

I've told my story about how I came to the faith several times. It's very similar to most who came to this walk ten or more years ago. I often lament that people don't come to this walk the same way today. I think it's time to adjust that and start a series on how to do it today. The clock isn't going to be turned back.

With videos and podcasts being the prime source of people learning today, the only way to influence is to adopt those platforms. Which is what I've done for quite a while. But the messages have been based on people already knowing Christianity on some level, seeing the errors, and then coming to the truth through that process. People coming to the faith today often have nothing to contrast it with. Our society is not religious anymore. Me talking about how Calvinism or Catholicism are flawed doesn't mean anything to people who don't know what those two things are. So instead of contrasting, I'm going to start by simply teaching with the purpose of informing and helping others learn. This is going to be a chore because the faith has always been about contrasts. Either Yahweh or the way of the nations, either Yeshua's teachings or the Pharisees or Sadducees, either early Christianity or paganism. Now, either early Christianity or pagan Christianity. Parallels, contrasts, and such are necessary, so bear with me if I must make contrasts along the way but they are necessary. Many things society believes about Christianity, things people will believe just from growing up in the west about Christianity, aren't true so they need to be contrasted. They are necessary simply because we are different.

First, we need to set the expectations. What is actually possible to know and what we are expected to know.

Slide 2 And when I came to you, brethren, I did not come with superiority of speech or of wisdom, proclaiming to you the testimony of God. For I determined to know nothing among you except Yeshua Messiah, and Him crucified. I was with you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling, and my message and my preaching were not in persuasive words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, so that your faith would not rest on the wisdom of men, but on the power of God. (1Co 2:1-5)

Most of what we hear today, and have heard since the reformation, are people coming with superiority of speech and or wisdom. It is our human nature to want to learn deep things from people who understand deep things. The Apostle Paul was the most educated and gifted teacher of the New Testament by a very large margin. He was raised to be a Pharisee Rabbi, perhaps even the next head Rabbi, while also being educated in the Greek ways and a Roman citizen. Paul was a savant even before being given the Holy Spirit. He could come in superiority of speech and wisdom

because he had that. But his mission was not to be a professor but an evangelist. His determination was to explain Christ, meaning Messiah, and Him crucified. This should be the focus of ministry.

In order to know who Christ is, we have to start with Genesis and work through the whole thing. In order to understand the crucifixion, we must search the rest of the Old Testament for why that happened.

Why do we need to know who Christ is and His crucifixion?

Slide 3 "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life. For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him." (Joh 3:16-17)

Still slide 3 The one who believes in the Son of God has the testimony in himself; the one who does not believe God has made Him a liar, because he has not believed in the testimony that God has given concerning His Son. And the testimony is this, that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life. (1Jn 5:10-12)

Eternal life. That's why. We're not here playing a game. This isn't a hobby, and it's not a mere academic exercise. Getting this right is the key to eternal life. And please do not say "that's trying to earn salvation". Salvation is a gift, but you have to accept it and use it for it to matter. Accepting salvation takes effort and comes with responsibility and works. Works are absolutely required. Learning who Christ is and why He got crucified is works, for goodness sakes.

Here is the expectation, though. The expectation is to know Yeshua, the Messiah, and why He was crucified. Then, by extension, why He was resurrected, why He ascended, and then what are the next steps in the plan of salvation. To learn these things we have to start in Genesis and work our way through to the New Testament. Then we understand the New Testament the way it was meant to be understood. This is a chore and takes time because we live in a culture very removed from the first century and culture that's even more foreign than that of Moses, David, or Nehemiah.

Slide 4 Whoever believes that Yeshua is the Messiah is born of God, and whoever loves the Father loves the child born of Him. By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and observe His commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments; and His commandments are not burdensome. (1Jn 5:1-3)

Along the way to knowing Messiah, we must learn the commandments. Our faith is to love God and His Son. Our display of that love is to adopt their commandments, which are not burdensome. In fact, they are a lifestyle. This comes from starting in Genesis.

Slide 5 "For Moses from ancient generations has in every city those who preach him, since he is read in the synagogues every Sabbath." (Act 15:21)

The Torah is referred to as "Moses" here. Moses wrote the first 5 books of the bible. Acts 15 occurs about 10-15 years after the Messiah ascended. Gentiles did not get grafted in in large numbers for a long time after the ascension. Peter even had a problem eating with the gentile converts. The council in Acts 15 was about a starting point. The gentiles were showing up at synagogue, which is why the Jews had such a problem with them. They were learning Moses and the Messiah through the learning centers available to them in that day. Synagogues are religious centers. These religious centers were ran by Pharisees, which is why Paul could walk into any of them and command an audience.

This is an example of what to expect on this journey. When I was new to taking the faith seriously, I often marveled how people could get so much information out of one verse. It took a long time to realize that I could also do the same thing. But I'm not doing it because I want to be a smart fellow, it's just what happens when you take this walk seriously. When you ditch your preconceived notions, surrender to the Holy Spirit, and allow the text and history to say what it says. The bible then becomes one coherent book, which it was meant to be. It's the Word of God, after all, so it should bring peace and be easy to comprehend. The difficulty is that we have modern western minds and baggage that we have to work through to understand the Word.

Some simple, but important things that help us understand. Things that don't require learning another language or taking classes on middle eastern cultures:

Who wrote the books and what is their perspective?

When were they written?

What time frame they cover?

This is why we use commentaries and reference tools. This work has been done for us. In the Old Testament and in the New.

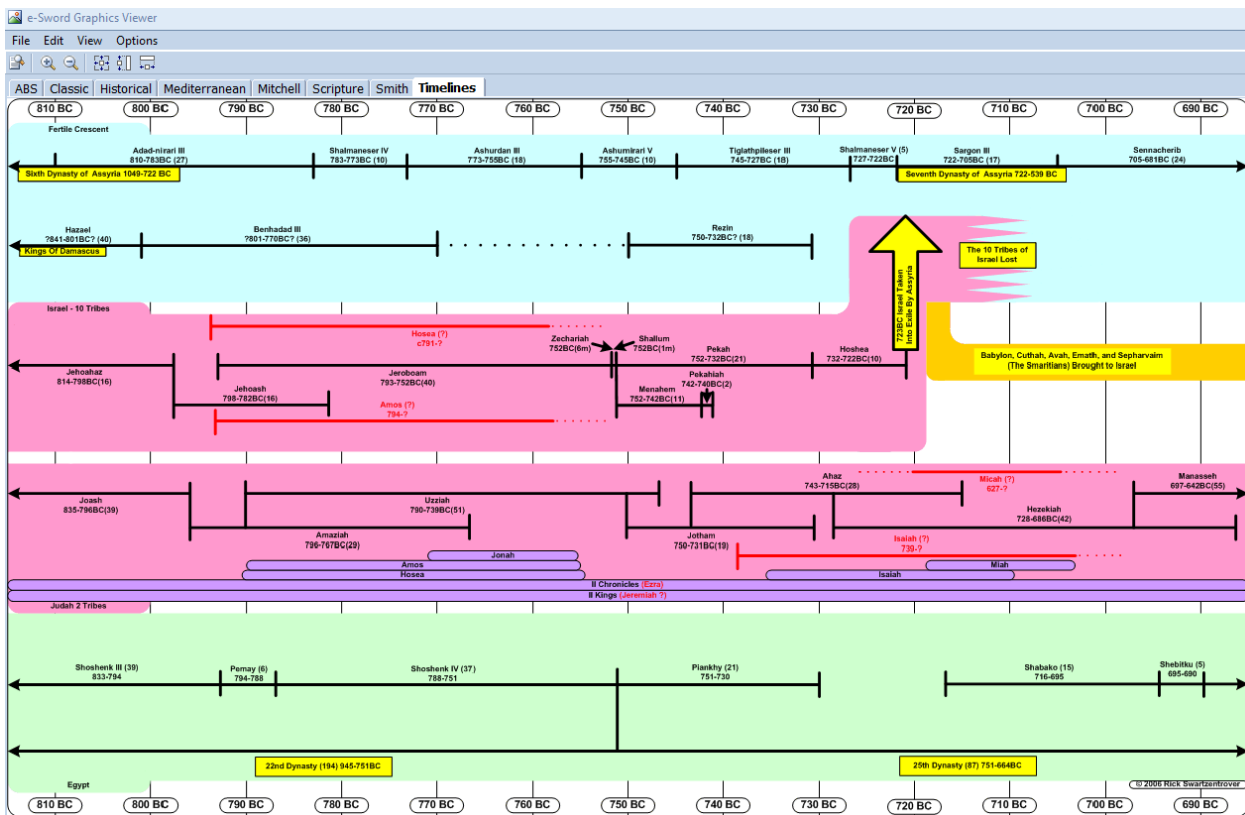
For example, Moses wrote the first five books of the Bible. There is no book older than that. Which means what we know about before Moses lived was communicated to him supernaturally and either he or his scribe wrote it down. There's no written information before Moses. Period.

We've been studying Ezekiel. He was exiled to Babylon a few years before the temple came down. So his writings cover the period of the end of Judea and the beginning of the exile. He also speaks about the restoration that would come 70 years later but also about events that haven't happened yet. Parsing these things out is a chore.

A very key thing to keep in mind is that the Gospels and Acts were not written as journals. They were written up to thirty years after their events they record happen and the authors were not together when they were written. Some opine the perhaps one author had another's Gospel, but in general, we are quite confident they were all penned at different times, in different places, and distributed to different people.

The letters were written AD 55-AD 65 time periods. Grasping how long they stayed faithful, cohesive, on message, and unified without writing anything down is miraculous. Paul went to Rome, the others went to other parts of the world, and they spread the same message. They got together in Jerusalem in Acts 15 and were united. This is comforting but also reinforces our faith in the Holy Spirit to guide truth.

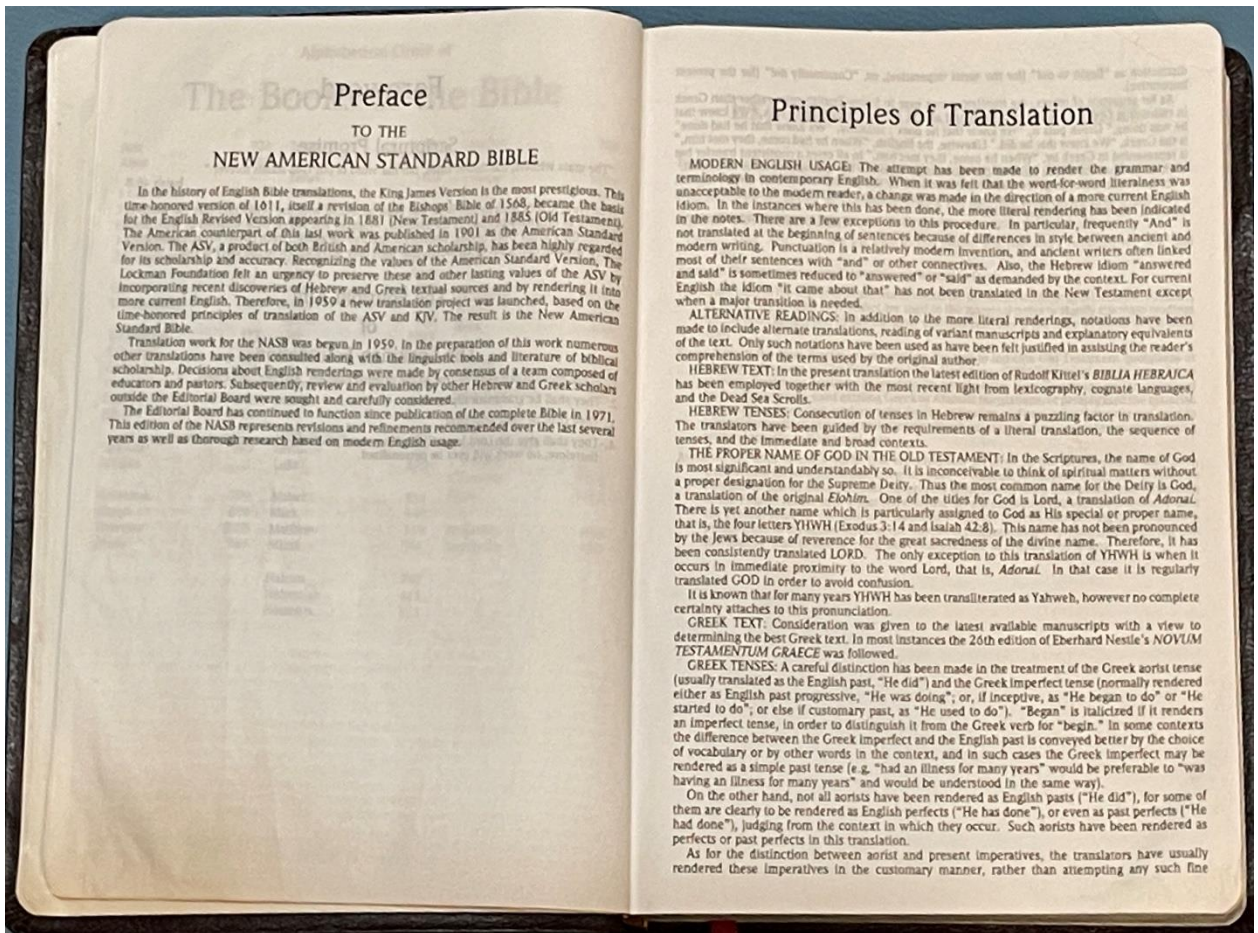
Slide 6



Here's an example of a timeline tool. These are very handy to quickly see which prophets in the OT lived at the same time and what was going on in the world at that time. You can see which empires

were in play simultaneously, who was king of Israel, and all sorts of interesting information that put the scriptures into context.

The reason I bring all this up is that we can trust historians and those who have done the work to document these things even though we're going to disagree with their theology almost all the time. Doctrine doesn't matter when people are putting timelines on spreadsheets or presenting accurate historical facts to us. These helps can really put the Word into a better context for us.



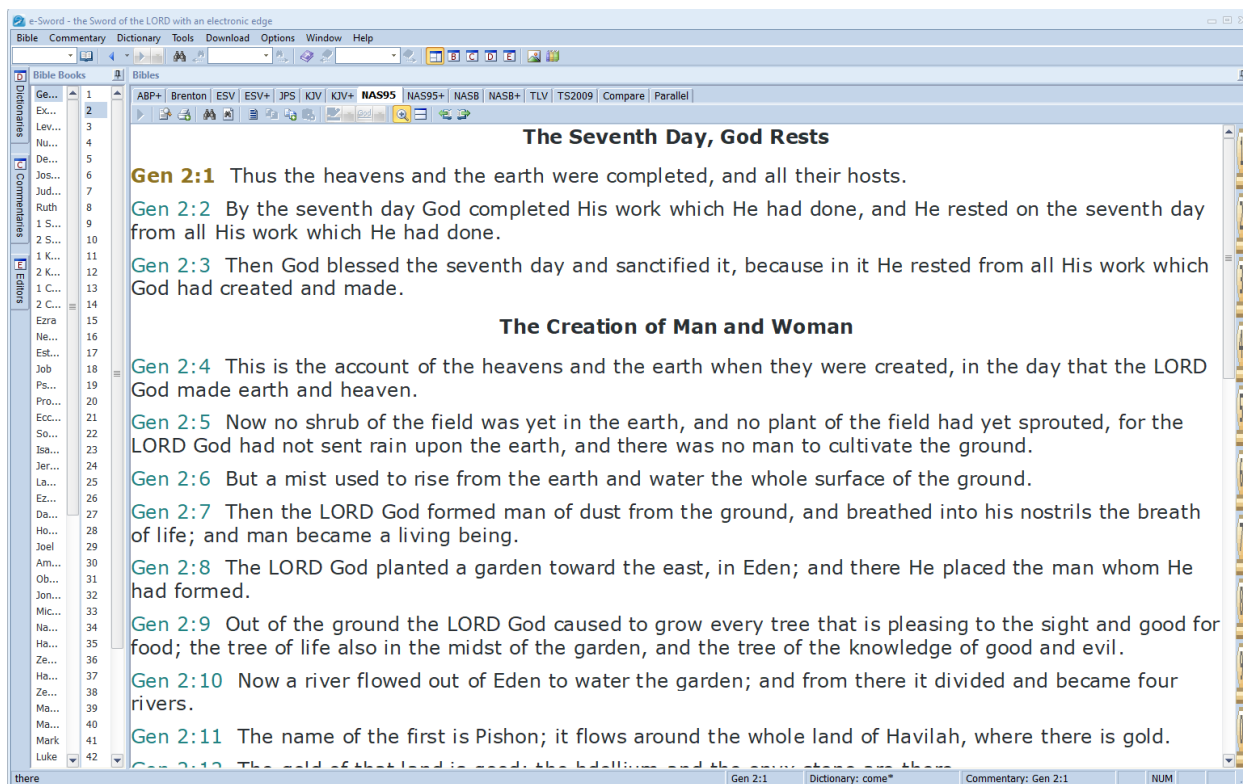
Bible picture

Choosing a bible. I strongly recommend the NASB95. Many of the reasons are in the picture. The 1995 version is remarkably precise, accurate, literal, and readable. They built in hints and helps that previous generations did not have. This is a great tool to get a sense of the original without having to learn the original languages. It's not a sacred name bible. I wish it were. However, they have a way of using LORD and God to let us know when to change it to the sacred names. The sacred name bibles I have looked at are simply not serious bibles. They are often simply KJV bibles where someone has used ctrl-f find and replace to change the word LORD to YHVH, which is easy to spot because YHVH is called Lord sometimes. If you know where and you find YHVH there, then you

know the bible you hold is a novelty. It's not serious. There is a new SNB out called TLV that I haven't looked at yet, but the ISR and others from that time frame are really just KJV's where someone has made a mutt bible based on what they think it ought to look like.

The KJV should be avoided. It has verses that are made from whole cloth. It's translation rules prohibited presenting the truth. While this bible served mankind well, many were saved through it, and many came to the knowledge of Torah through it, it's just not accurate. There's a study group we frequent where the brethren still use the KJV and they spend a LOT of time correcting it. Last time that happened, I showed that their correction to a verse matched the NASB95. This group largely learned on the KJV and just can't break the habit. For new people, you can just fast forward on that one and use the NASB95.

Slide 8 Electronic Bibles



This is e-sword which is great on the computer and how I make these messages. You can add more to this platform than a human can read in several lifetimes. Electronic bibles are great. Apps, well, they're OK for reading but kinda hard to do studies.

The benefits to bible programs like this are enormous. The research tools, the side by side comparisons, it's a long list of positives. But do you know what's missing? The principles of translation and the hints I put up from the print version. The programs have made all versions

incredibly accessible but without the ease of looking at the first couple pages to find out details of the translation. They put all versions on an equal footing when that's really not the case at all. Some of what you see on my screen are very specialty versions. The KJV is only there because it comes stock with that program. I only use that to look up quotes from it and then click to a good one. (TS2009 is up there, frankly, so I can find the mistakes in it.)

With all these bibles, tools, videos, and podcasts, it's information overload. The internet puts everything on a level playing field so it's up to the individual to figure out what's true, what's malarky, and all the stuff in between. We need anchors. We need to find sources that are as impeccable as possible and then measure the rest of the information against that. This is why I recommend the NASB95. Reading this bible is not going to steer you wrong and they make note when they have to add things to make sentences make sense, when verses aren't really there, and how to determine the Name in the OT. They also put in all caps when something is a direct citation of the OT in the NT.

Slide 9 Title slide again

While you are on this journey, always remember why you're here and what you are looking for. The goal is to know Christ and Him crucified. That's the path to eternal life. While on this path, you will learn all sorts of interesting things and you will change how you live your life day to day. Your perspective on this life will change as will your understanding of the world to come. We're not here to find truth for the sake of being right or so we can win arguments. We are here to learn about the God, His Son, and the path to eternal life. Next week, we'll continue this series and talk in more detail about scripture and such. Shabbat Shalom.