

27 Activities of Satan

1. He has a false trinity. Rev. 13:2; 16:13
2. He has his synagogues. Rev. 2:9
3. He has his doctrines. 1 Tim. 4:1
4. He has his mysteries. Rev. 2:24; 2 Thess. 2:7
5. He has his throne. Rev. 2:13; 13:2
6. He has his kingdom. Luke 4:6
7. He has his worshipers. Rev. 13:4
8. He has his angels. Rev. 12:7
9. He has his ministers. 2 Cor. 11:15
10. He has his miracles. 2 Thess 2:9; Matt. 7:21-23
11. He has his sacrifices. 1 Cor. 10:20
12. He has his fellowship. 1 Cor. 10:20
13. He has his armies. Isa. 24:21; Rev. 14:14-17; 16:16
14. He sows tares among God's wheat. Matt. 13:24-30, 36-43
15. He instigates false doctrine. 1 Tim. 4:1-3
16. He perverts the Word of God. Gen. 3:1-4
17. He hinders the works of God's servants. 1 Thess. 2:18
18. He resists the prayers of God's servants. Dan. 10:12-13
19. He blinds men to the truth. 2 Cor. 4:4
20. He steals the Word of God from human hearts. Matt. 13:19
21. He accuses Christians before God. Job 1:7-12; 2:3-6; Zech. 3:1-4; Rev. 12:10
22. He lays snares for men. 2 Tim. 2:26; 1 Tim. 3:7
23. He tempts. Matt. 4:1; Eph. 6:11
24. He afflicts. Job 2:7; Luke 13:16; 2 Cor. 12:7; Acts 10:38
25. He deceives. Rev. 12:9; 20:8, 10
26. He undermines the sanctity of the home. 1 Cor. 7:3-5
27. He prompts both saints and sinners to transgress against the holiness of God. 1 Chron. 21:1; Matt. 16:22-23; John 13:2; Acts 5:3

14 Activities of Fallen Angels

1. They oppose God's purpose. Eph. 6:12
2. They execute Satan's program. 1 Tim. 4:1; Rev. 9:16:12-14
3. They disseminate false doctrine. 2 Thess. 2:2; 1 Tim. 4:1
4. Some cause insanity. Matt. 8:28; 17:15, 18; Mark 5:15; Luke 8:27-29
5. Some cause muteness of speech. Matt. 9:33
6. Some cause disease. Matt 10:1; Mark 1:23-26; 3:11; Luke 4:36; Acts 5:16; 8:7; Rev. 16:13
7. Some cause deafness. Mark 9:25
8. Some cause epilepsy. Matt. 17:15-18
9. Some cause blindness. Matt. 12:22
10. Some cause suicidal mania. Mark 9:22
11. Some cause personal injuries. Mark 9:18
12. Some cause physical defects. Luke 13:11
13. They will inflict grievous torture upon unsaved mankind during the great Tribulation. Rev. 9:3-4
14. Saul, Israel's first king, was often troubled by an evil spirit. 1 Sam. 16:14; 18:10; 19:9

16 Facts about Satan

1. He was named Lucifer before his fall. Isa. 14:12
2. He was in Eden. Ezek. 28:13
3. He was the anointed cherub of God. Ezek. 28:14
4. He was adorned with precious stones. Ezek. 28:13
5. He possessed great musical ability. Ezek. 28:13
6. He was the perfection of wisdom and beauty. Ezek. 28:12
7. He fell through pride. Ezek. 28:17
8. He attempted to steal God's throne. Isa. 14:13
9. He wanted to be like God. Isa. 14:14
10. He possesses intelligence. 2 Cor. 2:11; 11:3
11. He possesses memory. Matt. 4:6
12. He possesses a will. 2 Tim. 2:26
13. He possesses desire. Luke 22:31
14. He possesses pride. 1 Tim. 3:6
15. He possesses wrath. Rev. 12:12
16. He possesses great organizational ability. 1 Tim. 4:1; Rev. 2:9, 24

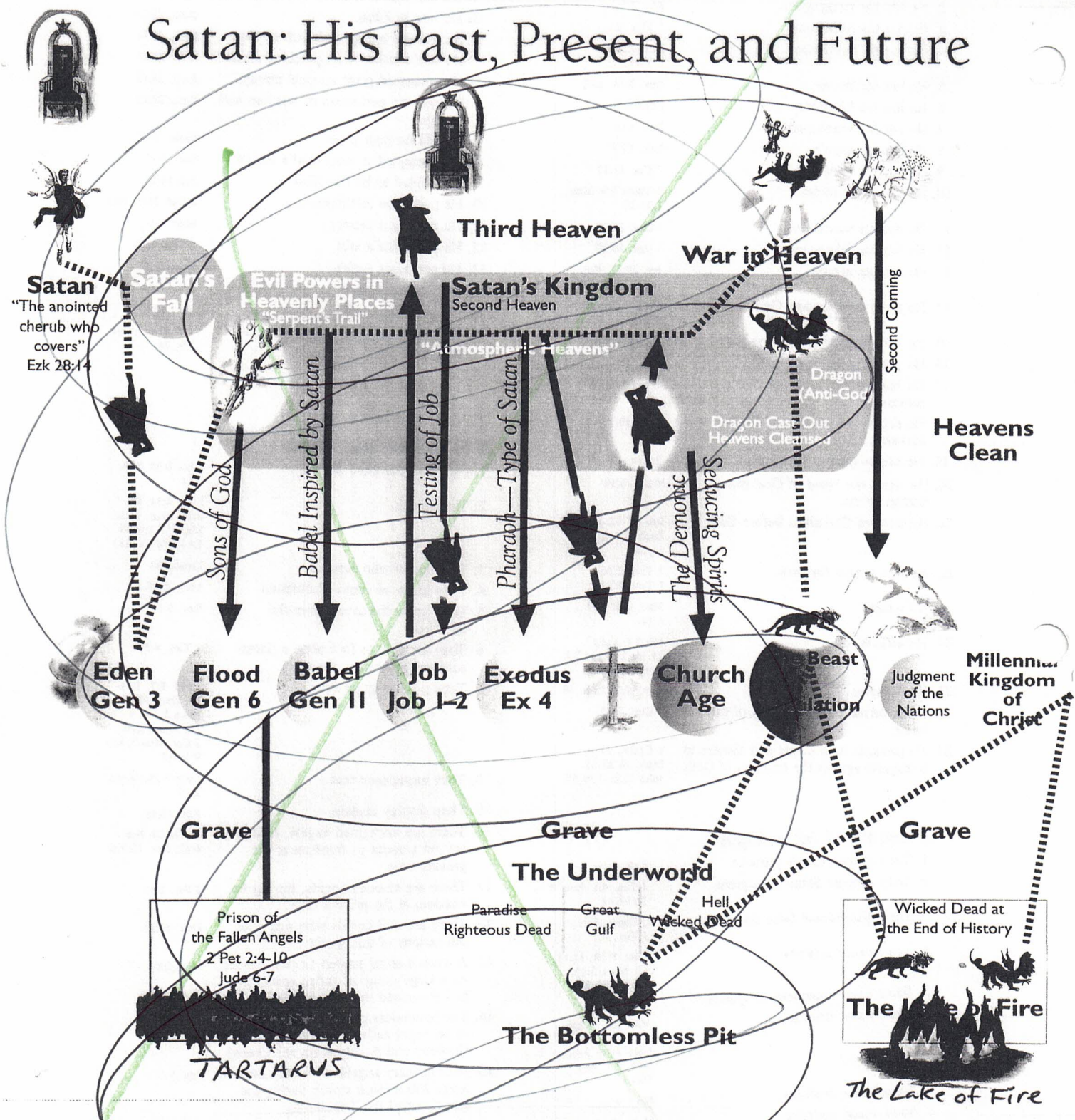
20 Facts about Fallen Angels

1. Fallen angels have names. Luke 8:30; Rev. 9:11
2. They speak. Luke 4:34, 41; 8:28; Matt. 8:29; Mark 5:12; Acts 19:15; Mark 3:11
3. They know who Jesus is. Luke 4:34
4. They know of future damnation. Matt. 8:29
5. They know the saved from the unsaved. Rev. 9:4
6. They are able to formulate a Satan-centered systematic theology. 1 Tim. 4:1
7. They possess great strength. Exod. 8:7; 7:11-12; Dan. 10:13; Mark 5:2-4; 9:17-26; Acts 19:16; 2 Cor. 10:4-5; Rev. 9:15-19
8. They experience fear. Luke 8:28; James 2:19
9. They display disdain. Acts 16:15
10. There are unchained angels, having a certain amount of freedom at the present time. Ps. 78:49; Eph. 6:12; Rev. 12:7-9
11. There are chained angels, having no freedom at the present time. 2 Pet. 2:4
12. There are evil angels who rule over the nations of this world. Dan. 10:13
13. A wicked angel named Legion headed up a large group of fallen spirits that had possessed the maniac of Gadara. Mark 5:9
14. The bottomless pit is under the control of an angel called Abaddon (in the Hebrew) and Apollyon (in the Greek). Rev. 9:11
15. Four military angels will lead a hellish army 200 million strong during the latter part of the Tribulation. Rev. 9:16
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18. Three angels organize those events which lead to the battle of Armageddon. Rev. 16:13-14
19. Evil angels will be judged by Christ and his Church. 1 Cor. 6:3
20. They will eventually be cast into the lake of fire forever. Matt. 25:41; 2 Pet. 2:4; Jude 6

45. Names of Satan

Title	Emphasis	Citation
Satan	Adversary	Matthew 4:10
Devil	Slanderer	Matthew 4:1
Evil One	Intrinsically evil	John 17:15
Great red dragon	Destructive creature	Revelation 12:3,7,9
Serpent of old	Deceiver in Eden	Revelation 12:9
Abaddon	Destruction	Revelation 9:11
Apollyon	Destroyer	Revelation 9:11
Adversary	Opponent	1 Peter 5:8
Beelzebub	Lord of the fly (Baalzebub)	Matthew 12:24
Belial	Worthless (Beliar)	2 Corinthians 6:15
God of this world	Controls philosophy of this world	2 Corinthians 4:4
Ruler of this world	Rules in world system	John 12:31
Prince of the power of the air	Control of believers	Ephesians 2:2
Enemy	Opponent	Matthew 13:28; 1 Peter 5:8
Tempter	Solicits people to sin	Matthew 4:3
Murderer	Leads people to eternal death	John 8:44
Liar	Perverts the truth	John 8:44
Accuser	Opposes believers before God	Revelation 12:10

Satan: His Past, Present, and Future



5 Examples of How God Uses Fallen Angels for His Glory

1. A demon was used to punish wicked King Abimelech. Judg. 9:23
2. A demon was used to prepare for the execution of King Ahab in battle. 1 Kings 22:19-23
3. A demon brought out the true nature of unsaved King Saul. 1 Sam. 16:14

4. Demons were used to punish rebellious Israel during the time of wandering. Ps. 78:49
5. Demons will be used to bring ungodly nations to Armageddon for slaughtering at the end of the Tribulation. Rev. 16:13-16

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5. He has his throne. Rev. 2:13; 13:2
6. He has his kingdom. Luke 4:6
7. He has his worshippers. Rev. 13:4
8. He has his angels. Rev. 12:7
9. He has his ministers. 2 Cor. 11:15
10. He has his miracles. 2 Thess 2:9; Matt. 7:21-23
11. He has his sacrifices. 1 Cor. 10:20
12. He has his fellowship. 1 Cor. 10:20
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20. They will eventually be cast into the lake of fire forever. Matt. 25:41; 2 Pet. 2:4; Jude 6

44. Doctrine of Satan and Demons (continued)

Demons Gr. <i>daimon, daimonion</i> , fallen spirits		
Occurrences in Scripture	Scripture	Doctrine of Demons Categorized
Worship of demons forbidden	Lev. 17:7; Deut. 32:17; 2 Chron. 11:15; Ps. 106:37; Zech. 13:2; Matt. 4:9; Luke 4:7; Rev. 9:20; 13:4	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin-bottom: 10px;"> Description Angels who fell with Satan (Matt. 12:24), divided into two groups: one group is active in opposing God's people (Rev. 9:14; 16:14) and another is confined in prison (2 Peter 2:4; Jude 6), intelligent (Mark 1:24), know their doom (Matt. 8:29), know the plan of salvation (James 2:19), have their own doctrine (1 Tim. 4:1-3). </div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin-bottom: 10px;"> Activities/Works Seek to hinder the plan of God (Dan. 10:10-14; Rev 16:13-16), inflict illnesses (Matt. 9:33; Luke 13:11-16), possess animals (Mark 5:13), promote false doctrine (1 Tim. 4:1), influence nations (Isa. 14; Ezek. 28; Dan. 10:13; Rev. 16:13-14), possess unbelievers (Matt. 9:32-33; 10:18; Mark 6:13). </div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin-bottom: 10px;"> Limitations Limited in space like unfallen angels (Matt. 17:18; Mark 9:25), are used by God for his purposes when he desires (1 Sam. 16:14; 2 Cor. 12:7), may be cast out and return to former person from whom cast out (Luke 11:24-26). </div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;"> Destiny Some free in the time of Christ have been cast into the abyss (Luke 8:31), some now confined will be loosed during tribulation (Rev. 9:1-11; 16:13-14), will be cast along with Satan into lake of fire forever (Matt. 25:41). </div>
Possession by, instances of	1 Sam. 16:14-23; 18:10-11; 19:9, 10	
Two men of the Gergesenes	Matt. 8:28-34; Mark 5:2-20	
The dumb man	Matt. 9:32-33	
The blind and dumb man	Matt. 12:22; Luke 11:14	
The daughter of the Syrian Phoenician	Matt. 15:22-29; Mark 7:25-30; Luke 9:37-42	
The lunatic child	Matt. 17:14-18; Mark 9:17-27	
The man in the synagogue	Mark 1:23-26; Luke 4:33-35	
The herd of swine cast out by Jesus	Matt. 4:24; 8:16, 30-32; Mark 3:22; Luke 4:41	
Power over, given the disciples	Matt. 10:1; Mark 6:7; 16:17	
Cast out by the disciples	Mark 9:38; Acts 5:16; Acts 8:7; 16:16-18; 19:12	
Disciples unable to expel	Mark 9:18, 28-29	
Sceva's sons exorcise	Acts 19:13-16	
Parable of the man repossessed	Matt. 12:43-45	
Jesus falsely accused of having	Mark 3:22-30; John 7:20; 8:48; 10:20	
Testify to deity of Jesus	Matt. 8:29; Mark 1:23, 24; 3:11; 5:7; Luke 8:28; Acts 19:15	
Adversaries of people	Matt. 12:45	
Sent to cause trouble between Abimelech and the Shechemites	Judges 9:23	
Gave messages to false prophets	1 Kings 22:21-23	
Believe and tremble	James 2:19	
To be judged	Matt. 8:29; 2 Peter 2:4; Jude 6	
Punishment of	Matt. 8:29; 25:41; Luke 8:28; 2 Peter 2:4; Jude 6; Rev. 12:7-9	
Possession (Mary Magdalene)	Mark 16:9; Luke 8:2, 3	

44. The Doctrine of Satan and Demons

Satan

Heb. *sātān*, Gr. *satanas*, an adversary, opponent
(1 Chron. 21:1; Job 1:6; John 13:27; Acts 5:3; 26:18; Rom. 16:20)

Names and Titles	Scripture	Doctrine of Satan Categorized
<p>Abaddon</p> <p>Accuser of our brothers</p> <p>Adversary</p> <p>Angel of the Abyss</p> <p>Apollyon</p> <p>Beelzebub</p> <p>Belial</p> <p>The devil</p> <p>Enemy</p> <p>Evil spirit</p> <p>Father of lies</p> <p>Great red dragon</p> <p>Liar</p> <p>Lying spirit</p> <p>Murderer</p> <p>Ancient serpent</p> <p>Power of darkness</p> <p>Prince of this world</p> <p>Prince of devils</p> <p>Ruler of the kingdom of the air</p> <p>Power of this dark world</p> <p>Serpent</p> <p>Spirit at work in those who are disobedient</p> <p>Tempter</p> <p>The god of this world</p> <p>Unclean spirit</p> <p>Evil one</p>	<p>Rev. 9:11</p> <p>Rev. 12:10</p> <p>1 Peter 5:8</p> <p>Rev. 9:11</p> <p>Rev. 9:11</p> <p>Matt. 12:24; Mark 3:22; Luke 11:15</p> <p>2 Cor. 6:15</p> <p>Matt. 4:1; Luke 4:2; Rev. 20:2</p> <p>Matt. 13:39</p> <p>1 Sam. 16:14</p> <p>John 8:44</p> <p>Rev. 12:3</p> <p>John 8:44</p> <p>1 Kings 22:22</p> <p>John 8:44</p> <p>Rev. 12:9; 20:2</p> <p>Col. 1:13</p> <p>John 12:31</p> <p>Matt. 12:24</p> <p>Eph. 2:2</p> <p>Eph. 6:12</p> <p>Gen. 3:4, 14; 2 Cor. 1:3</p> <p>Eph. 2:2</p> <p>Matt. 4:3; 1 Thess. 3:5</p> <p>2 Cor. 4:4</p> <p>Matt. 12:43</p> <p>Matt. 13:19, 38</p>	<p>Description Subtle (Gen. 3:1), provoker (1 Chron. 21:1), owner of the kingdoms and glory of the world (Matt. 4:8), murderer and without truth (John 8:44), full of subtlety, all mischief, enemy of all righteousness, perverter of the right ways of the Lord (Acts 13:10). Has power, signs, and lying wonders (2 Thess. 2:9). Sinner from the beginning (1 John 3:8), deceiver of the whole world (Rev. 12:9). Can appear as an angel of light (2 Cor. 11:14). Leads his followers (1 Tim. 5:15). His children called tares (Matt. 13:38).</p> <p>Activities/Works General Description. Provokes (1 Chron. 21:1), goes to and fro on the earth (Job 1:7), can cause physical illness (Job 2:7), can blind people (Luke 13:16), spiritually blinds unbelievers (2 Cor. 4:4), shoots flaming arrows (Eph. 6:16), hinders (1 Thess. 2:18), condemns and snares (1 Tim. 3:16), seeks to devour (1 Peter 5:8), takes away sown Word of God (Matt. 13:19), wants to take advantage (2 Cor. 2:11), transforms into an angel of light (2 Cor. 11:14). Specific Examples: Bruised Christ's heel (Gen. 3:15), tempted Jesus (Matt 4:1), desired to sift Simon Peter as wheat (Luke 22:31), entered into and persuaded Judas to betray Jesus (John 13:2, 27), filled the heart of Ananias to lie (Acts 5:3), will cast some into prison (Rev. 2:10).</p> <p>Limitations Must receive permission from God (Job 1:12), head crushed by Christ, Christ's heel bruised by Satan (Gen. 3:15), can be resisted (James 4:7), can be overcome (1 John 2:13), overcome by the blood of the Lamb (Rev. 12:11), cannot touch those begotten of God (1 John 5:18).</p> <p>Destiny Head crushed by Christ (Gen. 3:15), will be crushed by the God of peace (Rom. 16:20), his power of death destroyed by Jesus (Heb. 2:14), works destroyed by the Son of God (1 John 3:8), bound for 1,000 years (Rev. 20:1), cast into the bottomless pit (Rev. 20:3), loosed after 1,000 years to deceive the nations (Rev. 20:8), cast into the lake of fire (Rev. 20:10), rebuked by the Lord (Zech. 3:2), doomed to everlasting fire (Matt. 25:41), cast from heaven (Luke 10:18), judged by God (John 16:11).</p>

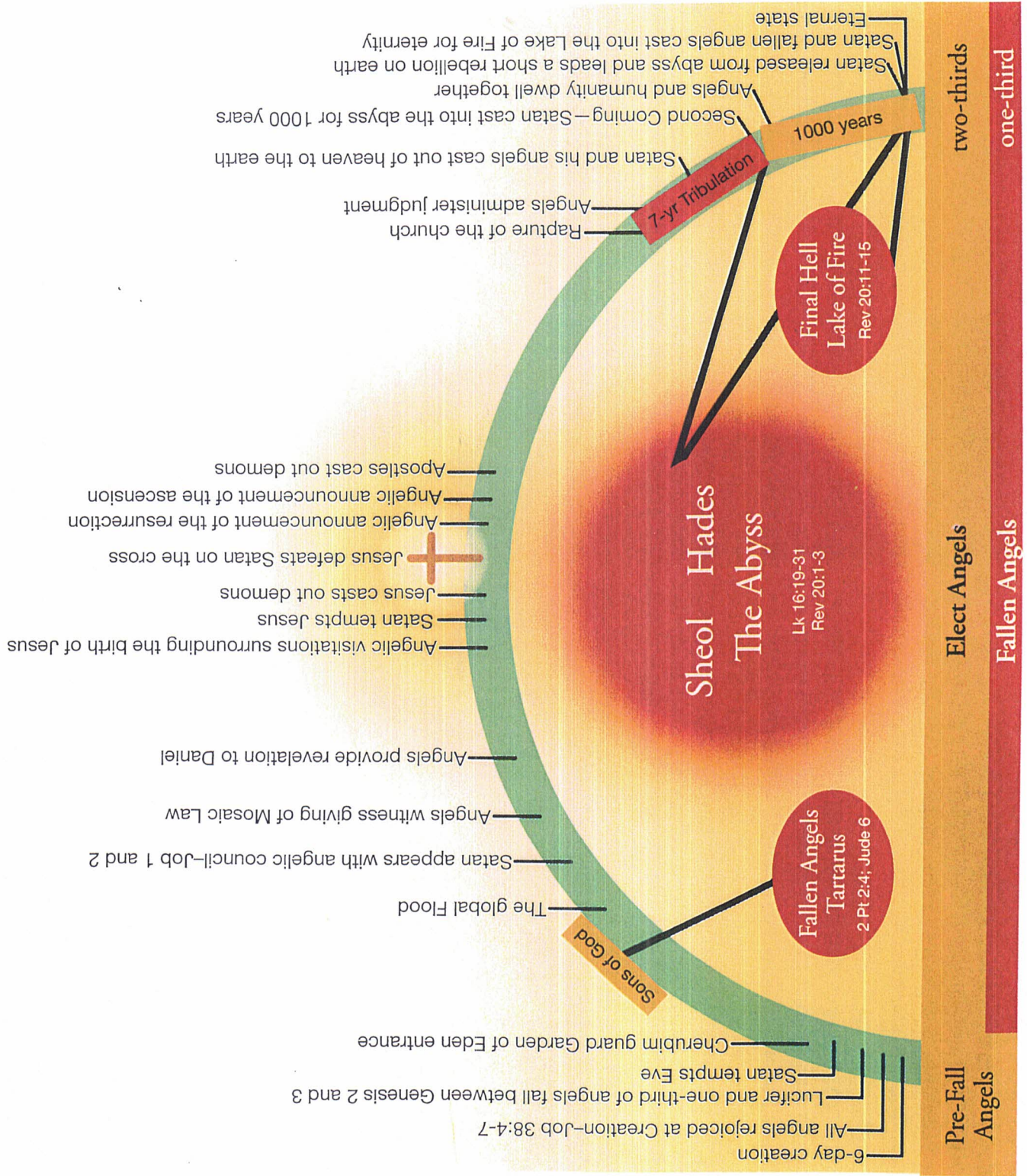
43. Biblical Teaching on Angels

Origin	Angels were created as holy beings (Mark 8:38) by God (Col. 1:16) before the creation of the earth (Job 38:7) by fiat (Ps. 148:2, 5).	
Nature	Angels were created with the ability to fellowship and with personality expressed by intellect (1 Peter 1:12), emotion (Job 38:7), and will (Isa. 14:12-15), but they are never said to be in the image of God, as man is. They are localized beings (Dan. 9:21-23), immortal (Luke 20:36), and have limited knowledge (Matt. 24:36). They are normally invisible (Col. 1:16) but have appeared to people in the form of male beings (Gen. 18:1-8), sometimes very unusual men (Dan. 10:5-6), and at times with some sort of supernatural dazzle (Matt. 28:3) and as unusual living creatures in heaven (Rev. 4:6-8). Usually their appearance affects the human concerned to respond in fear and agitation (Luke 1:29).	
Spiritual Condition	Although all angels were created good, there are now two moral classifications: holy and elect (Mark 8:38; 1 Tim. 5:21) and evil and unclean (Luke 8:2; 11:24-26). They are aligned either with God (John 1:51) or with Satan (Matt. 25:41).	
Similarities With Man	Created by God, localized, accountable to God (John 16:11), limited in knowledge (Matt. 24:36).	
Differences From Man	Different order of being (Heb. 2:5-7), invisible, do not procreate (Matt. 22:28-30), greater in intelligence, strength, and swiftness (2 Peter 2:11), not subject to physical death.	
Classifications	Rulers, powers, world forces (Eph. 6:12), dominion (Eph. 1:21) thrones (Col. 1:16).	
Purpose	Fallen	Unfallen
	To promote Satan's program in opposing God (Rev. 12:7) by promoting rebellion (Gen. 3), idolatry (Lev. 17:7), false religions (1 John 4:1-4), and oppression of mankind.	To serve God in worship (Rev. 4:6-11), in ministry (Heb. 1:7), in being God's messengers (Ps. 103:20), to act in God's government (Dan. 10:13, 21), protecting God's people (Ps. 34:7), executing God's judgment (Gen. 19:1).
Relationship to Believers	Wage war (Eph. 6:10-18), accuse (Rev. 12:10), plant doubt (Gen. 3:1-3), tempt to sin (Eph. 2:1-3), persecute (Rev. 12:13), prevent service (1 Thess. 2:18), disturb the church (2 Cor. 2:10-11).	Reveal truth (Gal. 3:19), guide (Mt. 1:20-21), provide physical needs (1 Kings 19:6), protect (Dan. 3:24-28), deliver (Acts 5:17-20), encourage (Acts 5:19-20), act in answering prayer (Dan. 9:20-24), accompany the dead (Luke 16:22).
Relationship to Christ on Earth	Satan tempted Christ (Mark 1:13), led people to betray and kill Him (Luke 22:3-4); Christ cast demons out and finally defeated them on the cross (Col. 2:15).	Announced the birth of Christ (Luke 1:26-38), guided Joseph to safety (Matt. 2:14), ministered to Christ (Matt. 4:11; Luke 22:43), announced his resurrection (Matt. 28:2-4), ascension and return (Acts 1:11).
Place of Habitation	Heavenly (spiritual) realms (Eph. 6:12), abyss (Rev. 9:1-11), people (Mark 9:14-29), the bonds of darkness (Jude 6).	In God's presence (Isa. 6:1-6), heavenly realms (Eph. 3:10)
Destiny	Defeated by Christ (Col. 2:15), cast into the abyss during Millennium (Rev. 20:1-2), cast into lake of fire as final punishment (Rev. 20:10).	To be in God's presence and Christ's presence in his kingdom (Rev. 21:22)
Specific Angels	Satan	Michael, Gabriel

41. A Comparison of Angels, Humans, and Animals

Category	Angels	Humans	Animals
Image of God	No	Yes	No
Nature/Existence <i>Body</i>	Immaterial/spirit Influence through humans No marriage or propagation	Immaterial/physical Influence by spirits Marriage/propagation	Material/physical No marriage, but propagation
<i>Personality</i>	Full personality Emphasis on will/obedience	Full personality Emphasis on will/obedience	Partial personality Emphasis on subordination
<i>Sin</i>	Prideful rebellion: desire to be "like God"	Prideful rebellion: desire to be "like God"	Nonmoral, derived from man or Satan (Gen. 3)
Relation to God	Direct Heavenly/earthly	Direct Earthly/heavenly	Indirect Earthly under man
Function/Purpose	Influence on earth under God	Dominion on earth under God	Service on earth under man

Timeline of Elect and Fallen Angels



Satan: His Past, Present, and Future



Satan
 "The anointed cherub who covers"
 Ezk 28:14

Satan's Fall

Evil Powers in Heavenly Places
 "Serpent's Trail"

Third Heaven

Satan's Kingdom
 Second Heaven

War in Heaven

Dragon Cast Out
 Heavens Cleansed

Heavens Clean

Dragon (Anti-God)

"Atmospheric Heavens"

Pharaoh—Type of Satan

Testing of Job

Babel Inspired by Satan

Sons of God

The Demonic
 Seducing Spirits

Eden
 Gen 3

Flood
 Gen 6

Babel
 Gen 11

Job
 Job 1-2

Exodus
 Ex 4

Church Age

The Beast
 Tribulation

Millennial Kingdom
 Judgment of the Nations
 of Christ

Grave

Grave

Grave

Prison of the Fallen Angels
 2 Pet 2:4-10
 Jude 6-7
Tartarus

The Underworld

Paradise Righteous Dead
 Great Gulf

Hell Wicked Dead

Wicked Dead at the End of History
The Lake of Fire

The Bottomless Pit



Identity of the "Sons of God"

Genesis 6:1-2

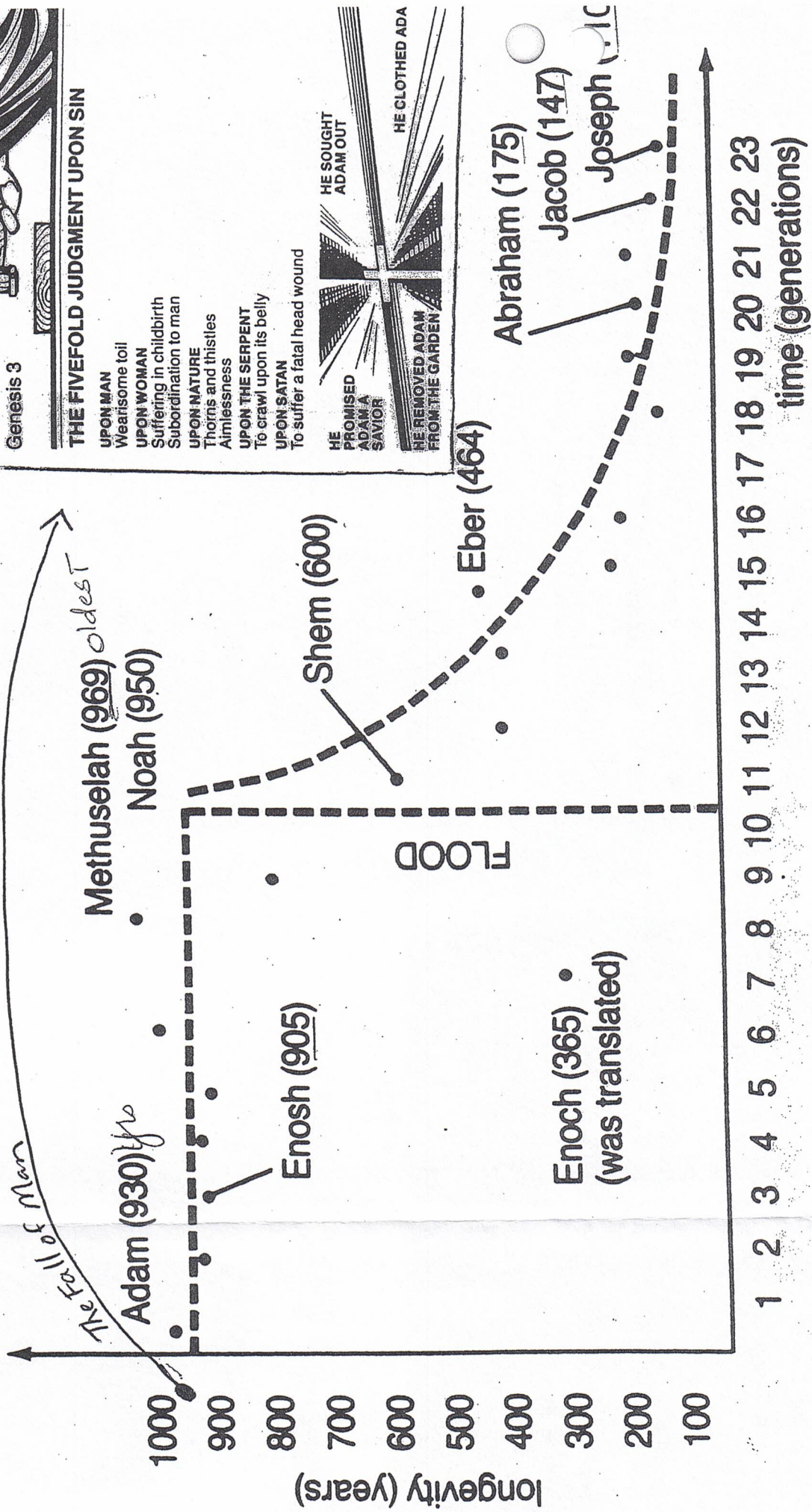
	MATERIAL DISTINCTION	THEOLOGICAL DISTINCTION	SOCIAL DISTINCTION	NO DISTINCTION
SONS OF GOD	Fallen angels	Godly line of Seth	Dynastic rulers	Royal heroes of old
DAUGHTERS OF MEN	Mortals	Line of Cain	Commoners	Any woman
OFFENSE	Marriage between supernatural and mortal	Marriage of holy to unholy	Polygamy	Right of the first night: king, acting in place of deity, could spend first night with any woman getting married (fertility rite)
E V I D E N C E	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The term "sons of God" refers only to angels. (Job 1; 38:7; Ps. 29:1; 89:7) 2. Jude 6-7 perhaps refers to this incident. (See also 2 Peter 2:4) 3. It is the clear reading of the text 4. The Septuagint in Job 1 reads "angels of God" 5. Christ says angels do not marry; doesn't say "cannot" 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The concept of a holy line is seemingly established (Gen. 4:26) 2. Hebrew indicates continuity from the previous chapter 3. The sin here becomes a common theme throughout the Pentateuch 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Magistrates or rulers often referred to as gods (Exod. 21:6; 22:8, 9, 28; Ps. 82:1, 6) 2. Kings sometimes called sons of deities (2 Sam. 7:14) 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ancient kings were regularly portrayed as sons of God 2. Practice attested in Gilgamesh Epic (Ps. 4:32-4) as offensive 3. Matches language of text: took wives, whichever they chose
P R O B L E M S	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Lends mythological tone 2. Angels were not previously mentioned 3. Why is man punished by the Flood for the wickedness of angels? 4. New Testament support is questionable 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The term "sons of God" never means this elsewhere 2. No evidence that the lines are kept totally separate. The theory does not account for Adam and Eve's other children 3. God has not yet begun working through one line. (No concept of election) 4. The term for men is general. It would need further classification to be understood otherwise 5. In Noah's time he alone was holy 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Kingship is not expressed in any way 2. Scripture never speaks of kings in a group as sons of deity 3. Needs the connection of v. 4, but the "mighty men" are the Nephilim, not the children of the union 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Scripture never speaks of kings in a group as sons of deity 2. "Right of the first night" is not widely attested in Ancient Near East

36

42. Sons of God in Genesis Six

Position	Angelic Creatures	Apostate Sethites	Ambitious Despots
Persons	Fallen angels cohabit with beautiful women	Ungodly Sethites marry depraved Cainites	Despotic chieftains marry plurality of wives
Perversion	Perversion of human race by intrusion of angels	Pollution of godly line by mixed marriage	Polygamy of Cainite princes to expand dominion
Progeny	Monstrous giants	Wicked tyrants	Dynastic rulers
Proofs	The reference to angels as "sons of God"	The emphasis on men in the context	The antiquity of this interpretation
	The New Testament references to the angelic sin of Genesis 6 in 2 Peter 2:4-5 and Jude 6-7	The basis for human sin as the reason for the Flood	The biblical usage of "god" for rulers and judges
	The antiquity of the view	The thematic development of Genesis 4 and 5	The reference in the context to the development of wicked dynasties
	The satisfactory explanation that some angels are bound and others are not	The aversion in Genesis and elsewhere to intermarriage between the godly and ungodly	The Near Eastern practice of calling kings "sons of God"
			The reference in ancient accounts to the origin of kingship just prior to the Flood
Problems	The psychological and physiological impossibilities of angelic marriages	The textual difficulty in making "men" of Genesis 6:1 different from "men" in verse 2	The lack of evidence that such a system was established in the line of Cain
	The likelihood that "sons of God" refers to men, since it is used elsewhere of men	The absence of exact terms "sons of God" for believers in the Old Testament	The lack of evidence that "sons of God" was borrowed from contemporary literature
		Failure to explain the origin of the giants and mighty men through simply religiously mixed marriages	The fact that no writer of Scripture ever considered kings to be deities
Proponents	Albright, Gaebelein, Kelly, Unger, Waltke, Delitzsch, Bullinger, Larkin, Pember, Wuest, Gray, Torrey, Meyer, Mayor, Plummer, Alford, Ryrie, Smith	Hengstenberg, Keil, Lange, Jamieson, Fausset, Brown, Henry, Scofield, Lincoln, Murray, Baxter, Scroggie, Leupold	Kaiser, Birney, Kline, Cornfeld, Kober

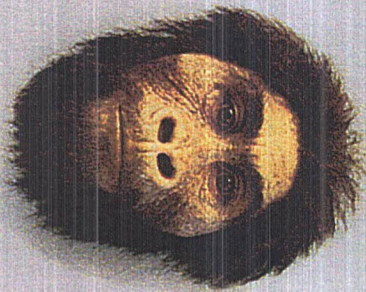
The patriarchs who lived before the Flood had an average life span of about 900 years (Gen. 5). The ages of post-Flood patriarchs dropped rapidly and gradually leveled off (Gen. 11). Some suggest that this is due to major environmental changes brought about by the Flood.



ART AND PERSPECTIVE



▶ This head is cast from the same mold as the head on the Lucy sculpture to the left. It represents what Lucy's head may have looked like with only flesh. **Artistic decisions can strongly influence how we view Lucy.** Was she more human-like or ape-like? Below are three examples based on different art directions.



"Ape-man"
Lucy



"Gorilla"
Lucy



"Orangutan"
Lucy

THE POWER OF PERSPECTIVE

▶ Art is communication. Even when words are absent, it has a great capacity to convey meaning. When you look at a piece of art, remember that it speaks for the artist who crafted it to tell a story.

Consider these depictions of australopithecine heads, cast from the same mold as the "Lucy" figure. Despite looking very different from one another, their sculpted details are identical. Only arbitrary details set them apart—things like hair, eye, and skin colors, as well as hair length and coverage.

Whether filling in missing bits of skull, surveying a bony surface for muscle attachment points, or choosing skin tones based on specimen location, degrees of assumption attend every stage of reconstruction. Ironically, the more superficial elements—things that

represent the biggest unknowns—are often most effective in conveying a broader narrative.

For example, artists who wish to communicate that australopithecines were human relatives usually add human eyes and hair patterns. Those who wish to show that australopithecines were more like other apes will take inspiration from familiar varieties like gorillas, chimpanzees, or orangutans.

There is nothing wrong with using art to communicate. But these examples demonstrate at least two important things: how art can be used to shape public opinions, and how preconceived ideas can significantly impact art. Art, like the tongue or written words, can be a powerful tool for good or ill.

Art always speaks, so ask yourself what it is saying.



WHY AM I HERE?

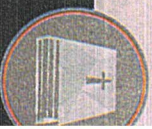


NATURALISTIC EVOLUTIONIST WORLDVIEW

▶ We are just a cosmic accident, the product of time and chance.

"There is no higher purpose. It's left to us. We must create our purpose. That's the only meaning we have in this universe." —Michael Shermar¹

"Yes, secularism does propose a historical and purposeless universe, and many (but not all) of us accept the notion that our sense of self is a neuronal illusion. But although the universe is purposeless, our lives aren't. This confiction of a purposeless universe (i.e., one not created for a specific reason) with purposeless human lives is a trick that the faithful use to make atheism seem nihilistic and dark. But we make our own purposes, and they're real." —Jenny Coyne²



BIBLICAL CREATIONIST WORLDVIEW

▶ God created man in His image and authority over this world. We are God and one another and reflect His world.

"God created man in His own image, male and female He created them, and He blessed them and said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply, rule over the fish of the sea and over every living thing that moves on the earth.'" —Genesis 1:27-28

"You shall love the Lord your God, heart, soul, mind, and strength. You shall love your neighbor as yourself." —Mark 12:30

¹Michael Shermar, said this in an interview with Lea Stiebel. See Lea Stiebel, *The Case for Atheists* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2018), p. 46.

²Jenny A. Coyne, "Doubtful on the Remains of Agnosticism Against Secularism, Girls II At Work" at <https://www.doubtfulontheremains.com/2013/12/23/doubtful-on-the-remains-against-agnosticism-2013-12-23/>. All wrong. Erubescit in original.



Beginning after the fire in Rome in AD 64, the Emperor Nero harshly persecuted Christians, killing significant leaders such as Peter and Paul. One of the motivations for writing the Gospels may have been the deaths—because of Nero's persecution—of key eyewitnesses of the life of Jesus.

■ *Gospel of the Savior* (Gnostic writing, early third century AD)

Not actually a Gospel but a few fragments from an ancient document known as Papyrus Berlin 22220, *Gospel of the Savior* seems to have been a Gnostic adaptation of *Gospel of Peter*. Also known as *Vision of the Savior*.

■ *Gospel of Thomas* (Gnostic writing, mid-second century AD) Not actually a Gospel, but a collection of sayings attributed to Jesus. Most sayings in *Gospel of Thomas* are similar to statements found in the New Testament Gospels. A few, however, seem to represent an early form of Gnosticism. Although some sayings in the book can be traced to the first century AD, the book did not emerge in its final form until the middle of the second century.

■ *Infancy Gospel of Thomas* (Christian writing, mid-second century AD) An account of the childhood of Jesus, supposedly written by the apostle Thomas. In this text, the boy Jesus uses his miraculous powers for his own benefit. The author's style of writing and his lack of knowledge about Jewish traditions suggest that the book was written in the mid-second century AD, long after the death of the apostle Thomas.

■ *Gospel of Truth* (Gnostic writing, late second century AD) Unearthed at Nag Hammadi in the 1940s, *Gospel of Truth* is a Gnostic retelling of the creation story and of the life of Jesus. According to Irenaeus of Lyons, a disciple of a Gnostic teacher named Valentinus wrote *Gospel of Truth*, also known as *Gospel of Valentinus*.

■ Why are so many people so enthralled by the "lost Gospels"?

Perhaps people long to believe that there's some knowledge or experience of Jesus Christ that isn't available in the New Testament Gospels—and, in some sense, they're correct. There *is* experience and knowledge of Jesus Christ that isn't available simply by reading the New Testament Gospels. But this knowledge and experience certainly is not available in the unreliable myths found in the "lost Gospels." The full knowledge and experience that our souls crave is available when we not only *read about* Jesus Christ but also *personally commit our lives to* Jesus Christ, the One in whom we can be "made complete" and through whom we can enter into fellowship with the God who gives us his love in "far greater abundance than any of us could ask or think" (Colossians 2:9; Ephesians 3:20).

Notes

- 1 See Bart Ehrman, *Lost Christianities* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003) 3-5. Hereafter, *Lost Christianities* will be cited as *LC*, followed by the page numbers.
- 2 *MJ* 36.
- 3 Ehrman places the emergence of this principle later and summarizes it in this way: Authoritative texts had to be "ancient" (from the time of Jesus) and "apostolic" (from the first followers of Jesus or their associates) (*LC* 242-243). As Ehrman notes, two other standards came into play later, those of catholicity (widespread usage among Christians) and orthodoxy (agreement with other Scriptures). I would contend, though, that—for the earliest Christians—the categories of *orthodoxy*, *apostolicity*, and *antiquity* were not distinguishable. All three categories were rooted in the assumption that eyewitness testimony was authoritative.
- 4 Quoted in Eusebius, 3:39
- 5 It was, according to Eusebius, from these prophetesses that Papias received some stories about the apostles (Eusebius 3:39).
- 6 Muratorian Fragment.
- 7 Eusebius, 5:8.
- 8 *LC* 235.
- 9 Translated from "Muratorian Canon in Latin": Retrieved October 28, 2006, from <http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/muratorian-latin.html>.
- 10 Eusebius, 6:12.
- 11 See *LC* 16. The beginnings of blaming the crucifixion on the Jewish people can be seen in the trial before Pontius Pilate in *Gospel of Peter*, suggesting a date after the expulsion of Christians from the synagogues in the late first century AD
- 12 Eusebius, 6:12; cf. Tertullian of Carthage, *De Praescriptione Haereticorum*, 3:20-21: Retrieved October 28, 2006, from http://www.tertullian.org/latin/de_praescriptione_haereticorum.html.
- 13 Eusebius, 5:8.

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■ *Gospel of Eve* (Gnostic writing, probably third century AD) Lost Gnostic writing, quoted by Epiphanius of Salamis. *Gospel of Eve* was written at least a century after the time of Jesus. Seemingly also known as *Gospel of Perfection*.

■ *Gospel of the Hebrews* (Christian writing, first century AD) *Gospel of the Hebrews* is truly a "lost Gospel"; it survives only in quotations found in the writings of early Christians. Many scholars believe *Gospel of the Hebrews* represents an early, Aramaic summary of Jesus' life from the apostle Matthew—a summary that eventually became part of the document that now known as the Gospel According to Matthew. Also known as *Gospel of the Nazoreans*.

■ *Infancy Gospel of James* (Christian writing, late second century AD) An account, supposedly written by James, of the life of Mary. According to this document, Mary the mother of Jesus remained a virgin throughout her life.

■ *Acts of John* (Docetic writing, late second century AD) Supposed retelling of events from the life of the apostle John. Some copies of this text include comments that are *Docetic*—that is, they imply that Jesus Christ was not fully human—but these comments are not present in every version. It is possible that they were added later.

■ *Gospel of Judas* (Gnostic writing, late second century AD) Supposed account of the life of Jesus in which Judas Iscariot is portrayed as a heroic figure, commanded by Jesus to act as the betrayer.

■ *Gospel of the Lord* (Marcionite writing, mid-second century AD) Alteration of the Gospel According to Luke, edited to fit Marcion's theology.

■ *Gospel of Mary* (Gnostic writing, late second or early third century AD) Although frequently called *Gospel of Mary Magdalene*, the text of this document never indicates *which* biblical Mary is the story's central character.

■ *Gospel of Matthias* (Ancient writing, perhaps Gnostic, second century AD) Lost document, known to many early Christians. This writing seems to have passed out of usage among Christians because (1) no clear evidence was available to suggest that the apostle Matthias actually wrote the book and (2) the book was used by heretical sects including the Gnostics.

■ *Gospel of Nicodemus* (Forgery, fourth century AD) Forgery that claimed to include Pontius Pilate's report to the emperor about Jesus. Also known as *Acts of Pilate*.

■ *Gospel, Oxyrhynchus* (Christian writing, third century AD or earlier) Not actually a Gospel but a tiny papyrus fragment from an unknown source, the "Oxyrhynchus Gospel" describes a confrontation between Jesus and the Pharisees. The events described in this fragment do not contradict any New Testament Gospels and seem to represent an expansion of the events described in Mark 7:1–23.

■ *Gospel of Peter* (Christian writing, second century AD) Although familiar to many early Christians, this text was rejected as an authoritative account of the life of Jesus because (1) it could not be clearly connected to the apostle Peter and (2) some passages in the book could be misconstrued to suggest that Jesus wasn't fully human.

■ *Apocalypse of Peter* (Christian writing, second century AD) An apocalyptic text that circulated with *Gospel of Peter*, *Apocalypse of Peter* doesn't directly contradict any New Testament writings, but the book seems to have been written around AD 135, seventy years or so after the death of the apostle Peter.

■ *Coptic Apocalypse of Peter* (Gnostic writing, late third century AD) The *Coptic Apocalypse of Peter* clearly denied that Jesus had a physical body, declaring that "the one whose hands and feet they nailed to the cross [was] only a fleshly substitute."

■ *Gospel of Philip* (Gnostic writing, third century AD) Not actually a gospel but a collection of brief excerpts from other Gnostic writings, *Gospel of Philip* summarizes the views of the followers of the Gnostic leader Valentinus.

"*Matthew* composed his Gospel among the Hebrews in their language, while Peter and Paul were preaching the Gospel in Rome and building up the church there. After their deaths, Mark—Peter's follower and interpreter—handed down to us Peter's proclamation in written form. Luke, the companion of Paul, wrote in a book the Gospel proclaimed by Paul. Finally, John—the Lord's own follower, the one who leaned against his chest—composed the Gospel while living in Ephesus, in Asia."

—Irenaeus of Lyons, mid- to late second century AD¹³

and third letters, and the letters of James and Jude—Christians universally agreed at least as early as the second century on the authority of at least nineteen of the books in the New Testament. From the beginning, Christians unanimously embraced at least the four Gospels, Acts, Paul's letters, and first epistle of John. (See chart on page 30.) Even if this handful of books had been the *only* documents that represented eyewitness testimony about Jesus, every vital truth of Christian faith would remain completely intact.

Truth about the "Lost Gospels"

■ Who wrote the "lost Gospels"?

No one knows for sure. Even though the names of Jesus' apostles and other companions are attached to several lost Gospels, no evidence exists to suggest that the authors of these texts even *could* have been eyewitnesses of the ministry of Jesus. In many cases, names such as "Mary" or "Philip" have been attached to these Gospels simply because these individuals are such prominent characters in the book. In a few cases—such as *Gospel of Thomas*, for example—the Gospel does actually claim to come from a prominent apostle or church leader, though it is clear from the language used in the book that the document was written long after the death of its namesake.

■ How are these writings different from the New Testament writings?

The "lost Gospels" were primarily fanciful accounts of Jesus' life, or they were written to promote a theology that contradicts the eyewitness testimony found in the New Testament. A few lost Gospels—for example, *Infancy Gospel of Thomas*, *Infancy Gospel of James*, and perhaps *Gospel of Peter*—seem to have been penned by well-meaning Christians who felt compelled to expand stories in the New Testament. Many parts of these writings don't directly contradict anything in the New Testament, but they tend to expand the New Testament accounts in fanciful and theologically problematic ways. For example, according to these writings, Jesus used his divine powers for his own benefit throughout his childhood. A couple of lost Gospels—such as *Gospel of the Lord* and *Gospel of the Ebionites*—were variations of the New Testament Gospels, edited to fit the theology of certain sects.

The distinct theology of most of the "lost Gospels" was, however, *Gnostic*. From the perspective of most Gnostics, the deity who created the universe was not the true or supreme God; the creator of the physical world was an evil deity, a rebel against a higher and greater deity. Since they understood the cosmos to be the product of an evil deity, most Gnostics viewed everything physical—especially the role of women in reproduction—as evil; they also claimed that Jesus Christ only *seemed* human. According to Gnostics, Christ came to deliver humanity from the limitations of the physical world. As such, Gnostics were not typically interested in the actual, historical events of the life of Jesus; the Gnostics focused most of their attention on other-worldly sayings and myths, many of which depicted biblical villains as heroes and vice-versa.

■ How many lost Gospels are there?

If a Gospel is defined as an ancient retelling of the events and teachings of Jesus' life, there are fewer than thirty known Gospels. Most texts survive only in incomplete fragments. Here's a summary of many of the lost Gospels, most of which could not have been written by eyewitnesses:

■ *Gospel of Basilides* (*Gnostic writing, mid-second century AD*) Gnostic writing, now lost, mentioned by several early Christians.

■ *Gospel of the Ebionites* (*Ebionite writing, second century AD*) Surviving only in fragmented quotations in the writings of early Christians, *Gospel of the Ebionites* appears to have been a variation of *Gospel of the Hebrews*, edited to fit the theology of a sect known as "Ebionites." The Ebionites believed Jesus was a human being, adopted by God at his baptism.

■ *Gospel, Egerton* (*Fragments from an ancient document, second century AD*) Not actually a Gospel but a few fragments from an unknown source, the "Egerton Gospel" includes four stories about Jesus. Three of these stories appear, in varying forms, in the New Testament Gospels (Mk. 1:40–45; 12:13–17; Jn. 5:39–47; 10:33–39).

■ *Gospel of the Egyptians* (*Ancient writing, perhaps Gnostic, second century AD*) Presented as a dialogue between Jesus and a female disciple named Salome, *Gospel of the Egyptians* encourages all believers to practice celibacy.

■ *Coptic Gospel of the Egyptians* (*Gnostic writing, late third century AD*) *Coptic Gospel of the Egyptians* recounts a Gnostic myth in which Jesus is presented as a reincarnation of Seth, the third son of Adam and Eve.



(Courtesy of the Schøyen Collection, Oslo and London)

Inkwell discovered near the site where the Dead Sea Scrolls were copied.

■ How did early Christians determine which writings really came from eyewitnesses?

These decisions were informed by a combination of *oral history*, *external and internal evidence*.

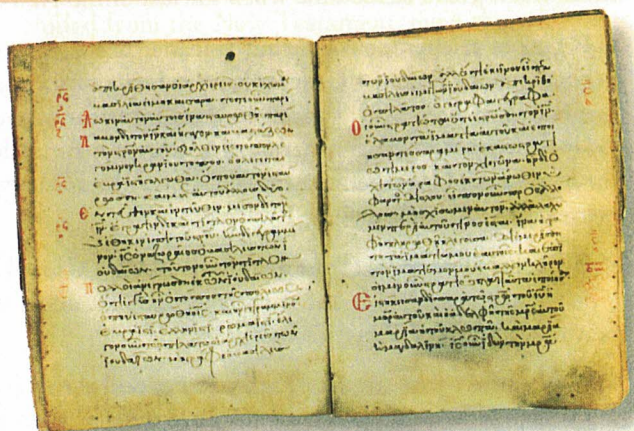
■ **Oral history:** Most of the knowledge about the origins of the New Testament books probably passed orally from one generation to another. From the first century onward, the names of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John were connected with the four New Testament Gospels, and the writings of early Christians such as Ignatius of Antioch suggest that it would have been widely known that Paul wrote the epistles attributed to him.

■ **External evidence:** When no clear tradition was available to connect a book to an eyewitness, church members might explore *external evidence* about a book's origins. For example, a generation after the deaths of the apostles, a church leader near Rome considered which Christian writings should be viewed as authoritative. His conclusions can be found in a document known today as "the Muratorian Fragment." After listing the books that he viewed as authoritative, here's what this leader said that he had discovered regarding a popular book known as *The Shepherd*: "Hermas composed *The Shepherd* quite recently—in our times, in the city of Rome, while his brother Pius served as overseer. . . . While it should indeed be read, it cannot be read publicly for the people of the church—it is counted neither among the prophets (for their number has been completed) nor among the apostles (for it is after their time)."⁹ Notice the reasons: This writing could not be added to the Old Testament prophets because the time of the Hebrew prophets had passed, and—with the deaths of the apostles—the time of the apostolic eyewitnesses had also ended. This teacher didn't forbid believers to read *The Shepherd*; he simply pointed out that the book should not serve as an authoritative text.

■ **Internal evidence:** Other times, Christians might conclude on the basis of *internal evidence* that a certain book did not represent eyewitness testimony. For example, in AD 199, a leading pastor named Serapion was told that a certain Gospel was "inscribed with Peter's name."¹⁰ Since it bore the name of an apostolic eyewitness, Serapion allowed the Gospel to be used in the churches. When Serapion read *Gospel of Peter* for himself, however, he recognized he'd made a mistake. Although *Gospel of Peter* didn't directly contradict the New Testament Gospels, certain phrases in the book could be taken to imply that Jesus wasn't fully human. What's more, Serapion probably knew from oral tradition that John Mark had once served as Peter's translator and that the Gospel According to Mark represented the words of Peter; yet, the *Gospel of Peter* added many fanciful details that never appeared in Mark's Gospel—like a towering, talking cross that accompanied the risen Jesus out of the tomb. After comparing *Gospel of Peter* to "the writings handed down to us"—that was Serapion's term for the New Testament texts that were connected indisputably to eyewitnesses—Serapion concluded that *Gospel of Peter* did *not* represent the eyewitness testimony of Simon Peter, and he reversed his previous decision. As it turns out, Serapion was correct: The language and thought-patterns in *Gospel of Peter* have convinced most scholars today that the book was written a generation after Simon Peter's death.¹¹

■ Why do we call the chosen books of the New Testament a "canon"?

The word "canon" comes from the Greek word *kanon*, which means "measuring stick," and these are the writings that "measure" Christians' faithfulness to Jesus Christ. It was not until the fourth century AD that the authoritative writings about Jesus Christ began to be known as a "canon." The idea of recognizing certain writings as authoritative, however, emerged much earlier, apparently in the first century. Each authoritative writing was expected to be connected to an eyewitness of the risen Lord, to be recognized in churches throughout the known world, and not to contradict other writings about Jesus. Although debates continued into the fourth century about a few writings—including the letters of Peter, John's second



(Courtesy of CSNTM.org)

Gospel According to John, around the tenth century AD.

"We, brothers and sisters, receive Peter and the rest of the apostles as we would receive Christ himself. But those writings that are falsely ascribed with their names, we carefully reject, knowing that no such writings have ever been handed down to us."

—Serapion of Antioch, late second century AD¹²

Christians that these Gospels represented eyewitness testimony back to the late first century, within a few years of the time when the last of the New Testament Gospels was written.

■ Papias of Hierapolis—a church leader in the geographic area known today as Turkey, born about the time the Gospels were being written and a friend of Philip's four daughters mentioned in Acts 21:9⁵—received his information about the first two New Testament Gospels from the first generation of Christians. According to Papias, the primary source for Matthew's Gospel was the testimony of the Matthew, a follower of Jesus and former tax collector (Matthew 9:9).

■ Papias also wrote that the author of Mark's Gospel had served as Peter's translator when Peter preached in the early churches. As such, what Mark recorded in his Gospel was the witness of Peter himself.

■ About the same time as Papias recorded these recollections, a pastor named Polycarp of Smyrna referred to the words of the apostle Paul as "Scripture."

■ In a mid-second-century document known as the Muratorian Fragment, an unknown church leader reports that Luke's Gospel came from Luke, the apostle Paul's physician, and that this Gospel included eyewitness accounts from people that Luke interviewed.⁶

■ The Muratorian Fragment also makes it clear that the apostle John was the source for the Gospel that bears John's name.

■ Also in the mid-second-century, another church leader—Irenaeus of Lyons—reported that he had received these same traditions about the four Gospels from Christians of the first and second centuries.⁷

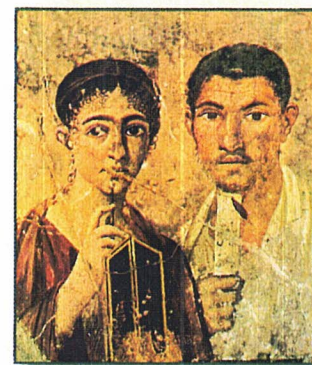
So, from the first century onward, it seems to have been widely recognized that the Gospels now known by the names of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John represented eyewitness testimony about the life and ministry of Jesus Christ. In contrast, *none* of the "lost Gospels" can be connected to firsthand testimony.

How do we know that Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John were really the sources of the Gospels that bear their names?

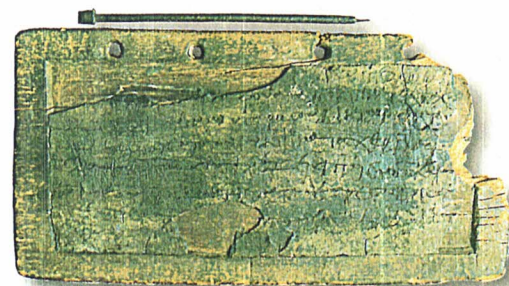
Consistent and reliable traditions have connected the names of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John with these Gospels from the first century onward. Some scholars claim that the New Testament Gospels received their names in the same way that some of the "lost Gospels" received their titles—people wanted these writings to seem authoritative; so, they simply added names of eyewitnesses, even though these people really didn't write the Gospels at all. For example, one scholar puts it this way: "Sometime in the second century, when [Christians] recognized the need for *apostolic* authorities, they attributed these books to apostles (Matthew and John) and close companions of apostles (Mark, the secretary of Peter; and Luke the traveling companion of Paul)."⁸

The first problem with this skeptical line of thinking is that the Gospels According to Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John seem to have been connected with their authors as soon as the Gospels began to circulate widely. At this time, some people who knew the authors would still have been alive; under these circumstances, it would have been difficult to ascribe false names to the Gospels without someone protesting.

But there's another problem with the skeptics' claims: By the end of the first century, the four New Testament Gospels had circulated thousands of miles throughout the Roman Empire. In fact, a fragment of John's Gospel from early years of the second century—a portion known as the John Rylands Papyrus or P52—has been found in Egypt, hundreds of miles from the Gospel's point of origin in Asia Minor! Without rapid communication and without centralized church leadership, what would have happened if second-century Christians began ascribing false, apostolic names to the Gospels that had already spread this far from their places of origin? Most likely, each church would have connected a different author with each Gospel. Churches in Asia Minor might have ascribed a Gospel to the apostle Andrew, for example, while churches in Judea might have connected the same Gospel with Thaddeus or James or Jude. But, *in every titled manuscript copy of the four New Testament Gospels, no matter what part of the world in which it was used, each Gospel is connected to the same author.*



This painting from the ruins of Pompeii depicts two methods for writing in the first century: The man holds a papyrus scroll while his wife holds a stylus and wax tablet.



(Courtesy of the Schoyen Collection, Oslo and London)

Tax collectors were known to carry *pinakes*, books with wooden pages covered with wax. Notes were scratched into the wax using styluses.

■ What are the "lost Gospels"?

The term "lost Gospels" usually refers to ancient writings that were excluded from the New Testament, even though they included *supposed* recollections of events and teachings from the life of Jesus. A few of these "lost Gospels" have lasted throughout the centuries. Others survive only in tiny fragments of papyrus or in brief quotations found in the writings of early Christian scholars. Several "lost Gospels" were discovered anew in the past 100 years. Copies of some texts—such as *Gospel of Philip*, *Gospel of Thomas*, *Gospel of Truth*, and *Coptic Gospel of the Egyptians*—were unearthed in 1945 in Egypt, near a village known as Nag Hammadi.

Truth about the New Testament Gospels

■ Why were the "lost Gospels" excluded from the New Testament?

The lost Gospels were excluded because they did not include reliable, eyewitness testimony about Jesus. Some scholars today depict this decision as having been made by powerful church leaders in the fourth century, three centuries after the books in the New Testament were written. One such scholar claims that a letter from a powerful bishop, Athanasius of Alexandria, established the list of authoritative books in AD 367. He claims, "Athanasius wrote his annual pastoral letter to the Egyptian churches under his jurisdiction, and in it he included advice concerning which books should be read as Scripture in the churches. He lists our twenty-seven books, excluding all others. This is the first surviving instance of anyone affirming our set of books as the New Testament. And even Athanasius did not settle the matter. Debates continued for decades, even centuries."²

Each fact in this summary is *technically* correct, but it leaves out several key truths, leaving readers with false impressions—such as, (1) until the late fourth century, there was no consensus about which Christian writings were authoritative and true, and (2) even then the church's standard was simply the authoritative statement of a powerful bishop.

So when *did* Christians agree on which writings were authoritative in their congregations? And what was the standard for these decisions? Hints of this standard can be found in first-century Christian writings. The basic idea was something like this: *Testimony that could be connected to eyewitnesses of the risen Lord was uniquely authoritative among early Christians.*³ It was *not* one specific person or a powerful group in the early church that decided to include certain books in the New Testament. *From the beginning, authoritative testimony about Jesus Christ had to have its source in eyewitnesses of the risen Lord.* The lost Gospels were excluded by the fact that they could not be clearly connected to persons who walked and talked with Jesus; therefore, their testimony could not be considered authoritative or reliable.

■ When did Christians begin to treat the words of eyewitnesses as the most reliable testimony about Jesus?

Even while the New Testament books were being written, the words of people who saw and followed the risen Lord—specifically, the words and writings of the apostles—carried special weight in the churches (see Acts 1:21-26; 15:6—16:5; 1 Corinthians 4—5; 9:1-12; Galatians 1:1-12; 1 Thessalonians 5:26-27). After the apostles' deaths, Christians continued to cherish the testimony of eyewitnesses and their associates. Around AD 110, Papias of Hierapolis put it this way: "So, if anyone who had served the elders came, I asked about their sayings in detail—what Andrew or Peter said, or what was said by Philip or Thomas or James or John or Matthew or any other of the Lord's followers."⁴ The people most likely to know the truth about Jesus were the ones who had encountered Jesus personally or the close associates of these witnesses. So, although Christians wrangled for several centuries about *which* writings were authoritative, it was something much greater than political machinations that drove their decisions. Their goal was to determine which books could be clearly connected to eyewitnesses of the risen Lord.

■ Why did only four Gospels make it into the New Testament if so many Gospels were available to early Christians?

Only four Gospels—the ones known to us as the Gospels according to Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John—could be clearly connected to firsthand accounts of the risen Lord. Unlike the "lost Gospels," each of the New Testament Gospels was written in the first century AD, at a time when the eyewitnesses of Jesus' ministry were still alive. (The earthly ministry of Jesus began around AD 28 and lasted until AD 30 or so.) What's more, it's possible to trace widespread awareness among



(Courtesy of the Schoyen Collection, Oslo and London)

Earliest known fragment of Acts of Paul. When it was discovered that Acts of Paul was a fictional text, Christians rejected its authority.

THE GOSPELS: "LOST" & FOUND



The New Testament begins with four accounts of the life of Jesus Christ commonly known as "Gospels," a word that means "good news" or "victorious tidings." The Gospels According to Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John have been familiar to Christians for so many centuries that many believers have assumed these Gospels are the only retellings of the life of Jesus that ever existed. But there are more than a *dozen* other "Gospels," plus several supposed accounts of episodes from Jesus' life that aren't known by the name of "Gospel."

Some of these alternative "Gospels" have been familiar among scholars for centuries. Dan Brown's novel *The Da Vinci Code* popularized several "lost Gospels," including *Gospel of Philip*, *Gospel of Mary Magdalene*, and *Gospel of Thomas*. A couple of years later the *Gospel of Judas* was reconstructed and translated anew. The media implied that *Gospel of Judas* and other lost Gospels provide information about the historical Jesus that isn't included in the New Testament Gospels. Several writers and entertainment corporations were quick to turn a profit by sensationalizing the news of this reconstructed "Gospel." Indeed, the viewpoints found in the "lost Gospels" do differ from the New Testament Gospels.

ACCORDING TO NEW TESTAMENT GOSPELS	ACCORDING TO "LOST GOSPELS"
Jesus was fully human and fully divine	Jesus was a spirit who seemed human or a mere human uniquely inhabited by a divine spirit (Gnostic gospels)
Judas Iscariot willingly chose to betray Jesus	Jesus told Judas to betray him (<i>Gospel of Judas</i>)
The first miraculous sign that Jesus performed was turning water to wine at Cana	Jesus performed self-serving miracles throughout his childhood ("infancy Gospels")

How likely is it that the lost Gospels really tell us the truth about Jesus Christ? An open-minded look at the historical record quickly reveals that there is little reason to doubt the New Testament Gospels and great reason to reject the so-called "lost Gospels."

True or False?

What if the version of the life of Jesus that's found in the Bible isn't the right one? What if there were other accounts of his life and ministry? And what if none of these versions actually represents eyewitness testimony about Jesus? That's precisely what some scholars are teaching, not just on college campuses but in popular literature and on television.

Popular scholars such as Bart Ehrman and Elaine Pagels, whose books boast titles such as *The Gnostic Gospels*, *Lost Scriptures*, and *Lost Christianities*, make claims such as this one: "Many years passed before Christians agreed concerning which books should comprise their sacred scriptures. . . . In part this was because other books were available, also written by Christians, many of their authors claiming to be the original apostles of Jesus, yet advocating points of view quite different from those later embodied in the canon."¹

Indeed, the viewpoints found in these writings, many of which are called "Gospels," do differ from the New Testament Gospels. In fact, many include descriptions of Jesus that directly contradict the Gospels according to Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. Most significantly, the "lost Gospels" consistently depict the *nature of Jesus* in ways that disagree with the Gospels according to Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. For example, the New Testament writings describe Jesus as fully divine and yet fully human (see, for example, Philippians 2:5-11). But, according to other writings, Jesus Christ was a spirit who merely *seemed* human. In others, such as *Gospel of Philip*, Jesus of Nazareth—a human being—was possessed by a Christ-spirit; then on the cross, this Christ-spirit abandoned the human Jesus.

So what's at stake when it comes to the lost Gospels? Nothing less than the nature of Jesus Christ, the essence of Christian faith! Simply put, if the authors of the lost Gospels were telling the truth, the perspective on Jesus that's found in the New Testament Gospels is false. Let's look together at the historical evidence, though, and see what we actually find.

THE BIBLICAL CANON

CULTURE: Greek and Roman | **ERA:** 1st century AD | **FEATURED ELEMENT:** Greek gods Atlas and Athena

SHOULD THE APOCRYPHA BE INCLUDED?

A compilation of books known as the Apocrypha has been the focus of countless debates on the canon. Written during the "Intertestamental Period" (the four centuries between Malachi and Matthew), the following books have been accepted by some traditions and rejected by others:

1 and 2 Esdras

Tobit

Judith

Additions to Esther (10:4–16:24)

Wisdom of Solomon

Ecclesiasticus (Sirach)

Baruch (including the Letter of Jeremiah)

Additions to Daniel

▸ Song of the Three Youths (3:24–90)

▸ Susanna (13:1–65)

▸ Bel and the Dragon (14:1–42)

1 and 2 Maccabees

EASTERN ORTHODOX - Eastern Orthodox churches have long accepted the Apocrypha in their canon because these writings were included in early editions of the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures frequently used by the earliest Christians.

ROMAN CATHOLIC - In response to the Protestant Reformation's criticism of certain doctrines, such as prayers for the dead and Purgatory, the Roman Catholic Church, which had always held the Apocrypha in high regard, officially canonized the Apocrypha in 1546 at the Council of Trent.

PROTESTANT - Most Protestants reject the inspiration and canonicity of these writings, although the books are generally considered useful for background studies.

PROTESTANTS CITE THE FOLLOWING REASONS TO EXCLUDE THE APOCRYPHA FROM THE CANON

The books contain teachings contrary to the rest of Scripture

▸ Prayers for the dead (2 Maccabees 12:39–46)

▸ Giving of alms brings forgiveness of sins (Tobit 12:9)

The New Testament never quotes the Apocrypha as authoritative

▸ Hebrews 11:35–38 likely alludes to the martyrs in 2 Maccabees 6–7. This acknowledgement of the events cannot be viewed as an endorsement of divine inspiration since biblical writers frequently cited historical events not mentioned in Scripture and even quoted pagan poets.

The books never claim to speak for the Lord

▸ 1 Maccabees 9:27 practically denies inspiration by stating prophets were not in the land at the time.

THE BIBLICAL CANON

RECOGNIZING THE CANON

The collection of books in the Bible is referred to as the canon, from the Latin word for rule or standard. The 39 books of the Old Testament were largely agreed upon by the first century AD.

Circumstances in the second century AD necessitated the recognition of the New Testament canon to affirm which writings were authoritative and inspired by the Holy Spirit. The apostles and those who learned directly from them had died, and erroneous books were being written by people using names of key biblical figures.

Except for a handful of books (Hebrews, 2 Peter, 2 and 3 John, Jude, and Revelation), there was practically unanimous acceptance of the New Testament writings as Scripture during the second century AD, and even the disputed books were accepted by most churches. In AD 367 Athanasius listed the 27 books of the New Testament as the complete canon, and the church councils at Hippo Regius (AD 393) and Carthage (AD 397) affirmed his list.

THE NEW TESTAMENT BOOKS MET CERTAIN CRITERIA.¹



Was the book written by an apostle or his close associate?



Was the writer confirmed by acts of God?



Did the message tell the truth about God?



Does it come with the power of God?



Was it accepted by the people of God?

Ultimately, God determined which books belong in the Bible, and the Holy Spirit inspired the writing of these books to teach and guide His people. The church does not determine the canon. Instead, believers indwelt by the Holy Spirit can recognize His voice (John 10:2-5) and discover which books were inspired by Him.

¹Norman L. Geisler and William E. Nix, *A General Introduction to the Bible, Revised and Expanded* (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 1986), pp. 229-231.