

THE NON-PROPHET'S GUIDE™ TO
THE BIBLE

TODD HAMPSON



HARVEST PROPHECY
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The Non-Prophet's Guide™ to the Bible

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Dedicated to my sister Corinne Holloway—one in a million.
You are one of the toughest and most caring people I know.
I've learned so much from watching you live your life with thoughtful
grace and purpose. Biology made us siblings. Life made us friends.
I'm doubly blessed by your family—my brother-in-law, Tim Holloway,
and my beautiful nieces (inside and out), Shea and Skye.
You all truly make the world a better place!

*A friend loves at all times, and a brother [or sister]
is born for a time of adversity.*

—Proverbs 17:17 (addition mine)

Acknowledgments

I am thankful to the the Lord daily for my wife, Tracey, and our “kids,” Daniel, our soon-to-be daughter-in-law Maddie, Natalie, and Luke.

I would also like to acknowledge my first agent, Ruth Samsel, who believed in a first-time author with an untested concept (the series is still going strong!); Teresa Evenson, my current agent, for your expertise and vision; Dr. Joseph M. Holden, for the privilege of working with you on projects that (unknown to me at the time) helped prepare me for this book; and my editor, Steve Miller, one of the best theologians and most selfless people on the planet. All of you helped craft this book in some way, and I truly appreciate your contribution.

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INTRODUCTION

The Life-Changing Uniqueness of the All-Time Bestseller

*The word of God is alive and active.
Sharper than any double-edged sword,
it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit,
joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts
and attitudes of the heart.*

— HEBREWS 4:12

The thin, dark-skinned man worked with great efficiency and a contagious joy that stood out in this extremely run-down area of the city. He worked as a day laborer and his wrinkles, scars, and select missing teeth told a story of a tough life on the streets in the place where our team had gathered to assist a full-time local missionary. Belo Horizonte, the third-largest city in Brazil, has had a decades-long struggle with poverty, drug use, and family breakdown, resulting in thousands of homeless street children. Stephen—the joy-filled worker—had been one of them.

Stephen worked for the full-time missionary who invited our group and oversaw the 20 local laborers hired to help us with our week-long construction project—a two-story Christian orphanage in a neighborhood of Belo Horizonte.



Over the next few days, Stephen and I struck up a friendship. In fact, he bonded with our whole team. He had a genuine joy that was clearly evident. One day, the missionary shared Stephen's story with those of us who had befriended him. By his late teens, Stephen was a regular drug user. By his twenties, he was thoroughly addicted and on a fast track to an early death.

The missionary had reached out to him many times, and eventually they formed a bond. The missionary told Stephen about Christ and presented the gospel message to him—but at first the struggling young man rejected the offer. A lifetime of living on the streets coupled with years of drug use does not make for an easy conversion—but God. Those are the two most powerful words in Scripture. With God, the impossible becomes possible.



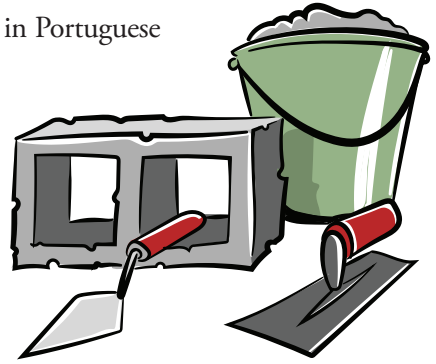
One day, Stephen hit rock bottom. As high on drugs as he could be without overdosing, Stephen showed up at the missionary's doorstep. He was filthy. Stinking. He hadn't bathed in weeks and had been on a multiday drug binge. The missionary and his wife lovingly took

Stephen in, bathed him, put fresh clothes on him, and let him sleep off his high for a couple days while they took care of his immediate needs.

At an opportune time, the missionary asked Stephen if he was tired of living in such a way. The Holy Spirit used the unconditional love and selfless care of the missionaries to break through the hard soil of Stephen's heart. After a long conversation, he accepted Christ as his Savior. He then decided to work with the missionary couple, assisting with short-term teams like ours and helping to reach and manage the Brazilian day laborers they would hire as part of each ministry outreach.

By the time we had met Stephen, he had been successfully working with the missionaries for several years. I'm sure he felt the pull of his old temptations and the pain of his difficult life growing up on the streets—but he was clearly a changed man, full of hope and joy that everyone could see. His love for

the Lord was visible. He sang worship songs in Portuguese as we worked. He even knew a few English worship songs that he had learned so he could connect with the short-term missions teams that came from the United States. He sang them whenever he felt the Lord's leading and encouraged us to join in as we worked. This was not churchianity—his was a real-world, genuine, rugged faith.



Stephen's story is one of millions upon millions of believers whose lives were changed by the Savior. Aside from the many strong evidences for the reliability and divine nature of the Bible (which we'll cover in upcoming chapters), the testimony of countless numbers of changed lives bears witness to the power of its central message: that Jesus came to die for sinners (including you and me) and powerfully change them from the inside out.

Through the soul-saving effect of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, drug attics have been set free, murderers have become saints, slave traders have become soul winners, terrorists have become preachers, street thugs have become chaplains, prostitutes have become rescuers, narcissists have become selfless missionaries, and greedy thieves have become extravagant givers. Despite what our postmodern humanist society claims, everywhere the Bible takes root it changes lives—and cultures—for the better. Families are stronger, societies are safer, the helpless are more protected, the poor are better cared for, and love is more selflessly given.

A Unique Work

The Bible is a truly unique work. It is a collection of 66 books with 1,189 chapters (929 in the Old Testament; 260 in the New Testament) consisting of more than 31,100 verses—yet it all fits together like a custom-designed puzzle. The Bible is the only religious book that has multiple authors from different time periods, places, and occupations yet tells one complete story. Written over a period of 1,500 years by 39 authors from all walks of life, it claims to be the very Word of God and backs up this claim with hundreds of specific fulfilled prophecies.

1,189
CHAPTERS
929 OT 260 NT
31,100 VERSES

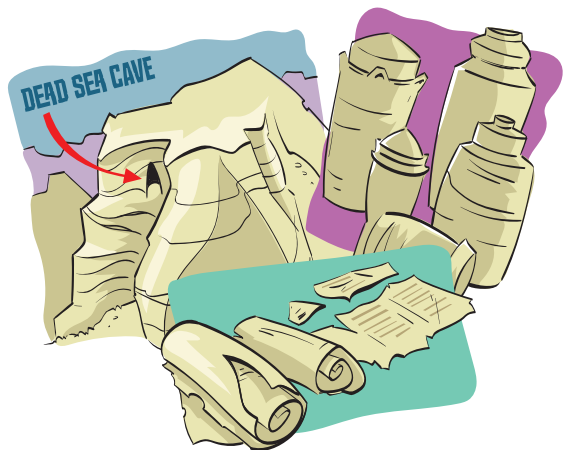
The people, places, and events of Scripture have been verified more than any other ancient document. Archaeologists have been able to excavate only a small percentage of ancient sites in the Holy Land, yet every time an artifact relevant to the Bible is found, it supports the details found in Scripture.

At one time, critics argued that Nineveh was not a real city—until archaeologist Sir Austen Henry Layard (1817–1894) discovered and excavated the city. Critics used to say the Hittites were a made-up people group because they were mentioned in the Bible and nowhere else. Then in 1834, French archaeologist Charles Texier discovered the ruins of the

ancient Hittite capital, Hattusa, which revealed the Hittite Empire rivaled that of the Egyptian Empire.¹

There are hundreds of large and small examples like what I've described above. From the game-changing discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls beginning in 1947 (which confirmed the transmissive accuracy and writing time frame for most of the Old Testament) to more recent discoveries such as the Tel Dan Inscription, which verifies the existence of King David,² every turn of the shovel seems to further support the accuracy of Scripture.

No other religious book can make any of these claims or is so intricately connected to history, consistently verified by archaeology, or backed up by hundreds of specific



fulfilled prophecies. Any honest skeptic should be swayed by these facts—if time is taken to truly consider the details.

The All-Time Bestseller

The famous French philosopher Voltaire—who was critical of Christianity—reportedly said this about the Bible: “A hundred years from my death, the Bible will be a museum piece.” Well, guess what? Voltaire died in 1778, and the Bible is still the all-time bestselling book on the planet. In fact, 100 years after Voltaire’s death, the French Bible Society set up its headquarters in his old home in Paris. From that very location, they printed Bibles to ship all over Europe.

Psalm 119:89—Your word, LORD, is eternal; it stands firm in the heavens.

From ancient times, when scribes meticulously copied scrolls as the older versions wore out, to the printing era, when the first movable-type presses were invented, to today’s technology, which makes it possible for books to be distributed digitally and audibly, no other book in history even comes close to being as widely distributed as the Bible. God has made sure his inspired Word is distributed far and wide.

What are the odds that a Jewish man from a poor village in a dusty and remote province of the ancient Roman Empire with a handful of disciples would generate a global movement known to billions of people 2,000 years later? Jesus said in Matthew 24:14 that “this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations.” As unlikely as this is from a human perspective, that is exactly what has happened.



You are about to embark on one incredible study and learn the amazing details of the most unique and life-changing book of all time. I guarantee this study will have a great impact on you because no one can engage meaningfully with God's Word and *not* be changed. Get ready to experience the life-changing uniqueness of the greatest bestseller of all time.

CHAPTER 1

Overview

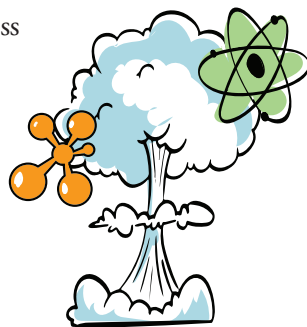
Beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself.

—LUKE 24:27

On July 16, 1945, at 5:29:45 a.m., an event took place that changed the world forever. A handful of people witnessed it and knew this would instantly catapult humanity into a new era. A top-secret, five-year-old project with an original budget of just \$6,000 led to the detonation of the world's first atomic bomb in Alamogordo, New Mexico.³ After the initial fireball, the mushroom cloud grew to 2,000 feet across and 6 miles high. The world would never be the same.

Until that day, the concept behind the atomic bomb was theoretical and centered on the idea that if an atom was split, the amount of energy released would be so large that a chain reaction would occur—splitting the surrounding atoms, which would, in turn, split more atoms. Some scientists feared this chain reaction would not stop.

Inside of an atom are three subatomic particles known as protons, neutrons, and electrons. The protons and neutrons make up the center of the atom, known as the nucleus. The electrons orbit the nucleus. Now, scientists are still working at figuring out the dynamics behind what keeps an atom together. They know that atoms hold immense amounts of energy (which is why they lead to fiery explosions when they are split apart), and they know what happens inside of an atom. But there is still a lot more to learn.



Little did they know that a first-century Jewish missionary could have given them the answer they were looking for. In Colossians 1:17, Paul the apostle wrote, “He [Jesus] is before all things, and in him *all things* hold together” (emphasis mine). Whenever scientists get to the end of their ability to explain how things work, an unsolvable mystery awaits them that points to a creator. If Jesus lost his divine concentration for a split second, atoms would fly apart and the universe would instantly explode. Thankfully, he is God and he has no imperfections. Perhaps Jesus will suspend his “atomic glue” momentarily during the creation of the new heavens and the new earth (Revelation 21:1, 4). In 2 Peter 3:10, we are informed that “the heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything done in it will be laid bare.”

In any case, our Savior currently holds “all things” together. Jesus holds the mystery of the atomic glue. He also serves as the glue that binds Scripture together. It is said there is a crimson thread that runs through God’s Word: a continuous story arc of a redemptive and self-sacrificing Savior, the metanarrative of the future reigning King. I have read variations of a list of each book of the Bible with descriptions of Jesus from every book. This is often called the crimson thread, or the scarlet thread of redemption. Some of these lists have unknown authors. Using a few of them for reference, here is a modified version of my own that I would like to share:

The Scarlet Thread of the Messiah that Runs Through Scripture

In Genesis, he is the promised offspring who would crush Satan’s head.

In Exodus, he is foreshadowed by the Passover lamb.

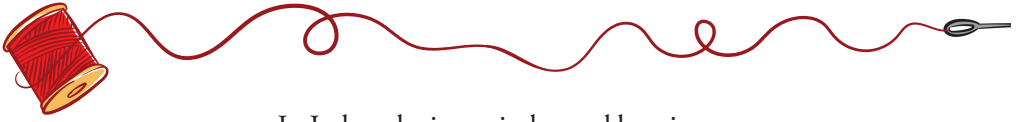
In Leviticus, he is our high priest.

In Numbers, he is our guide through the wilderness and the hidden cross.

In Deuteronomy, he is the prophet like Moses.

In Joshua, he is the captain of our salvation.





In Judges, he is our judge and lawgiver.

In Ruth, he is our kinsman redeemer.

In 1 and 2 Samuel, he is our trusted prophet.

In 1 and 2 Kings and 1 and 2 Chronicles, he is our reigning king.

In Ezra, he is the rebuilders of the broken-down walls.

In Nehemiah, he is the sovereign orchestrator and the rebuilders of the walls.

In Esther, he is our Mordecai.

In Job, he is our prophesied redeemer.

In Psalms, he is our great shepherd.

In Proverbs and Ecclesiastes, he is our wisdom.

In the Song of Solomon, he is the loving bridegroom.

In Isaiah, he is the prince of peace and future king.

In Jeremiah, he is the righteous branch.

In Lamentations, he is our weeping prophet.

In Ezekiel, he is the promise-keeper and protector of his people.

In Daniel, he is the fourth man in the fiery furnace.

In Hosea, he is the faithful and forgiving husband.

In Joel, he is the necessary future judge.

In Amos, he is our burden-bearer.

In Obadiah, he is mighty to save.

In Jonah, he is our God of grace and forgiveness.

In Micah, he is the messenger with beautiful feet.

In Nahum, he is the avenger of God's chosen ones.

In Habakkuk, he is at work behind the scenes.





In Zephaniah, he is our Savior.

In Haggai, he is the restorer of God's lost heritage.

In Zechariah, he is the promised Messiah.

In Malachi, he is the sun of righteousness.

In Matthew, he is King of the Jews.

In Mark, he is the servant.

In Luke, he is the Son of Man—fully human.

In John, he is the Son of God—fully divine.

In Acts, he is the Savior of the world.

In Romans, he is the righteousness of God.

In 1 Corinthians, he is the rock.

In 2 Corinthians, he is the triumphant one.

In Galatians, he is our liberty.

In Ephesians, he is head of the church.

In Philippians, he is our joy.

In Colossians, he is our completeness.

In 1 and 2 Thessalonians, he is our future hope.

In 1 Timothy, he is our faith.

In 2 Timothy, he is our stability.

In Titus, he is truth.

In Philemon, he is our advocate.

In Hebrews, he is our perfection.

In James, he is the power behind our faith.

In 1 Peter, he is our example.



In 2 Peter, he is our purity.


In 1 John, he is our life.

In 2 John, he is our pattern.

In 3 John, he is our motivation.

In Jude, he is the foundation of our faith.

In Revelation, he is our soon-coming King.



From the first prophecy of a Messiah in Genesis 3:15 to the last sentence of the Bible (Revelation 22:21), Jesus is the all-important central focus—and deservedly so. The incredible verse from Colossians 1 that I cited earlier is part of a section of Scripture that demonstrates the centrality of Christ in all things. In Colossians 1:15-20, we read,

The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy. For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.

For an even more extensive study on the supremacy of Christ, we can turn to the book of Hebrews. The entire theme of the book is the superiority of Christ over everything—including angels, Moses, and all things related to the law. All of Scripture revolves around the person of Jesus.

Currently, Jesus is—in a sense—a king in exile. But at just the right time he will change all of that. In Revelation 11:15, we read this, which will take place after one of the future tribulation period judgments: “The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Messiah, and he will reign for ever and ever.”

1/3RD
PROPHECY

80%
FULFILLED

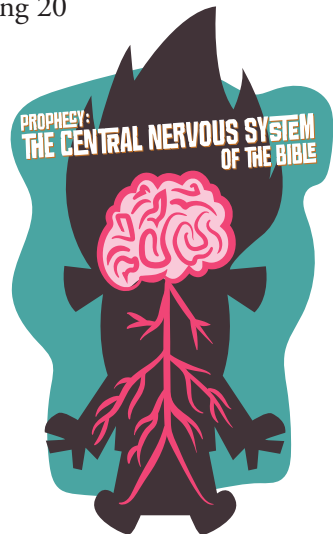
20%
STILL FUTURE

The Central Nervous System of Scripture—Prophecy

There's another type of glue that binds Scripture together. As I mentioned in the introduction of this book, the Bible is the only religious book that claims to be the very Word of God and backs up this claim with hundreds of specific fulfilled prophecies. We read this bold statement from God in Isaiah 46:9-10: "Remember the former things, those of long ago; I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me. I make known the end from the beginning, from ancient times, what is still to come. I say, 'My purpose will stand, and I will do all that I please.'" In a similar manner, Jesus—after telling the disciples some of what was to come—said these words in John 16:4: "I have told you this, so that when their time comes you will remember that I warned you about them."

There are more than 31,000 verses in the Bible, and 9,000–10,000 of them contain specific predictions about future events. Experts cite that the Bible is made up of 27–33 percent prophecy. Roughly 7,000 of the verses that contain Bible prophecy (about 80 percent) have already been fulfilled. The remaining 20 percent of the prophecies are related to end-time events.

Even more compelling is the fact that the 27–33 percent of the Bible that is made up of prophecy isn't peripheral content—it includes many of the most important parts! Bible prophecy is like the central nervous system of the Bible. Biologists study systems in organisms—the digestive system, the cardiovascular system, the muscular system, etc. None of those systems can work without the central nervous system. They are all connected to it and rely on it.



Just as living things like humans and animals can't function properly without a healthy central nervous system, the Bible can't be accurately understood without the all-important feature of prophecy.

All key teaching (doctrine/theology), stories, people, and themes in the Bible are somehow connected to Bible prophecy. This is because the Bible (though penned by at least 39 human writers, on 3 different continents over a period of 1,500 years) was inspired by God, who knows everything that is to come. And only God can bring about the perfect fulfillment of every prophecy given in Scripture.

Second Timothy 3:16 tells us that the Bible was "God-breathed." Second Peter 1:21 tells us that those who wrote prophecy "spoke from God" and were "carried along by the Holy Spirit." In other words, God told them what to write. That is why the whole Bible tells one complete story—a story that is tied together by prophecy and in every way ultimately points to Jesus!



Overview of the Books

There are 39 books in the Old Testament, and they are categorized into four sections: law, history, poetry, and the prophets. These categories are featured in the chart below.

Law (5)

Genesis
Exodus
Leviticus
Numbers
Deuteronomy

History (12)

Joshua
Judges
Ruth
1 Samuel
2 Samuel
1 Kings
2 Kings
1 Chronicles
2 Chronicles
Ezra
Nehemiah
Esther



Poetry (5)

Job
Psalms
Proverbs
Ecclesiastes
Song of Songs

Prophets (17)

Major Prophets (5)

Isaiah
Jeremiah
Lamentations
Ezekiel
Daniel

Minor Prophets (12)

Hosea
Joel
Amos
Obadiah
Jonah
Micah
Nahum
Habakkuk
Zephaniah
Haggai
Zechariah
Malachi

There are 27 books in the New Testament, and they are categorized into four sections: Gospels, history, epistles (letters), and apocalyptic/prophesy. These categories are featured in the chart below.

Gospels (4)

Matthew
Mark
Luke
John

History (1)

Acts

Epistles (21—13 Pauline, 8 General)

| | | | |
|---------------|-----------------|-----------|--------|
| (Pauline) | Colossians | (General) | 3 John |
| Romans | 1 Thessalonians | Hebrews | Jude |
| 1 Corinthians | 2 Thessalonians | James | |
| 2 Corinthians | 1 Timothy | 1 Peter | |
| Galatians | 2 Timothy | 2 Peter | |
| Ephesians | Titus | 1 John | |
| Philippians | Philemon | 2 John | |

NEW TESTAMENT SECTIONS

Gospels (4)

History (1)

Epistles (21*)

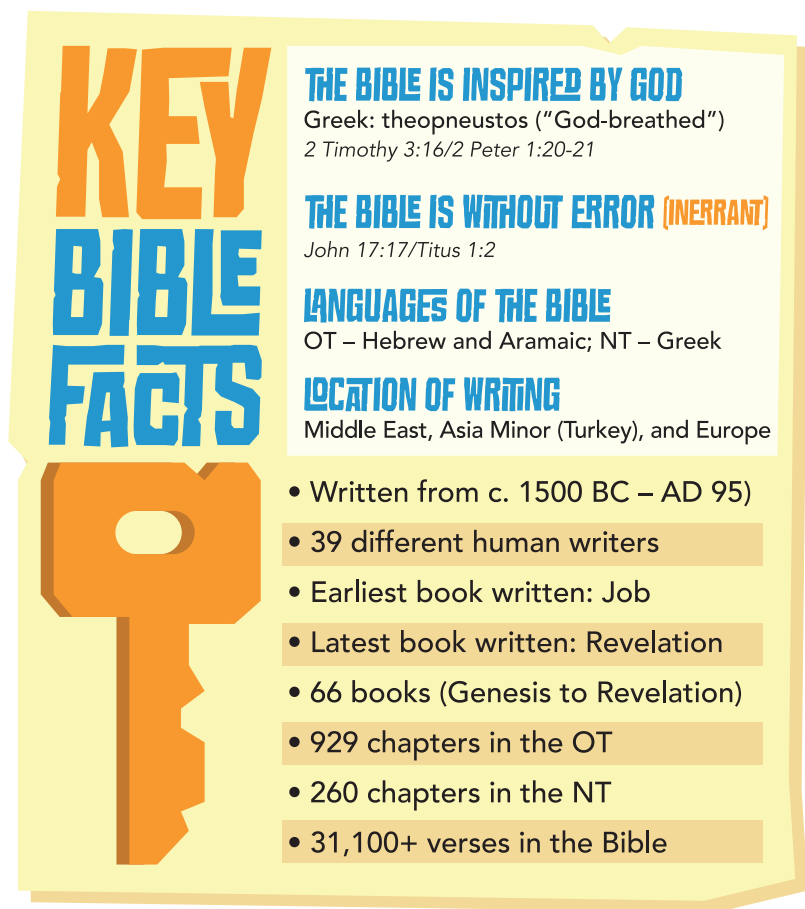
Apocalyptic/Prophecy (1)

*13 Pauline, 8 General

Apocalyptic/Prophecy (1)

Revelation

Here are some other important facts about the Bible to consider as we begin this journey together.



KEY BIBLE FACTS

- THE BIBLE IS INSPIRED BY GOD**
Greek: theopneustos ("God-breathed")
2 Timothy 3:16/2 Peter 1:20-21
- THE BIBLE IS WITHOUT ERROR (INERRANT)**
John 17:17/Titus 1:2
- LANGUAGES OF THE BIBLE**
OT – Hebrew and Aramaic; NT – Greek
- LOCATION OF WRITING**
Middle East, Asia Minor (Turkey), and Europe

- Written from c. 1500 BC – AD 95)
- 39 different human writers
- Earliest book written: Job
- Latest book written: Revelation
- 66 books (Genesis to Revelation)
- 929 chapters in the OT
- 260 chapters in the NT
- 31,100+ verses in the Bible

As you study each section of the Bible more in-depth through the upcoming chapters, keep a keen eye out for the crimson thread (Jesus) and the importance of the central nervous system of Scripture (prophecy). But before we jump into our study of the Old Testament, there is one major underlying question we should address: How can we be sure the Bible is from God and that it has been passed down to us intact? Or, to put it another way: How can we be sure that the words we read are the very same words God originally intended to be recorded? Turn the page, and we'll take a look!