1. <u>INTRODUCTION</u> – Twenty-one of the total twenty-six New Testament books are epistles or letters; comprising 35% of the New Testament. Paul alone wrote thirteen of the epistles.

   a. The reason for the epistle form or writing is at least 2 fold – 1) the rapid growth of the Christian communities in faraway places demanded a different means of communication, and letters fit the need. 2) Because known Apostles were engaged in the evangelistic efforts in particular communities, the letter form allowed a more personal touch when their physical presence was not possible. 3) Due to the need for a quick response to questions and problems in these Christian communities where seasoned leadership was not yet developed. The Epistles therefore provide a wonderful look into local theological issues and problems that are still speaking to Christians almost 2,000 years later.

   b. Each of the Epistles are letters that were written to specific churches by Apostles during the mid to late first century AD, and were usually written in anticipation of a coming trial or in response to a known problem or challenge the church community would have to deal with. These trials contained elements of social, political, theological, and spiritual questions and oppression; and these letters provided guidance on things God's people needed to know and to hear from their leaders due to the circumstances of the time. The following quote I think captures much of the sentiment the Apostles held fast to and encouraged Christ-followers through the ages to be certain of:

      > I have told you these things, so that in Me you may have [perfect] peace *and* confidence. In the world you [will] have tribulation *and* trials *and* distress *and* frustration; but be of good cheer [take courage; be confident, certain, & undaunted]! For I have overcome the world [I have deprived it of power to harm you and have conquered it for you]. John 16:33 from the Amplified Version of the Bible.

   c. Epistles [letters] were not the typical method of revealing God's Word in literary form. In fact, until the time of the Roman Empire there wasn't sufficient means or safety of transporting documents over long distances. The epistolary form was a technological breakthrough in communication.

   d. These concepts have application for the proper interpretation and application of the Epistles. For more on this topic refer to Hermeneutics – The Art and Science of interpretation of Scripture – Parts 1-3 under the Biblical Literacy tab at www.authenticdiscipleship.org

2. <u>AUTHORSHIP</u> -The questions of authorship are addressed on each of the Bible Survey articles. There are some generic issues that relate to some portions of Biblical texts and depending upon the translations of the text used.

   a. The versions of Scripture generally employed by www.authenticdiscipleship.org are the <u>New American Standard Bible [NASB]</u>, and the <u>New International Version [NIV].</u> Though there are many versions of the Bible and each has their own merits and followings, these two versions are regarded by most scholars as the most critically researched and validated versions of Scripture.

God's Word has been carefully kept through the ages by Jewish scholars and scribes, and their preservation methodologies were incorporated into the New Testament as well. Part of this methodology involved the fact that Scripture was written upon parchment scrolls and on papyrus sheets that had to be recopied from time to time because of the perishable nature of the material God's Word was written upon. The discipline and the skill of these scribes have preserved God's Word through the ages, and we have an incredible amount of ancient texts and fragments that continue to be studied and translated to ensure the accuracy and validity of God's Words.

b. One issue that affects all versions of Scripture is which of the texts are validated as "Canon" meaning authoritative Spirit-directed; and which are more human-authored and informational in nature and "non-canonical." Scholars have through the ages conducted painstaking analysis of old source documents to ensure the correct materials are properly translated in our Bibles. Though not applicable to the Biblical Canon in general, of the books found in the NASB or the NIV, Zondervan's New International Dictionary of the Christian Church defines the practice of false authorship in the following article on "Deutero-Canonical" or "Pseudepigraphica" which is presented here for background information only. Here is also a link to Wikipedia for another excellent article on this topic: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Deuterocanonical_books

c. There are some of literary works which are known to be literary forgeries, having been written hundreds of years after the events depicted yet claiming to have been the work of an eye witness. Other such literary works maybe theologically correct but historically false… meaning they were added at a later date by unknown editors or redactors. The intent of the authors of these false works varies including 1) the deliberate spiritual deception to undermine the faith, 2) personal gain of the author, and 3) the more innocent attempt to support a position known to be valid but in an improper manner, or 4) to protect the identity of the author for reasons of modesty or threats against their life. Biblical scholars have a vast amount of historical texts that have been discovered, and extensive critical literary research that has been performed to validate true Scripture from forgeries. Simply stated, there is more evidence and research performed on Biblical Scripture than any other of the ancient texts written throughout history.

d. The term "Pseudepigraphica is the technical designation of a collection of writings known to be attributable to imitators of Biblical authors. The term "Deutero-Canonical" is the technical designation of writings that failed to pass the rigid test of authoritative Scripture. This material often has some historical significance, even if it lacks the authority of Scripture. Here are some examples of such writings:

    i. Jewish writings not included in the OT canon, ranging from 200 B.C. to A.D. 200, some of which contain Christian additions. Written in Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek, they include apocalypses, legendary histories, psalms, and wisdom literature. The fact that some of them are ascribed to Adam, Enoch, Moses, Isaiah, and Ezra caused them to be known in Protestant circles as "Pseudepigrapha" being falsely attributed to a known authoritative author.

ii. In the Roman Catholic Church there are writings called "apocryphal," which is to be distinguished from those other writings known by Protestants as the "Apocrypha." These documents are known as "Deutero-Canonical."

iii. There is no agreed order in the arrangement of this material. Generally, it is classified according to its source – Palestinian (written in Hebrew or Aramaic); or Hellenistic (Greek) in its origin, and dated as follows:

1. *Palestinian sourced:*
   a. Enoch, or Ethiopic Enoch (165-80 B.C.)
   b. Book of Jubilees
   c. Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs (140-110 B.C.)
   d. Psalms of Solomon (70-40 B.C.)
   e. Testament of Job (first century B.C.)
   f. Assumption of Moses (A.D. 7-28)
   g. Lives of the Prophets (first century A.D.)
   h. Martyrdom of Isaiah (A.D. 1-50)
   i. Testament of Abraham (A.D. 1-50)
   j. Apocalypse of Abraham (A.D. 70-100)
   k. Apocalypse of Baruch, or 2 Baruch (A.D. 50-100)
   l. Life of Adam and Eve, or the Apocalypse of Moses (A.D. 86- 110)

2. *Hellenistic sourced:*
   a. Letter of Aristeas (200 B.C.-A.D. 33)
   b. Sibylline Oracles (fifteen books, three of which are missing; written over six centuries, some by Christian authors; Book III dates 150-120 B.C., IV c. A.D. 80, V before A.D. 130)
   c. Maccabees (toward end of first century B.C.)
   d. Enoch, otherwise known as Slavonic Enoch or the Book of the Secrets of Enoch (A.D. 1-50)
   e. Baruch, or the Apocalypse of Baruch (A.D. 100-174)

3. *Gnostic Sourced:* all written in the 2nd century AD
   a. The Gospel of Mary
   b. The Gospel of Thomas
   c. The Gospel of Philip
   d. The Gospel of Nicodemus

iv. These books are so classified as "Extra Biblical" – so as not to confuse the "Truth" for Christ followers. There have been many false teachers and false prophets through the ages who taught about elements that had to be added to Scripture to properly understand it. These include elements of secret knowledge, mysticism, and syncretism… mostly promoting something other than faith in a crucified and resurrected Christ as taught in Scripture. Each of these false teachers/prophets taught that something else was

necessary to know and understand Scripture in addition to the Gospel revelation of Jesus as Messiah. Even in more modern times, some groups have introduced their own interpretations and translations of Scripture. "Mormonism" and "Jehovah's Witnesses" are two such groups that have produced their own versions of the Bible to promote their particular version of faith the Christian church has labeled as heresy. Both of these groups teach fail to teach God as a Triune Unity of Father, Son and Spirit – as taught in the Nicene Creed (See Appendix A at the end of this article for a copy of the Nicene Creed). Paul and John warned about these false teachers, and of the real danger of being led astray by Gnostics, Nicolaitans, Mormons, Jehovah's Witnesses, and mystery religions, etc.; all add materials discovered much later under questionable circumstances as authoritative Scripture. Here is an applicable passage written by Paul to instruct Timothy:

> "I solemnly charge *you* in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by His appearing and His kingdom: preach the word; be ready in season *and* out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction. For the time will come when they [the dominant social cultural population] will not endure sound doctrine; but *wanting* to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires, and will turn away their ears from the truth and will turn aside to myths. But you, be sober in all things, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry." 2 Timothy 4:1-5

When people accept these books as valid and authoritative Scripture, Paul warns they have embraced unsound [false] doctrine [theology]. Paul here advises that it is important for Christians to know what they believe and be able to explain why they believe it in accordance with Scripture; meaning they are to make a reasoned argument for their faith in order to hold onto the Truth and teach others properly. This appeal for "Biblical Literacy" – knowing the Word, what it says, what it means, and how to apply it – has never been more important than it is today.

3. <u>HISTORICAL & CULTURAL CONTEXT</u> – Historical Context provides much impetus on both the author and their reason for writing: The date of the epistle can be surmised from certain known historical events. Much of the New Testament was written during the reigns of Nero, Vespasian, and Domitian. The Socio-Political world of these Roman rulers had a strong influence on the Christian world.
   a. Of significance for the use of the Epistolary [letter] form of communication that resulted from the socio-political world that resulted from the Greco-Roman Empire are the following elements:
      i. <u>Common language</u> – the Eastern part of the empire formerly part of Alexander the Great's empire spoke Greek. Under Roman rule Greek remained the dominant language of the region and of the scholarly class. The western part of the region spoke Latin. Latin became the primary language of the aristocrats and leadership. Having two dominant

languages as well as various regional languages, such as Aramaic in east made communication far more easy throughout the empire. Interestingly, the two earliest known translations of the Bible are the "Septuagint" [Greek] and the "Vulgate" [Latin].

ii. Pax-Romana – Though often brutally enforced by soldiers, there was an extended era of peace throughout the region for a prolonged period of time. The Pax-Romana [peace of Rome] enforced by Roman Law and their military governance made trade and travel safer and more predictable. Pax-Romana was supported for almost 206 years… from 27 BC to 180 AD. This long period of stability was not without its problems… the Jewish revolt of 70 AD led to the destruction on the Temple in Jerusalem. Ongoing issues at the extreme borders ultimately made additional expansion of the empire difficult if not impossible. However, travel, trade and discourse were possible like no-time before throughout the Mediterranean region. (See Appendix B at the end of this article for more on Pax-Romana)

iii. Roman infrastructure – in order to continue expansion and consolidate the empire, Rome invested in many public works improvements… including roads, water supply, sewage and drainage, port-city improvements, etc. This increased the ease and safety of traveling throughout the empire and communication within it, as well as the general quality of life of citizens.

iv. Christianity – in 313 at the Edict of Milan the oppression against Christianity was finally removed, and people were allowed to worship as they chose. Christianity was finally accepted as a faith under Roman Law, and Emperor Constantine the Great converted to Christianity and began to financially support the construction of churches and Basilicas throughout the empire including the Church of the Holy Sepulcher and Old Saint Peter's Basilica. However, Christianity was not made the official faith of Rome until 380 AD.

v. History – There were both Jewish and Roman historians who documented well the life and times throughout the Roman Empire. Court writers were known to have been used since early on in the Egyptian Empire. Court historians have provided much of the material content we find in Kings and Chronicles. Scripture tends to be generally more truthful than the more flavored histories that occurred in earlier ages tending to report both the good and the bad that transpired in the context of a God that doesn't change and demands openness and honesty. Biblical kings and nobility were presented in their humanity with "warts and all" – their flaws and humanity on display along with their character and faith or lack of it. Kings and Emperors who proclaimed themselves as gods didn't welcome the light of truth when it was shown on them, and many resorted to changing the official records to portray them more favorably.

b. We know that Paul, John, & Peter's letters were written in response to the threat and reality of persecutions that began against Christians in the middle of the 1st century, the dates of these persecutions provided a specific need and purpose for these letters. The following article from Zondervan's New International Dictionary of the Christian Church provides some historical

specifics: In the early period of the Christian era, persecution was initiated partly by the decree of Roman emperors, and partly by mobs who resented Christian world view. Reasons for the imperial opposition varied as did the character of the Emperors. One consistent theme was that the Jews and Christians held to a faith that opposed Greco-Roman Paganism and Emperor worship. When Rome pressed for unifying elements of faith, both Jews and Christians refused to comply. As such, they were seen as trouble makers and seditionists. Some brief specifics of the character of these emperors include:

i. **Tiberius (14-37)** – was personally insecure and as a result was desirous of flattery and suspicious of any detractors. He looked for such detractors and began a series of "treason trials" to force loyalty and compliance to him. Unfortunately, the Roman aristocracy as well as religious zealots were mostly victimized.

ii. **Caligula (37-41)** – was regarded as a young madman who deliberately provoked Jewish sensibilities, pressing them nearly to the point of revolt. He promoted himself as a god that needed to be worshiped throughout the empire. His decree mandating emperor worship included installing statues of himself throughout the Empire including upon the Temple grounds, which stirred protests and harsh Roman responses.

iii. **Claudius (41-54)** – was an intelligent and well educated man, who was inflicted with cerebral-palsy or some similar ailment that included spastic episodes. He was seen as weak from the standpoint of the Roman aristocracy. He was murdered by his mother to make way for her son of a previous marriage, Nero, who she believed would be more easily controlled.

iv. **Nero (54-68)** – was a hedonistic and unscrupulous man, whose mother continued her heavy handed dealings in Rome through him. Nero finally had enough and had his mother killed. He had great ambition including rebuilding a new Roman imperial palace worthy of the ruler of the world. He conspired to burn down much of the old Roman city for the purpose of making room for his new palace and grounds. He then blamed Christians for the fire to redirect public outcry. He also persecuted Jews who were not liked in Rome anyway. Jews finally revolted in 66 AD. Much of our Christian Scripture including those of Paul, Luke, Peter, Mark, and Matthew were written during this period. Both Paul and Peter were executed in Rome by Nero between 66-67 AD. Persecution was generally restricted to imprisonment and execution of Christian leadership in Nero's time… such was the case with Paul and Peter in Rome. As a Roman citizen, an appeal to Nero's predecessor Claudius would have been a wise move by Paul, not so with Nero. Nero's persecution began in earnest in 64 AD, and continued until his death in 68 AD. Nero allowed or at least didn't discourage mob violence focused against Christians and Jews. It has long been held that Peter wrote his epistles shortly before Nero's sanction against Christians to prepare them for their coming ordeals. Both Paul and Peter's assertion that Christ followers should obey the law and respect governmental

leaders is seen as a way to not inflame Roman governmental opposition – Romans 13:1-5; 1 Peter 2:13-17.

v. Vespasian (69-79 – was a capable leader and army officer. He was tasked with and capably quelled the rebellion on the frontiers, crushing the Jews [especially the Zealots] who had revolted against the empire because of Nero.

vi. Domitian (81-96) – persecuted Christians out of his fear that they would become possible rivals due to the increasing Christian influence in the empire. The Apostle John's writings emerged during his reign.

vii. Trajan (98-117) – was a successful soldier-general who became governor of Germany in 97. He is known for presiding over the greatest period of military expansion of the empire.   His experience as governor was instrumental in enabling his choosing competent governors that well managed the land and people under his rule. Generally, he was an excellent leader whose social welfare policy and rule was supported by the senate, the army, and the general population. His social welfare policies began a period of successful leadership throughout the empire.

viii. Hadrian (117-138) – was another effective military officer who helped consolidate Trajan's expansion before ruling as Emperor. He built Hadrian's Wall as the northern limit of the empire across Britannia. Simon Bar-Kokhba initiated a Jewish revolt against Rome in 132AD, and was accepted as Israel's new political leader who would bring them to freedom. The result was a merciless defeat by Rome resulting in Hadrian's decree erasing the names of 'Judah' and ancient 'Israel' and renaming the region Syria-Palaestania.

ix. Pius (138-161) – along with Trajan and Hadrian were known as part of the "five-good emperors" of Rome. Pius was an effective administrator who invested heavily in public works throughout the empire, and generously helped regions that had experienced natural disasters in the form of earthquakes and violent storms of the time. Persecution and mob violence was somewhat restrained during the reigns of Trajan, Hadrian, and Pius. However, Christians nevertheless suffered due to local religious customs that they refused to participate in and resultant economic restrictions intended to force their participation and integration.

x. Aurelius (161-180) – persecuted Christians because he was personally sympathetic to Greek Stoicism. Therefore, he suppressed what he perceived to be rival philosophy and religion throughout his domain.

xi. Decius (249-251) – persecuted Christians because he was concerned about the political threat of a growing Christian body throughout the Empire that was more loyal to Jesus than the Roman emperor.

xii. Diocletian (284-305) – persecuted Christians because he feared they were disloyal to Rome, and an impediment to the reorganization of the state he desired. In Diocletian's rule an edict was issued that required that churches should be demolished, Scriptures

confiscated, clerics tortured, and Christian civil servants deprived of their citizenship and executed if they remained unrepentant.

xiii. Two hundred and fifty years of active and passive persecution by Rome, effectively drove the Christian church underground.

1. The legal grounds on which persecution was carried out are often convoluted and even obscure, but none-the-less pervasive.

2. According to popular rumors of the time, Christians were cannibals, atheists, and incestuous. No real proof, however, was ever produced in substantiation of these claims.

3. Apparently just being a Christian became punishable without any other attendant vice, and their refusal to worship the emperor was viewed as seditious and politically treasonous.

xiv. Constantine The Great (306-337 AD) – ruled first as part of a Tetrarch with Licinius and Galerius, which made sense due to the size and scope of the empire by that time. This Tetrarchy ruled the Roman world for a short time.

1. Up to this time, Christianity was essentially illegal in the empire, and the "Edict of Toleration" in 311 promoted the tolerance of all faiths by the empire.

2. However, it wasn't until 313 when Constantine ended the era of Christian persecution that had endured for two and a half centuries with the "Edict of Milan."

3. In 325 AD the "First Council of Nicaea" of Christian Bishops convened as the "First Ecumenical Council" to establish a consensus promoting a standard of faith for Christianity, resulting in the "Nicene Creed" (see Appendix A).

xv. In 380 AD the "Edict of Thessalonica" made Christianity the official faith of the Roman Empire, although the empire continued to allow and even support some pagan faiths and cults as well.

xvi. In 381 AD the Nicaean Council reconvened and the result of the effort was the "Nicene Creed" – a statement of faith still in use by the Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, Anglican Communion, and many Protestant churches.

4. **DEDUCTIVE VERSES INDUCTIVE REASONING: [From Wikipedia Online Encyclopedia]**

a. **Deductive reasoning** [also known as deductive logic] is the process of reasoning from one or more statements (premises) to reach a logically certain conclusion. It differs from inductive reasoning or abductive reasoning.

i. Deductive reasoning links premises with conclusions. If all premises are true, if the terms are clear, and if the rules of deductive logic are followed, then the conclusion reached is necessarily true. This is also known as "If/Then logic."

ii. Example of deductive argument:

1. All men are mortal.

2. **Socrates is a man.**
3. **Therefore, Socrates is mortal.**

   In example 1, the first premise states that all objects classified as "men" have the attribute "mortal". The second premise states that "Socrates" is classified as a "man" – a member of the set "men". The conclusion then states that "Socrates" must be "mortal" because he inherits this attribute from his classification as a "man".

iii. **Deductive reasoning is also known as top-down logic, and contrasts with Inductive (bottom-up logic) in the following way: In deductive reasoning, a conclusion is reached reductively by applying general rules that hold over the entirety of a closed domain of discourse, narrowing the range under consideration until only the conclusion is left. In inductive reasoning, the conclusion is reached by generalizing or extrapolating from, i.e., there is epistemic uncertainty. Note, however, that the inductive reasoning mentioned here is not the same as induction used in mathematical proofs – mathematical induction is actually a form of deductive reasoning.**

b. **Inductive reasoning [also known inductive logic] is reasoning in which the premises seek to supply strong evidence for but not necessarily absolute proof of the truth of the conclusion.** *While the conclusion of a deductive argument is certain, the truth of the conclusion of an inductive argument is probable, based upon the evidence given.*

   i. **Many dictionaries define inductive reasoning as reasoning that derives general principles from specific observations. The laws of discovery pertain to Inductive Reasoning as "what, why, where, when, who" observations all influence the outcome.**

   ii. **The philosophical definition of inductive reasoning is more nuanced than simple progression from particular/individual instances to broader generalizations. Rather, the premises of an inductive logical argument indicate some degree of support (inductive probability) for the conclusion but do not entail it; that is, they suggest truth but do not ensure it. In this manner, there is the possibility of moving from general statements to individual instances (for example, statistical syllogisms, discussed below).**

   iii. **An example of an inductive argument:**
      1. **90% of biological life forms that we know of depend on liquid water to exist.**
      2. **Therefore, if we discover a new biological life form it will probably depend on liquid water to exist.**
   This argument could have been made every time a new biological life form was found, and would have been correct every time; however, it is still possible that in the future a biological life form not requiring water could be discovered.

c. **Study of Scripture as presented in the www.authenticdiscipleship.org website is by its nature Inductive.**

5. <u>LANGUAGE UTILIZATIONS: [from Authentic Discipleship/Biblical Literacy/Interpreting Scripture]</u>
   a. When studying any text and especially when studying Scripture, we need to pay close attention to the sentence structure and word tense being used. In language utilization there may be in play any of 7 possibilities that indicate the time frame of the action described… 2 are in near term tense, 5 in a more distant tense.
      i. Example #1: Romans 7:14 "for we know the Law is spiritual"…. How would you interpret the tense of this text? The words indicate a "present tense" and the context indicates "historical past." "We know" is a present tense, yet Paul is speaking into the historical past of the Jews who are dealing with weather the Law has jurisdiction in their life as born again Christians… remember Paul is speaking to Messianic Jews and Gentile converts.
         1. If we ignore the tense and the substance of "to whom" the comment is intended we could miss its meaning.
         2. What Paul is saying is that while the Law is [was] spiritual, it has been replaced with Grace which is a higher order of spirituality… infinitely better than the past version. If read casually, you could conclude that the Law is still in play for Christians, that is not Paul's point.
      ii. Example #2: 1 John 3:6 "No one who abides in Him sins; no one who sins has seen Him or knows Him." How would you assess this sentence? Notice again the tense is present, in English this would be present perfect… it is now and continuing into the future.
         1. What is Paul saying? Is he suggesting that Christians never sin?
         2. The key to this passage is "no one who abides in Him continues to abide in sin." You cannot simultaneous live for Jesus and live for sin… they are mutually exclusive. If someone is abiding in sin, they are obviously not abiding in Jesus.
   b. Proximal descriptions of tense in language utilizations:
      i. Near:
         1. Completed action – "I've taken my break," the action is completed and now in the past.
         2. Limited present action - Examples:
         3. "We'll take a break in 20 minutes" – the action is in the future, but it is a statement that is said once in the present and applies to the near future.
         4. "I am taking a break" – the tense is present but refers to an action that is completed… not that the break is done that's not the point; but that the action to "take a break" has occurred in the near past and affects the near present.
      ii. Far:
         1. Past to present… including limited present – "I have been growing."
         2. As a statement of fact it only need be said once, but it pertains to the past and the limited present. It offers no conclusion to the future.

c. **Additional concepts of applicable language utilizations:**

    i. **Customary usage – "I normally go to sleep at 10:00." These states a normal or customary practice, but it leaves unsaid about whether you always go to sleep at 10:00, or even if it is AM or PM designation.**

   ii. **Iterative – "Pray without ceasing…." Iteration means the act of repeating a process usually with the aim of approaching a desired goal or target or result. Each repetition of the process is also called an "iteration," and the results of one iteration are used as the starting point for the next iteration.**

  iii. **Historical – "When I was growing up, I couldn't ride a bike." The statement pertains to the past and says nothing about "why" you couldn't ride a bike… were you physically unable, didn't have access to one, or forbidden from it; and doesn't say whether you can't ride one today.**

  iv. **Gnomic – "We're lost… we can't find our way to God." This is a general statement of the human condition; it pertains to all people of all time because all are subject to the statement by virtue of being human.**

d. **For more information on the science and art of Interpreting Scripture, go to www.authenticdiscipleship.org under the Biblical Literacy tab.**

APPENDIX A:

The Nicene Creed: *The Nicene Creed, also called the Nicaeno-Constantinopolitan Creed, is a statement of the orthodox faith of the early Christian church in opposition to certain heresies, especially Arianism. These heresies, which disturbed the church during the fourth century, concerned the doctrine of the trinity and of the person of Christ. Both the Greek (Eastern) and the Latin (Western) church held this creed in honor, though with one important difference: the Western church insisted on the inclusion of the phrase "and the Son" (known as the "filioque") in the article on the procession of the Holy Spirit; this phrase still is repudiated by the Eastern Orthodox church. In its present form this creed goes back partially to the Council of Nicea (A.D. 325) with additions by the Council of Constantinople (A.D. 381). It was accepted in its present form at the Council of Chalcedon in 451, but the "filioque" phrase was not added until 589. However, the creed is in substance an accurate and majestic formulation of the Nicene faith. This translation of the Greek text was approved by the CRC Synod of 1988.*

a. We believe in one God, the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all things visible and invisible. And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, begotten from the Father before all ages, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made; of the same essence as the Father.

b. Through him all things were made. For us and for our salvation he came down from heaven; he became incarnate by the Holy Spirit and the virgin Mary, and was made human.

c. He was crucified for us under Pontius Pilate; he suffered and was buried. The third day he rose again, according to the Scriptures. He ascended to heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again with glory to judge the living and the dead. His kingdom will never end.

d. And we believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life. He proceeds from the Father and the Son, and with the Father and the Son is worshiped and glorified. He spoke through the prophets.

e. We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic church.

f. We affirm one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.

g. We look forward to the resurrection of the dead, and to life in the world to come. Amen.

APPENDIX B:

"Our Daily Bread" Devotional offers this context on the "Peace" Christians still hope for and wait upon:

OUR DAILY BREAD:

Sunday,
December 20, 2015

Pax Romana

Read: Isaiah 9:1-7 – "To us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders."

No one can afford the price of war. One website reports 64 nations are currently involved in armed conflicts. When and how will they end? We want peace, but not at the expense of justice.

Jesus was born during a time of "peace," but it came at the cost of heavy-handed oppression. The *Pax Romana* ("Roman Peace") existed only because Rome squashed all dissent.

Seven centuries before that time of relative peace, hostile armies prepared to invade Jerusalem. From the shadow of war, God made a remarkable pronouncement. "On those living in the land of deep darkness a light has dawned," the prophet declared (Isa. 9:2). "For to us a child is born, to us a son is given . . . . Of the greatness of his government and peace there will be no end" (vv. 6-7). Matthew tells us that Isaiah's prophecy found fulfillment in the Christ-child (Matt. 1:22-23; see also Isa. 7:14).

We adore the tiny baby in the manger scene. Yet that helpless babe is also the Lord Almighty, "the Lord of Heaven's Armies" (Isa. 13:13 nlt). He will one day "reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness" (9:7). Such a regime will be no oppressive *Pax Romana.* It will be the reign of the Prince of Peace. — Tim Gustafson

Father, we can never sufficiently thank You that Your Son came to bring us peace with You through His death and resurrection. Thank You that He will rule in both peace and righteousness.

The Lamb of God is also the Lion of Judah.