Transmitting Thoughts Through Writing

Commentary for November 16, 2017 — God Makes His Thoughts Available to Us

What you are reading now are my thoughts written in the past. In fact, every word written is “in the past.” This is because thoughts occur before they are written. Yet you are reading thoughts that I had in the past, before I wrote them down.

To explain the process more completely, by the agency of the human mind, the words I write here go from my mind to your mind.1 Knowledge travels forward in time through the following steps:

1. The thoughts are formed in my mind,
2. are typed by my fingers into words,
3. are saved to the ASK website (and perhaps are printed by you, the reader),
4. the words are read by you,
5. they go into your mind,
6. my thoughts are thought by you and, become your thoughts, and
7. if you choose, they are committed to short-term or long-term memory.

It is important to realize, everything that is written down was thought in the past by someone. If I am dead, yet you can read my words, and think my thoughts. Neat huh? (I wonder how evolution would explain such a wondrous phenomenon.)

You can read and think God’s thoughts. The Word of God works similarly to the seven steps above. In fact, the process between people described is a pale example of how God’s words proceed from Him into your mind through thousands of years. The same Word of God that goes into your mind now, spoke creation into being (Genesis chapter 1) through His Son who was sort of the prime contractor of all creation (Colossians 1:15–22). The Son made the eons (Hebrews 1:1–2). At the proper time He emptied Himself of glory (Philippians 2:5–11), became flesh, was born of Mary, and named Jesus (John 1:1–18). By His resurrection, He was our Savior. That is explained in the gospel message in First Corinthians chapter 15.

In days past, God communicated through His prophets who produced the Old Testament, His written word. Today, God communicates through His Son who is heir of all things (Hebrews 1:1–2, including God’s personal name, Philippians 2:9–11). Jesus spoke the Word of God in His ministry (Luke 5:1, 8:21). His apostles likewise spoke the Word of God as God’s Spirit inspired them (Acts 4:1, 6:7, 8:14, 11:1, 12:24, 13:5, 2 Timothy 3:16, and other instances).

1 I often use novels as examples. Jane Austen’s novels present the thoughts of their author at the moment she wrote or edited them, beginning with the publication of Sense and Sensibility (1811). The novel War and Peace likewise conveys to us the thoughts of Leo Tolstoy from the 1860s.
**Story Arcs**

The story of humanity in Scripture has a story arc, from Adam to you, to the last person born. What is a story arc? The graphic below gives one example. (Kurt Vonnegut gives a useful four-minute YouTube video at “story arcs” to a student group.) The Scriptures from Genesis to Revelation encompass a grand story arc.

Another story arc goes from Genesis to 1 Corinthians 15:23–28. It takes us beyond the end of Revelation to a time when the Son subjects Himself to God the Father “that God [the Father] may be all in all.” We do not know what the “all in all” means, we are not told. All mankind will all be glorified by that time and we all will experience that event together.

What does this have to do with you and me? After I die, I will be in the grave, my body will begin its process to return to dust/soil/dirt from which God made you and me. All thoughts will cease. My soul will dissolve when my spirit leaves my body, and my spirit goes back to God for safekeeping, until it combines with a glorious body composed of spirit, given to me at Christ’s return.

I want to encourage you, even plead with you, to make good use of what God has provided to us through Christ. As believers (through Christ’s resurrection and our salvation through Him), we are all babes in Christ and “little children.”

We in the first resurrection will finally meet, if we have not met before. All mankind will eventually meet at the consummation when God becomes all and in all (again, see 1 Corinthians chapter 15, it’s terrific). In death, there is no consciousness of time. One moment death is approaching — [then you die] — and next thing you know you are conscious again with years or centuries having passed. Either a physical resurrection will occur, or you will have a spiritual resurrection with a glorious body composed of God’s Spirit. See my article “YOUR Resurrection”:

> “Behold, what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knows us not, because it knew him not.

> Beloved, NOW are we the sons of God, and it does not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he [Christ] shall appear, WE SHALL BE LIKE HIM; for we shall see him as he is.”

• 1 John 3:1–3

I recently came across a different layout of the Bible devised by Dr. Ernest Martin after 1985 when ASK began. It explains elements of the entire Bible. I attach it for your edification.

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OLD TESTAMENT

Luke 24:44,45 suggests that Christ accepted a threefold partition of the Old Testament, i.e. the Law of Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalms. This insertion of Psalms was probably not to the 150 Psalms themselves. It was common practice to name books with the introductory word to the book. This occurred with the five books of the Law plus Lamentations. Since the book of Psalms was the first book of the third division, Christ’s reference was indicating the whole of that division. This same usage is also reflected in II Maccabees 2:12-15; Philo Judaeus (Cont. Life); and The Apostolic Constitutions (1.2.4).

### AN ARRANGEMENT OF THE TRIPARTITE DIVISIONS

1. The Law of Moses
   1. Genesis
   2. Exodus
   3. Leviticus
   4. Numbers
   5. Deuteronomy

2. The Prophets
   6. Joshua-Judges
   7. Book of Kingdoms
   8. Isaiah
   9. Jeremiah ( Longer)
   10. Ezekiel
   11. The Twelve
      [Minor (Shorter) Prophets]

3. The Psalms (Writings)
   12. Psalms
   13. Proverbs
   14. Job
   15. Song of Songs
   16. Ruth
   17. Lamentations
   18. Ecclesiastes
   19. Esther
   20. Daniel
   21. Ezra-Nehemiah
   22. Chronicles


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1. This arrangement of Old Testament books is the modern Jewish one, but it reflects the one most generally accepted by the Jews in the earliest period (Strack 43:44 to 49:10). In the history of the Jewish canon some books have been shifted in the division of Prophets and Psalms but never from one division to another. The books in the Law have always remained in the same order.

2. The Prophets division has this title because the books were found written by prophets (Acts 3:24) and they were an introduction to the major prophecies.

3. In the twenty-two numbering Joshua-Judges are reckoned as one book representing the time when Israel had no kings.

4. In the twenty-two numbering the Book of Kingdoms (comprising our Samuel and Kings) is reckoned as one book representing the time when Israel had kings. A relic of this former title is found in the superscriptions to our Samuel and Kings in the King James Version: I, II, III, IV Book of Kings. The book may have been devised by Isaiah and composed by him until his death (II Chronicles 32:32).

5. The Twelve Minor (Shorter) Prophets [from Hosea to Malachi] were always reckoned as one book by the Hebrews.

6. One of the earliest references to this third division calls it “the works of David, and royal letters about sacred gifts” (II Maccabees 1:12-15). The Psalms and succeeding books were all “royal” or “kingdom” books. The Psalms were associated with king David; Proverbs, king Solomon; Ruth was a “queen mother”; Lamentations was written in commemoration of king Josiah (II Chronicles 35:24,25); Ecclesiastes was ascribed to king Solomon; Esther was queen of Persia; Daniel was of the kings’ seed (1:3); Ezra was a ruler in Judah and Nehemiah was a ruler of the Jews and probably of royal seed (Neh. 6:5-9). Chronicles is about the fortunes of the kingdom of Judah. Thus, all could be reckoned as “royal” or “kingdom” books!

7. Song of Songs was read in the Temple at Passover; Ruth at Pentecost; Lamentations on the anniversary of the Temple’s destruction (Ab 10); Ecclesiastes at Tabernacles; and Esther at Purim. This custom of reading these five books at these times was probably begun in the time of Ezra (II Chronicles 35:24,25).

8. The three Restoration Books were written during the Gentile period of Israel’s history. They all reflect the restoration period of Judah under the Persians.
NEW TESTAMENT

Just before the Apostle Peter’s death he gathered together certain New Testament documents to leave with the Christian Church so they might continue knowing the “exceeding great and precious promises” (II Peter 1:4,12,21). This collection of works was designed to last the Church “until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts” (verse 19). These were considered to be inspired prophetic writings like the Old Testament (verse 20,21). It appears that the Apostle John finally, composing his Gospel, completed the New Testament canon. The final number of books became twenty-seven. Coupled with the twenty-two of the Old Testament, the complete Bible came to forty-nine (7x7) books. This number surely signified a symbolic completion to divine literature.

THE FOURFOLD DIVISIONS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT
(In manuscript order)

I. The New Testament Pentateuch 1
   1. Matthew
   2. Mark
   3. Luke
   4. John
   5. Acts

II. The Seven General Epistles 2
    6. James 3
    7. I Peter
    8. II Peter
    9. I John
   10. II John
   11. III John
   12. Jude

III. The Fourteen Pauline Collection 4
    13. Romans
    14. I Corinthians
    15. II Corinthians
    16. Galatians
    17. Ephesians
    18. Philippians
    19. Colossians
    20. I Thessalonians
    21. II Thessalonians
    22. Hebrews 5
    23. I Timothy 6
    24. II Timothy
    25. Titus
    26. Philemon

IV. The Prophetic Section
   27. Revelation 7

3The four Gospels and Acts are all historical books and belong together. The first four show a history of Christ’s ministry while in the flesh and Acts while He had returned to heaven.

3The seven General Epistles appear next after Acts in most manuscripts and we position them properly before those of Paul.

3The four authors of the General Epistles are positioned according to prominence in the Jerusalem church. “James, Cephas [Peter], and John, who seemed to be pillars” (Galatians 2:9). The books are “General” because they were not addressed to specific churches and they gave general (not specific doctrinal) teaching. They were placed before Paul’s collection because these took precedence. “To the Jew first” (Romans 1:16), their authors had seniority over Paul (Galatians 1:17), and they gave a basic introduction to Paul’s more advanced teachings.

4Romans headed the Pauline epistles. The later Catholic Church positioned the Pauline epistles ahead of the Seven General Epistles to place Rome in authority over Jerusalem (M’Clintok and Strong, *Cyclopedia*, vol. I, p. 800). Paul wrote to seven churches (to Corinth and Thessalonica twice) to give the “perfection” of “church” teaching (Lardner, *Credibility*, vol. III, p. 177). The same principle for prophetic teaching is found in the seven churches in Revelation. Paul’s seventh church was Thessalonica and the books discuss the last trumpet, the second coming, and the resurrection—the fulfillment of last things for the church.

5Hebrews was originally a non-titled book. It is a general letter. In most ancient manuscripts it appears in this position (well inside the Pauline collection). The Western Church rejected its Pauline origin and placed the epistle to last position after Philemon (Bacon, *Intro.*, p. 140). The internal evidence suggests that it belongs as the earliest manuscripts have it.

6The four Pastoral Epistles are positioned as to the prominence and length of messages of the authors. Timothy was Paul’s very close associate and pastored the Ephesian area while Titus had Crete while Philemon pastored a local area probably near Laodicea in Asia Minor.

7There are seven parts to the fourfold division of the New Testament.