) of God. Jesus Christ is God. "In Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form" (Colossians 2:9). And Jesus Christ took on the human nature in Mary (Luke 1:30-37). Jesus Christ therefore has a divine nature and a human nature (John 1:1 and 14). He makes God known to man (John 1:18) and enables man to know God and approach God.

▪ **What Jesus Christ does.**

Jesus Christ is the Creator of the universe as well as the One who came into the created world (John 1:3 and 9b). Jesus Christ reveals (expresses) God and God's character to people. "In him was life and that life was the light of men" (John 1:4) ("life" is the summary of God's divine attributes and "light" is that truth expressed) "Jesus Christ made God known (John 1:18). Jesus Christ is the only One that saves people (John 14:6; Luke 19:10). Jesus Christ now raises spiritual and physical dead people, and will later at his second coming raise dead people (John 5:21,24, 28-29) exactly as God the father does. And Jesus Christ will judge all people (John 5:22-23).

▪ **How a person can come into a relationship with Jesus Christ.**

Jesus Christ has the authority to forgive sins just as God the Father has (Mark 2:1-12). He blesses people with God's grace (John 1:16). He enlightens every person and yet he is not understood or acknowledged by many (John 1:4,9a and 5,10). He is being rejected by some people and received by others (John 1:11 and 12). He makes the love and presence of God a reality in human life (John 14:21 and 23).

Summary. By studying Jesus Christ, you can get to know GOD WHO BECAME MAN. Jesus Christ reveals the NATURE, PERSONALITY and CHARACTER of God.

D. THE HEART OF MAN REVEALS THE EXISTENCE OF GOD

1. How do all people know what is "right" and what is "wrong"?

Read Exodus 20:12-17; Romans 2:14-15. Illiterate and literate nations as well as all cultures in every part of the world know "you shall not murder", "you shall not commit adultery" and "you shall not steal". How can all people in the world know the difference between right and wrong? This is possible only if the same Lawgiver *wrote some of his moral laws on every human heart*.

The moral laws in the hearts and consciences of people are the same, because the same Lawgiver wrote them when he created people. When you listen to these moral laws written in your heart, your heart will begin to tell you that there is a God who loves what is right and hates what is evil (Psalm 5:4-5; Psalm 11:5).

However, this will not always happen, because something terrible has happened to the human heart.

2. What happened to the human heart?

Read Jeremiah 17:5-10. "The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?" Only when a very special miracle takes place in your heart, will your heart become new! In the Bible this miracle is called "regeneration" or "to be born again/anew/from above" (John 3:3). Jesus says, "No one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again" (John 3:3)! And, "You should not be surprised at my saying, 'You *must* be born again'." (John 3:7).

3. Why is the heart so important.

Read Psalm 14:1; Psalm 10:2-4; Psalm 27:8. With your heart you can exclude God or you can seek God and find him! "Your heart is the wellspring of life" (Proverbs 4:23). That is why God says, "My son, give me your heart" (Proverbs 23:26).

Summary. By listening to your heart and conscience, you can get to know the GOD FOR WHOM RIGHT AND WRONG IS VERY IMPORTANT. The heart of man reveals some of the MORAL LAWS of God.

⁹ Read Exodus 3:2. The Angel of the LORD (= the LORD)(verse 4) appeared in fire in the bush. Also Islam believes that Allah appeared to Moses in a burning bush and spoke to him Surah 20:10-12). If God can reveal himself in material fire, he can also reveal himself in the Man, Jesus Christ!

E. THE LIVES OF REAL CHRISTIANS REVEAL THE EXISTENCE OF GOD

1. Which changes took place in the life of the apostle Paul.

Read Acts 26:9-19 and Philippians 3:7-14. Who was Paul? Paul hated and persecuted Christians. But one day Jesus Christ appeared to him, transformed his heart and turned his life around. Christ forgave his sin and saved him. Paul's life changed and he began to live a new life. The former persecutor and destroyer of Christians became a Christian himself, a person whom God chose to use!

2. Who changed Paul's life so much?

Read 1 Timothy 1:15-16. Paul himself testifies that no religion, philosophy or science has changed him. Only God through the work of Jesus Christ changed his life!

3. Look at the lives of genuine Christians.

Seek contact and fellowship with genuine Christians¹⁰ and observe their lives and testimonies. Ask them who changed their lives and how it happened. Modern psychology, sociology, criminology and philosophy all recognise the importance of helping people to change for the better. But these sciences have little power to accomplish the necessary changes. However, millions of Christians give testimonies of how their lives have changed. Therefore, when genuine Christians tell you how their lives have been changed, you must listen and observe. Behind these Christians stands the living God who changed their lives and is continuing to transform their lives.

Unfortunately there are also people who call themselves "Christians", but in reality are not changed at all. Some so-called "Christians" behave as non-Christians and even as bad people. Nevertheless, Christians do not throw these people out of their churches, but persevere to speak the truth to them in the hope that they too will begin to grasp the truth and change.

Thus, seek genuine Christians, observe how they live and listen to what they say.

Summary. By studying the lives and testimonies of real Christians, you can get to know the GOD WHO CHANGES LIVES. The POWER OF GOD TO CHANGE LIVES is revealed in the lives of genuine Christians.

Summary. The 5 things that point to the existence of God:

If you want to know whether God exists, then:

1. Study the creation and discover the wonders, power, beauty and order of the work of God in creation.
2. Study the Bible and discover the thoughts, decisions, words and deeds of God in human history.
3. Study Jesus Christ and discover the nature, personality and character of God.
4. Listen to your heart and conscience and discover some important moral laws of God.
5. Study the lives and testimonies of genuine Christians and discover the power of God to change (transform) lives.

ASSIGNMENT BEFORE THE NEXT SESSION

1. Read the Bible passages again. Consider what the Bible says about the existence of God.
2. Consider the following problem: "If there is a God, why is there so much misery and suffering in the world?" Next time we will consider this problem

¹⁰ Unfortunately there are also *nominal Christians* or *cultural Christians*, people who are born in Christian families and raised in the Christian culture. Because they have not been born again, they live as the other people of this world. They call themselves "Christians", but in the eyes of Jesus Christ they are NOT Christians (Matthew 5:20; Matthew 7:21-23)!