



THE WELL INSTITUTE

APOLOGETICS

Lesson 6 (The Reliability of Scripture)

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Discussions about faith and apologetics will always lead to questions about the Bible. The Bible is the foundation source for what Christians believe and lays down the truths that we rely upon. For Believers, the Bible is the final Word from God and is sufficient for all of life and ministry; for Christians, one would say that the Bible is the **final authority**, God's very Word and Truth to His children and the world.

However, for unbelievers, the Bible is not a very significant book. They may respect it, but certainly will not accept its authority. That means in apologetic discussions with unbelievers, we cannot bring up 'biblical' arguments as long as the other person doesn't believe in the authority of the Bible. Most people think that:

- The Bible is just another book, like the Koran, the book of Mormon, etc.
- The Bible is an ancient, myth-driven, unreliable document that was changed over time; that one cannot even really know that the Bible we have today is the original or even a copy of the original.
- The Bible is a book full of stories that were invented by men – usually with very selfish motives. That the Bible is so old that it is obviously full of errors and contradiction and certainly not relevant for today anymore.

So, can we use the Bible in an apologetics discussion at all? What is so special about this book called the Bible that Christians view as authoritative? There are several aspects to this question:

- What is so unique about the Bible? What distinguishes it from other books?
- How reliable is the document we have in our hands today?
- Is the Bible really from God? What evidence do we have for that? What about the claims that it has errors or contradictions?
- How should we interpret what we read in the Bible?

For all these questions there are internal and external answers – answers that we find in the Bible itself and answers that we can base on external evidence. The former are sufficient only for those who already accept the Bible as the Word of God. But they also point us in the right direction when we look for external answers, since quite often the Word of God points to clearly visible evidence that we only need to check (e.g. prophecy). This evidence *can* then be provided to unbelievers. We should be aware, however, that all the evidence in the world cannot convince those who don't want to believe (Luke 16:29–31). On the other hand, the Word of God does not return empty (Isaiah 55:11), so it is our task to provide both the word and the evidence in a gentle and loving way and let God do the rest.

Before we look at these questions, let us review a few passages how the Bible describes itself:

“The grass withers, the flower fades: but the word of our God shall stand forever.” (Isaiah 40:8)

“All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.” (2. Timothy 3:16–17)

“For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart.” (Hebrews 4:12)

“For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty. For he received from God the Father honor and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount. We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts: Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.” (2. Peter 1:16–21)

So, **What is unique about the Bible?**

What distinguishes the Bible from any other piece of literature, from any other religious book, from any other historical document?

• **Unique in its Continuity**

The Bible was written over a span of 1500 years by more than 40 authors with very different backgrounds

- Written in very different places ranging from desert (Moses), caves (David), to a palace (Solomon)
- Written in very different situations (in times war, peace, persecution, in past, present, and future)
- Written in a variety of styles and languages (Hebrew, Aramaic, Chaldean, & Greek)
- Written touching hundreds of subjects, yet a single unfolding story about the One true living God who through Covenant love redeems mankind

• **Unique in its Circulation**

-More than one billion copies sold world-wide; Still more than 10 million copies are sold every year (compare this to ANY other bestseller)

• **Unique in its Translation**

-More than 2700 languages and “dialects” & counting (reaches more than 90% of the world population)

-First translations were already made in 250BC (Septuagint: translates Hebrew Old Testament into Greek)

• **Unique in its Survival**

-Though not the exact original autographs, many thousands of early manuscripts and early copies have survived through time: **There are more manuscript copies of the Bible than of all the other historical documents combined.** The variations between these documents are extremely small, despite time differences of hundreds of years.

-These manuscripts have survived persecution, fire, theft, and corruption; there have been many attempts to destroy Scripture or to stomp out Christianity (recall Roman Emperor Nero as the best-known, & Diocletian in 302AD). None of them succeeded.

-It has survived criticism: People have tried over and over again to refute the Bible, to label it as invention by men, to question authorship and dating, to prove it historically wrong, etc. All “evidence” against the Bible to prove it’s inauthenticity has failed ... and there are more people believing in it as authoritative Word of God than ever before.

• **Unique in its Teachings**

-The Bible is a book of prophecy: Prophecies have been recorded to take place exactly as predicted, An example of fulfilled prophecy: Christ’s birth (The Timing: Daniel 9; the City: Micah 5:2; the Circumstances: Is. 7:14)

-Other books claim divine inspiration yet none gives predictive prophecy like the Bible (God himself gives that challenge: Deuteronomy 18:22) .

-The Bible is a book of history: following one people from their beginning until the time of captivity, and eventual restoration. No other book is as complete in detail.

-The Bible is a book of characters: humans who are real, flawed, and needy - presented as they are, without omitting their weaknesses or sin (e.g. 2. Samuel 11, 12; 1 Cor. 1:11;15:12). The early church is not described in idealistic terms, but in reality (the death of Ananias and Saphira)

• **Unique in its Influence**

-The Bible is the most influential book in literature; it is the most cited ancient document. All themes in stories, books, and movies derive their meta-theme (good vs. evil) from the Bible.

-The Bible is the most influential book in civilization. Many constitutions adopted major components from the Mosaic Law; all Western societies are strongly influenced by Jesus’ teachings - even if the people don’t believe.

-No other book had such an impact 2000 years after the last chapter was written. We hardly know any other that even survived that long, let alone is still being used.

Historically, how reliable is the Bible we have today?

This question is not about divine inspiration, but about the reliability of Scripture as a document that states certain facts. Can we trust the text that we read? Are the documents we have today really the same as the original text? Is it accurate in what it describes?

How was the Bible written?

Most of the original letters and narratives of Scripture were written on either vellum (animal skins) or papyrus (Egyptian bark), which lasts longer than today’s paper, but nevertheless eventually decays. Finding a document older than 1000 years is a rare event – thus, it must have been preserved in a special way in an arid climate. By God’s design, there are no extant originals of the 66 ‘books’ of the Bible at this point; only copies exist. This is probably a divine mercy so that we would not worship the copies of Scripture itself and forget about the One to whom Scripture points. Think about how Christians have so misguidedly worshipped ancient relics believed to be original pieces of the cross or the supposed bones of the Apostles.

The Bible and its copies are recorded in Hebrew (Old Testament) and Greek (New Testament).

Reading the original Greek and Hebrew script and textual layout on scrolls is quite difficult today, even for the professionals who have dedicated their life to it. Original Koine Greek was written without any breaks or punctuation, since anyone who could write or read in the first century knew immediately where to put the sentence breaks. Papyrus was very expensive so the New Testament writers and copyists condensed the sentences. In the original Hebrew, vowels were dropped from the words so only consonants remained -making modern day guessing of how Hebrew words were pronounced all but impossible.

Chapter and verse markings were introduced much later: For the Old Testament they were standardized about 900AD, for the New Testament in the 1550's (the Masoretic text).

Why these 66 books - no more, no less? Who decided and why?

It is important to note that the Church did NOT determine what should be in the Bible (as many claim such as Roman Catholics -alleging to establish power over the Bible); but rather, historically, the Church (in all of its local cities and towns in local churches) discovered each of the letters of the New Testament as they were introduced by the Apostles -Matthew, John, Peter, Paul, etc.. and circulated these new letters among all the known churches in every vicinity where Christians lived. The Apostles who penned these letters made sure that each local church could recognize their authenticity and authority in the writings.

Later, we will discuss several criteria that helped the early Church recognize that a circulated letter to individual churches was divinely inspired and authored.

The New Testament canon (the Bible as we know it today) was recognized as early as 120AD and codified by a council of Pastors (Bishops) in 367AD in Nicea (modern day Turkey). The Old Testament was assembled and recognized by the Jews as authoritative and complete no later than 150BC. For instance, Jesus recognized the law, the prophets, and the writings as such (Luke 24:44, 11:51), so He recognized the already existing O.T. canon and many specific passages as well.

Q: What about Esther and the Song of Songs? Were these also accepted as canonical?

Esther: Although the mention of God was (deliberately?) omitted, one can clearly see God's hand in the story described. God is in control and directs seemingly insignificant coincidences to protect his people. One of the best sources for recognizing God's actions in what we experience – it is not necessary to point that out explicitly.

Song of Solomon: One of the greatest descriptions of love, which is God's greatest gift to marital life. There is nothing impure about love, passion, and desire. The fact that people have devalued love to something selfish only makes "the original" more valuable. Some people are offended by verse 4:2 – it's too explicit for them and the book was on "the index" (mature readers only) for quite some time. But there is nothing offensive to that passage.

Q: **What about the Apocrypha?** The 12 Deuterocanonical Books between O.T and N.T. in Catholic Bibles:

The reasons to exclude any book from the canon were inaccuracies (historical, geographical), doctrines that are inconsistent with the other scriptures, lack of divine characteristics (prophecy,

teaching, expression of relation to God), focus on legends and folklore, and most importantly, not conclusive that the book was written by either a recognized prophet (O.T.) or Apostle (N.T.).

The apocrypha ("hidden/concealed books) enjoyed only local and temporary recognition but were excluded very early because they don't meet all the acceptance criteria. These 12 books are not recognized to be canonical.

1. **Esdras** (150BC) too much legendary material with no religious value

2. **Esdras** (100BC) 7 apocalyptic visions, very confusing instead of edifying.

Tobit (early 2nd century) pharisaic material, wrong doctrine ("almsgiving atones for sin"), picked up by catholic church in the middle ages

Judith (middle 2nd century) a novel of little religious value

Additions to Esther (100BC) adding the lacking reference to God to the book (prayers). Questionable letters supposedly written by Artaxerxes.

These passages are clearly later additions, trying to fix a "deficiency" that made the inclusion of the book of Esther in the canon questionable to some people (who don't understand Esther). Not found in early manuscripts of Esther

Wisdom of Solomon (AD 40) many noble sentiments but authorship more than questionable

Sirach / Ecclesiasticus (180BC) Wisdom literature, similar to Proverbs. Useful, but not of the same power.

Baruch (AD 100): claims to be written by a scribe of Jeremiah but contains material that indicates a past disaster, probably the destruction of Jerusalem AD 70. Analysis of style and content points to a date AD 100, not 580BC.

Additions to Daniel (story of **Susanna, Bel and the Dragon**) legendary material of little religious value. Song of the Hebrew Children, borrows from Psalm 148. Neither of these is found in reliable manuscripts of Daniel.

1./2. **Maccabees** (1st century BC) a valuable historical book but of little religious value.

- Philo, Josephus, and all of the early Church fathers did not recognize the apocrypha.
- Jesus quoted from almost all of scripture but not from the apocrypha.
- All protestant Churches reject the Apocrypha as canonical scripture
- Even the Catholic church did not include the apocrypha in the canon until 1546 and it is suspected that including them was solely motivated by counter-Reformation efforts.

How to determine the reliability of ancient literature? Historiography

People say, "the originals of the Bible may have been inspired, but what we have today is not the original". Can we trust the documents we have to be close to the original text, to be accurate with respect to what it says, and to be consistent in itself?

There are 3 tests to apply:

Bibliographical Test: How reliable are the copies with respect to the originals

Internal Evidence Test: Is the document consistent in itself? What does the document say about itself?

External Evidence Test: Do other reliable historical materials (not just texts) confirm or deny what the document says

Note that none of the three tests alone is sufficient for a claim of reliability. The first test only proves that we actually know what the original text says. The second states that the text describes a “workable theory” of how things are, since it cannot be proven to be wrong within itself or without credibility. The third test ties the content of the text to observable reality.

In all sciences it is common practice to hold on to a theory as long as it is consistent and is accurate with respect to the data one shows. This holds particularly for historic documents. If a document is consistent in itself and not in conflict with external evidence, one should give it the benefit of doubt, as it is much closer to the time it describes than critics who evaluate it today. If we abandon this principle, which is said to go back to Aristoteles, we would not be able to trust any ancient document, since often we have no other material that describes what really happened.

What Bibliographical Information do we have about the New Testament?

Today there remains 5586 Greek manuscripts (some complete, some partial) and more than 20,000 manuscripts of early translations. Whoa!!! That's right 25,000 early copies and manuscripts. The earliest fragments date from the late second century, (120AD or earlier?) only 60 years after the originals were written. The oldest complete manuscript is from the early 4th century (300's AD).

For comparison: Homer's *Iliad* is second in the number of extant manuscripts (643 manuscripts), with the first *complete* copy from the 13th century (1700 years after the original).

For other well-known ancient texts (Herodotus' *Histories*, Plato's *Caesar's Gallic Wars*, Tacitus' *Annals*) there are often less than 10 extant manuscripts and historians still claim that the current copies are true to the original. If historians place such little doubt about the changes or corruptions of these copies, the manuscripts of the Bible should pass with even greater reliability using the very same historiographic tests.

Why is the Bible so well preserved?

- Scribal differences between manuscripts and copies are very small, even marginal, although they range from 200 AD to 1500 AD. God made sure that the copyist were very meticulous in their craft since everyone copying the letters and books of the Bible were aware of their sacred nature.
- There are plenty of reliable dating methods that don't use carbon dating (material, letter form, ink color, divisions, etc. with many historical samples for comparison)
- Translations (Syriac: Aramaic; Vulgate: Latin; Egyptian: Coptic) were made early with manuscripts dating as early as the 2nd Century and testify to the accuracy of the Greek copies.

Further, the early church fathers (AD 70-325) quoted exhaustively (not always verbatim) from the Bible in their letters, books, and defense of Christianity. There are more than 36,000 quotations that point to the meaning of the original text and we over 95% of all the New Testament quoted among the Patristic Fathers only 100-200 years after the originals. We have almost a complete (word for word) New Testament document when comparing all the early Church Fathers' letters. This is an amazing reality, knowing that many of these early Church Fathers actually held the originals letters of the Apostles in their hands.

Conclusion: If one is able to determine the original content of *any* historical document using proven tests and scientific methods, then we can certainly do so for the New Testament. People who don't trust the reliability of the New Testament shouldn't believe in science or history at all since the science demonstrates an overwhelming evidence of the Bible's accuracy and reliability, passing all three major tests for Systematic Consistency.

The Internal Evidence Test of the New Testament: Are there inconsistencies?

Evaluating ancient texts for accuracy is not easy, since one must try to understand correctly what the document actually says. Modern day critics have to take into account that language was used in a different way and that the culture didn't dictate the same standards for writing. For instance, a chronological order is not always used, numbers are not always accurate but rounded, writers use different reference points (Jewish time / Roman time), etc.

Q: How would one resolve the differences of Luke 8:26–39 vs. Matthew 8:28–34 and Matthew 27:5 vs Acts 1:18 The answer to these question reveals that we have to take certain guidelines into account when interpreting ancient texts. Here are a few important ones:

1. The unexplained is not necessarily unexplainable. It just points to the limitations of the human mind. Scientists today haven't figured out earthquakes, tornadoes, fusion energy – no one would claim that these things can't exist.
2. Fallible interpretation does not mean the original revelation was fallible. Even the most brilliant and devoted scholar – both in the religious as in the scientific world – will make mistakes. Contradictions between the interpretations of the Bible and the "interpretation of" science are to be expected. But that doesn't prove contradictions between the real world and God's word.

Example: the Greek *Μελίτα* in Acts 28:1 may not have been Malta, but an island south of Corfu.

3. The context of a passage is extremely important. Just imagine quoting a fragment of Psalm 14:1 "there is no God" out of context.
4. Difficult passages should be interpreted in the light of the easy ones. This is just common sense. Certain things are more obscure. Their interpretation should be based on what we already understand. For instance, James 2:14-16 does not teach salvation by works, because we already know that we are saved by faith Romans 4:5, Ephesians 2:8–9. So James talks about something else but justification before God – it's "justification" before men who cannot see our faith.

5. One should never base doctrines on obscure passages. For instance, the interpretation of the Greek for “daily” in Matthew 6:11 is unclear. We can’t build any teaching on that passage if that teaching is not supported by other passages as well. (Cf. 2. Peter 3:12; Mark 16).
6. The Bible writings contain human characteristics. Obvious figures of speech, exaggerations, similes, etc. should not be taken literally. Luke 18:25 needs a lot of context to be understood properly.
7. An incomplete account is not necessarily false. Luke 8:26–39 only speaks of one demon-possessed man whereas Matthew 8:28–34 speaks of two. That doesn’t mean Luke is wrong – but he only focuses on the more prominent person. Humans do that all the time. We focus on the important aspects and omit irrelevant details.
8. New Testament citations of the Old Testament don’t have to be exact/verbatim. Citations were often taken from the Septuagint which gives a different wording, when translated into English, than translations of the Original. For example, the NIV, NASB, and the KJV are very different texts – and they obviously don’t contradict each other.
9. The Bible does not always approve of what it records. The Bible often simply states what happens: lies (Genesis 3), adultery, murder, polygamy – and often uses that to make a point / open our eyes.
10. The Bible uses everyday, non-technical language. This doesn’t mean its descriptions are wrong. Actually, language idioms of the time tell a story much clearer than scientific language of the 21st century, which is made for experts only – not for “the common folks.”
11. Bible authors use round numbers and exact numbers. We do the same. The feeding of the 5000 could easily have been the actual feeding of 5634 people??
12. One needs to always consider the different Genres of Scripture when interpreting. Is the passage or text drawn from the Narrative, Wisdom, Poetic, Prophetic, Apocalyptic, Gospel, Apostolic letters Genre etc.??? The genre of Scripture will have a bearing on its interpretation. Also, the Bible uses different literal devices. Only the context can tell us whether we should take a passage literally or figuratively. Even symbolic language is representative of something real/actual. Allegorical interpretation has no place for the faithful biblical scholar who wants to accurately handle Scripture (2 Tim. 2:15).
13. If a **copy** contains an error, that doesn’t mean it was an error in the original. God’s word is the original text. Copies are made by humans, which were not inspired in the same way Scripture was dictated (2 Pet. 1:21).
14. General statements are not universal promises. What holds generally may have individual exceptions. God promises us peace and prosperity (Proverbs 16:7) *if* we follow him, but there have always been God-fearing people that had to go through incredible hardships like Jesus, Paul, many Prophets.
15. Later or progressive revelation supersedes previous revelation. God doesn’t reveal everything at once but in fragments that we can digest (just imagine giving a High School student the complete contents of the Archive of theoretical and experimental Physics at once). Later revelation makes

clearer what earlier revelation only hinted at (i.e. the nature of the Godhead as a Trinity).

The transition from a very strict worship O.T. covenantal, law-oriented format with animal sacrifices in Jerusalem to present day form(s) of grace-oriented worship only became possible because of the progressive revelation of what was promised in the OT and revealed in Jesus' atoning death. That doesn't mean the Old Testament contradicts the New Testament or that the New Testament overshadows the Old or negates it. Both are necessary because both testaments are divinely given in God's perfect time progressively. Parents do that to their children too. As trust and age build, a child's liberty and freedom grow. Does that mean we're inconsistent? Time matters.

If we apply these principles carefully, we realize that many misunderstandings about the Bible and its appropriate translation can be resolved using the above guidelines. Here are a few examples – Matthew 12:40 (three days and three nights) vs. Acts 10:40 (on the third day) – John 1:18 and Exodus 33:20 vs. Genesis 32:30 (not God, but a representative) – How did Judas kill himself (Matthew 27:5 vs. Acts 1:18 – methods vs. result)

People may admit that the Bible is consistent, but may still claim that the people who wrote it just accumulated unverified legends (myths). Fortunately, the biblical authors made sure that there is no misunderstanding about their sources. They were either eyewitnesses or did extensive research (Luke 1:1-3, 2. Peter 1:16). They testify to the accuracy of the account they give (and do not rely on here-say). More so, God promised to reveal truth to the authors through His Spirit (John 16:13).

Scholars today agree that the writers were who they claimed to be and that they did write during the first century (since their style and other literary features are verifiable).

Conclusion: There is no basis for a claim that the Bible is in any way inaccurate in itself. It does not contain contradictions or here-say. Claims to the contrary are mere presuppositions that cannot be substantiated.

(Note that an internal evidence test cannot convince people that the content is true in an absolute sense. People may still claim that the authors made everything up but they have to admit that the Bible is consistent and that there is not way to prove it wrong just by looking at what it says unless we have supernatural insight that gives us the right to say "this cannot have happened". However, people still have the right to doubt, saying they find this hard to believe and that they need more to be convinced. After all, we do the same thing for the Book of Mormon, the Koran, evolution theory etc.). At this point we have to look at external evidence. Does it support what the Bible says?

The External Evidence Test of the New Testament

External evidence can only falsify a theory. Scientifically, if serious attempts to disprove a theory fail, then this is an indicator that there is some truth to it. It is never possible to prove something unless we are in a closed system where we have complete knowledge about what can and cannot happen. For this reason, the absence of supporting evidence for everything that a theory says does not mean a theory is wrong, as long as, there is no conflicting evidence. However, the lack of any supporting evidence makes a theory unpalatable. It must be tied to reality at least to some extent.

Early Christian writers (Eusebius, Papias, Clement of Rome, Irenaeus, about AD 130) already comment on the authors of the New Testament documents and their accuracy. They believe in the

reliability of the Bible only three generations after it was written. This is important because for them this was *recent* history and there was a chain of witnesses from the Bible authors to these writers -I.e. John the Apostle (100AD) to Polycarp (150's AD) to Eusebius and Iranaeus (150-200'sAD). Eusebius was the first Church historian. Iranaeus was the Bishop of Lyon and ran a huge theological and philosophical defense (apologetics) against heretics and unbelievers and persecutors of the Faith in the beginning of the third Century. This is a powerful chain of progression that lends credibility to the reliability of eye-witness testimony of Jesus by John who died late (100-110AD) and passed on his discipleship to both Polycarp who discipled Eusebius and Iranaeus who are the first in the long thread of Early Church Fathers. This is uncontested and provides incredible evidence to the authenticity of both the Bible and what it reliably declares. Non-Christian sources from the first two centuries also refer to events mentioned in the Bible (i.e. Tacitus and Josephus) and further corroborate the historicity of Scripture.

[Therefore, unbelievers must declare all of them to be liars]

Archeology also attests to the accuracy of the New Testament writers. It confirms the Roman Census under Augustus and many other historical events mentioned by Luke. In some cases, archeologists had to revise theories that conflicted Luke, since newer excavations proved that Luke was right.

Conclusion: There is no external evidence against the facts described in the New Testament but plenty of evidence for it. This makes the authors very credible in everything we cannot check. Most of the above arguments dealt with the New Testament and unfortunately there are quite a few Christians who trust in the New Testament but disregard the Old Testament, particularly the creation accounts in Genesis 1–11. So let us briefly look at the evidence for the reliability of the Old Testament.

How about the Reliability of Old Testament Documents

The copying quality of the Hebrew manuscripts is simply astonishing compared to any other document of that time. Comparing the (Dead Sea Scrolls), particularly Isaiah found at Qumran (dated 200BC) with the oldest copy of the O.T. one had up to that point (980AD) = revealed that 99% of the text were word-for-word accurate, while the 1% differences were accounted for mostly by spelling differences and slips of a pen. There were no changes in meaning at all.

Given that there were 1200 years between these documents this is more than amazing. Even today, people modify a document over the decades (think about all the Bible translations in English in just the last 100 years), probably even in its meaning, unless they believed it was absolutely mandatory to be completely accurate (and even then, errors would naturally happen).

As an example of the incredible accuracy in preservation of the OT between 1600 years when comparing the oldest OT text with the last surviving manuscript, historical names of non-Jewish kings over a 1600 year span are preserved phonetically accurate in correct chronological order. One couldn't achieve this randomly (odds are 7.5×10^{23}) –but only by meticulous accuracy or by a divine miracle.

The Dead Sea Scrolls are such an amazing treasure. There are more than 700 manuscripts and ten thousands of fragments (many of them found in Qumran and Cairo), dating from 300BC to the 14th century. They attest to the evidence of just how well God preserved his Word over the centuries.

Early translations of the Old Testament also confirm the meaning of the Hebrew text that has survived to this day. For instance, the **Septuagint** (about 250BC) is a Greek translation of the OT for Jews by Greek speaking Jewish scholars; this translation became important for the scattered Jews far from home who didn't understand Hebrew as well. The fact that this translation also confirms the text literally make it very likely that the older manuscripts that were used in the translation (and thus the originals as well) state the same as the copies we have now.

Conclusion: If one can reliably trust the text of any document older than 2000 years then we certainly have to trust the Old Testament text as well. The scientific data applied to the Old Testament is overwhelmingly positive as to the accuracy of translation and continued meaning of the text (for then and now). One could say that the transmission and continuance of the Hebrew Old Testament is miraculously attested which the discovery and analysis of the Dead Sea Scrolls demonstrate.

External Evidence Test of the Old Testament

Archeological and historical evidence for the Old Testament is more scarce than for the New Testament, but this is the case for all of history older than 2000 years. But there have been thousands of archaeological finds in Israel, Syria, Iraq etc. which corroborate ancient biblical records and historical narrative. Further, nothing discovered has disproved it! As with the New Testament we can only hope to find more confirmation through direct evidence and lack of evidence to the contrary. One should, however, be aware that ancient archeological evidence is fragmentary and subject to the interpretation of the individual archeologist and to acceptance of the archeological community which is (unsurprisingly anti-biblical and non-Christian).

Archeology has confirmed many specific historical accounts, e.g. of Sodom & Gomorrah, Jericho and its walls, Saul's and David's wars, Solomon's cities, navies, and temple etc. Further, there are numerous "flood accounts" in the *Gilgamesh Epos*; the tower of Babel is mentioned and depicted in the *Ur-Nammu* monument where all of the Patriarchs are also mentioned.

It is noteworthy, however, that the Babylonian/Sumerian accounts of historical narrative often add to and embellish the simple accounts of the Bible narrative. This is common in history even today. Oral traditions can be easily embellished from generation to generation. Simple accounts spread and become stories and later legends. People tend to add to the original to make a point and often names and other details get mixed up. It never happens the other way around. Claims that the Old Testament writers extracted from legends are in conflict to the writing practices of these times.

Conclusion: All available historical evidence shows that the Old Testament accounts are truthful. This makes it plausible that even the issues that we can't check are accurately described in the Old Testament narratives.

The Internal Confirmation of the Old Testament

Both Jesus and the New Testament writers state and affirm that the Law was given by Moses and that the accounts of the Old Testament are factual -such as the creation event, the calling of Abraham, Moses, Elijah, and Jonah and the whale (see Mark 7:10, 10:3–5, 12:26; Luke 5:14, 16:29, 24:27; John 7:19,23; Acts 3:22, 6:14, 13:39, 15:1, 26:22, 28:23, 1. Corinthians 9:9, 2. Corinthians 3:15, Hebrews 9:19, and Rev 15:3). The New Testament affirms and upholds the Old Testament as both historically accurate, relevant, and reliable.

For example, Jesus confirms many passages of the Old Testament, quoting scripture and referring to Moses, the Prophets, and the writings. All New Testament sources, the gospels, acts, epistles, and revelation, cite from the Old Testament as divine Scripture.

Conclusion: If one accepts and believes in the New Testament as a reliable and accurate ancient document, then one also has to accept the New testament's treatment of the Old Testament. Thus, all the evidence indicates that the Bible is the most reliable book in history!

Although originals are missing, we can still determine their complete textual content. This means that historians and historiographers know more about the text of the Bible than about any other historical text. This scientific research demonstrates that there are no glaring contradictions or inconsistencies within Scripture. No alleged contradiction within Scripture has withstood the test of science and context. The external archaeological evidence also confirms what the Bible states historically.

This means that any historiographical reason that someone could bring up for claiming the Bible to be inaccurate would have to apply to all other historical documents as well. Thus, if one cannot intellectually trust what the Bible says then one could not intellectually trust any source of history at all -since the Bible is the most tested, scrutinized, and analyzed ancient source in history proven to be historically accurate and textually reliable.

Is the Bible really the Word of God?

Convincingly, there are today historians and scholars who now accept that the Bible is a reliable and very useful historical document, but who absolutely reject the idea that the Bible has any moral authority for them or the world. They believe it is a reliable ancient document, but reject the content therein. They may accept the moral teachings of Jesus as good ideology but not relevant. But when it comes to claims that the Bible shows us the only way to God, most refuse, stating that no book in the world can give us that kind of knowledge. For them, the Bible was written by faulty and biased men with a mysterious and conflicting agenda. Scholars can't get past the mystery or miraculous. In essence, they reject the message of Scripture but not its worth in historical reliability.

However, knowing that the Bible is not just historically accurate and reliable, and is more than just a collection of authors with a single theme is crucial when it comes to matters of faith. After all, the Bible contains not just historical facts, but claims to be the very revelation of God Himself and has a message for the entire world. The Bible itself claims to be the inspired word of God:

"All scripture is God-breathed and useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness" (2. Timothy 3:16).

. . . and the scripture cannot be broken (John 10:35b).

. . . your word is the truth (John 17:17b, Psalm 119:160).

Other verses which claim Scripture is God's revelation of Himself include (Exodus 17:14, 32:16, Leviticus 1:1, Number 1:1, Deuteronomy 31:24–26 Jeremiah 30:2, Hebrews 1:1, 2. Peter 1:21, Revelation 1:11, 10:4). The Bible claims to be the very inspired Word of God for all people.

What is inspiration / inerrancy?

If the Bible is inspired by God, then the logical conclusion is that it must be inerrant – the absolute truth and free of any error. But what exactly does that mean? In what sense is it inspired – what exactly is inerrancy?

Q: How could we define inspiration and inerrancy?

Inerrancy means that when all the facts are known, Scripture in its original autographs, properly interpreted, will be shown to be completely true in everything they say. They are God's word and God cannot lie (Hebrews 6:18). In short, Scripture is God's Word to man and exist without any error as God intended it. That Scripture is inerrant contents that the Bible (and ALL of the Bible) is truthful and without any mixture of error or falsity.

A definition of **inspiration** is a little more difficult, as it involves imagining how God made sure that men wrote *exactly what* God wanted them to write. Peter tells us that holy men spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit (2. Peter 1:21). But what does that mean? Here are common views of the doctrine of Inspiration:

1. **Universal/Naturalistic inspiration:** the writers had received unusual spiritual insights from God, but wrote as they determined best. In this sense, this means the Bible is the word of men without much authority.
2. **Thought (Dynamic / Concept) Inspiration:** God conveyed the general ideas to each man, then the writers chose the specific words to describe them. This means that specific words in the Bible don't count, only the general ideas.
3. **Encounter inspiration:** Reading the Bible makes us encounter God and receive insight. This means that only the reading is inspired and there is no authority in the writings themselves.
4. **Dictation inspiration:** God dictated every word, using the writers as stenographers. This is in strong conflict with the fact that the personality of the authors shines through in the writings.
5. **Spiritual inspiration:** God superintended the writing of Scripture through divine inspiration and intervention using unique men and their language, culture, context, and personality. Men wrote exactly what God wanted them to write. God, through His Spirit, made sure that their writings were accurate so that the letters (and eventually the Bible would not contain errors). Yet God allowed the writers to preserve their own personalities and styles in the recording of God's self-revelation, instruction, truth, and prophetic voice to the world.

The Spiritual inspiration best fits the biblical description of inspiration as defined in 2 Peter 1:21. For example, the Gospels emphasize different aspects of Jesus' life and ministry because they were writing for different audiences: to Jews (Matthew); to Gentiles (Luke); to those who want to know details of Jesus deity (John); and those who want a quick account (Mark). This often results in different descriptions of the same fact or teaching. Compare for instance Matthew 16:16 with Mark 8:29 and Luke 9:20.

Similarly, Paul writes deep theology and is sometimes polemic (argumentative); James writes a highly practical letter. John wrote simply and to new Believers. Peter writes to help the Church through persecution. All of these men were inspired by the Spirit to write what they recorded. God used each of the men's time and context, their voice and personality, and for a different audience. Yet, all of these letters are from God; they are beautifully and eternally God's Word.

At times, God also allowed the writers to break the normal or conventional rules of grammar in their context (which never discounts the content) to use figures of speech (parables, metaphors, satire Matthew 19:24, 23:24), or to use unprecise descriptions, nonscientific language, and even colloquial language so that the common man could understand. Yet, this doesn't make any of the biblical texts wrong. The point is that God wants to bring certain messages across to the readers of His word and the above are a means to accomplish that. For instance, Jesus certainly spoke in Aramaic, so the writers had to translate into the Greek. Jesus spent hours in talking with people and the writers had to focus on the essence of what had been said and translate that truth into Greek for world readers (i.e. non-Jewish readers). This was the Spirit's role communicating an accurate meaning for all people to comprehend across all cultures, all time, and in any language ... no small task.

Thus, in theological terms, the inspiration of the Bible is best described as **verbal** and **plenary**: This means that every word in the Bible is there because God wanted it to be there, and each and every part of the Bible is inspired with nothing being omitted. In other words, God ensured that the original writings were correct, complete, and consistent with His will and eternal purpose. What we have today as God's Word is still God's Word and we are not missing anything He wants us to have today!

This view of inspiration is most relevant when it comes to issues that cannot be checked by other external means. Whereas we can validate many historical and scientific descriptions in the Bible, there are also plenty of theological, moral, and spiritual statements about God, His nature, and His dealings with mankind, (His work) such as matters of right and wrong, our past (creation or evolution), our future (annihilation, reincarnation, or judgment) ---that can only be evaluated through history as progressive revelation or prophecy being fulfilled. In all these areas we "only" have the Word of the Bible as our source of Truth and eternal life. If the Bible were not inspired, then all these statements wouldn't matter at all – and that is exactly how the world sees it. But since the Bible is inspired, and claims to be the eternal Word of God Himself, accepting these statements as infallible truth will determine one's spiritual eternity. This matters. God's Word matters. How each of us treat, handle, relate to, interpret, and deal with God's Word matters. Eternity is at stake -yours and others (1 Tim. 4:16)

Objections to Inerrancy

People who don't believe in the authority of the Bible find the idea of inspiration and inerrancy hard to swallow and come up with all kinds of arguments why they don't have to believe that. Here are some of the objections that need to be addressed:

- The Bible doesn't teach inerrancy – it is a recent invention.

This objection comes from those who believe that the only purpose of the church is to exercise power and to control people. Claims to inerrancy would be a good way to accomplish this.

While it is true that the Bible nowhere states that "all scripture is inerrant", the doctrine of inerrancy is a simple logical conclusion from 2. Timothy 3:16 and John 24; 17:17b (and Hebrews 6:18). The church has recognized right from the beginning and all claims to the contrary are unsubstantiated.

- Inerrancy can't be true because there are errors in the Bible.

This is a common argument, but – as we discussed a while ago – nobody could ever prove any part of the Bible wrong. There are no glaring contradictions, no inconsistencies, and no biblical description of events where we have evidence that they didn't happen exactly as described. Every apparent contradiction has a reasonable or contextually historical answer.

- Inerrancy is not important – so why make a big fuss over it?

This objection is made by those who don't want to be confronted with specific commands by God. They may accept the authority of the Bible when it comes to religious issues but when it comes to questions about how we are to live (particularly moral issues like faithfulness, divorce, abortion, homosexuality, greed, war, etc) they don't like biblical teachings to interfere with their views. However, if the Bible itself points out in Matthew 5:18, John 10:35b that every single word in scripture is important and if the Bible teaches inerrancy, then inerrancy is important – and this for a good reason. If it were not, we could disregard any verse of the Bible that we don't agree with.

- Inerrancy is true only for religious and moral issues.

This argument is brought up by people who believe that there is a conflict between science and what the Bible teaches and who like to believe in evolution where the Bible teaches creation. The most serious flaw in that argument is that 2. Timothy 3:16 makes no distinction between religious and moral teachings on the one hand and scientific/historical teachings on the other. It simply says "all scripture". And in John 3:12, Jesus points out that we can hardly believe in heavenly things if we don't accept what the Bible says about earthly issues. Furthermore, many of the biblical teachings cannot be associated with only one of the two sides. For instance, Jesus' teaching on divorce in Matthew 19:14 is closely tied to his affirmation of creation. And how shall we separate the historical and the spiritual in the resurrection accounts? Again, if we accept this view, we could disregard any verse of the Bible that we don't agree with, so it is pretty much equivalent to not believing in the Bible at all.

- Believing in inerrancy is arguing in circles: you believe in inerrancy because the Bible teaches it, and you believe what the Bible teaches because you believe in inerrancy.

This is a serious objection that must be properly addressed.

Evidence for the Inspiration of the Bible

As discussed above, the Bible itself claims that it is inspired in a verbal and plenary way, sufficient for every part of life (2 Tim. 3:16). For the believer, it is sufficient that the Bible says so and confirms their trust in God's word. But for others, this is arguing in circles. They need "external" evidence, pointing to the fact that there is something so special to the Bible that it must have been inspired by God – since it is hard to explain these issues otherwise.

There are two kinds of evidence for the inspiration of the Bible – the fact that it is special among all the books ever written and the fact that it has supernatural content.

We discussed the uniqueness of the Bible already, so let us briefly review that.

- An astonishing unity despite being written over 1500 years by 40 very different authors.
- An incredible circulation both concerning the number of copies and the number of languages into which it is translated.
- Its impact on literature and civilization
- Its survival through time, persecution, and attempts to disregard it
- Its incredible factual accuracy

All these are indicators that there is something special about the Bible – something that only God could have caused. But there is more evidence to the fact that the Bible is from God.

1. Astonishing evidence: Scientific foreknowledge. The Bible contains accurate scientific information about things that the writers could not have known. Some of these concern fairly recent scientific discoveries or insights, so even a skeptic's dating of biblical sources can't explain this type of evidence away.

Astronomy: In Isaiah 40:22 we read "He sits enthroned above the circle of the earth". The Hebrew word Isaiah used for circle is the word *khug*, which means literally something with roundness, a sphere. But the people of Isaiah's day thought the Earth was flat – actually they did so until the late middle ages, 2000 years after Isaiah was written. Later it was discovered that the Earth was not flat; rather it was a *khug*. Isaiah had been correct all along, even when the people of his day emphatically stated the opposite.

In Job 38:31,33 God asks Can you bind the beautiful Pleiades - can you loose the cords of Orion? . . . Do you know the laws of the heavens?. For a long time people didn't really know what God was trying to tell Job here. Only in the 20th century astronomers discovered details about the stars that we see as constellations in the sky. And in fact, the Pleiades are just a bunch of stars that appear to be in the same spot in the universe – but in reality they are extremely far away from each other and not connected at all: you can't bind them together because there are lots of other stars "in between". In contrast to that the stars in Orion are quite close to each other, and in fact linked in the sense that they move along the same path through space.

Oceanography: In Ecclesiastes 1:7 we read All streams flow into the sea, yet the sea is never full. To the place where the streams come from there they return again. This statement, considered by itself, may not seem profound at first glance. But when considered with additional evidence and other biblical passages, it becomes all the more remarkable. Ecclesiastes 11:3a states that if the clouds be full of rain, they empty themselves upon the earth. Amos 9:6b tells us that He...callesh for the waters of the sea, and pours them out upon the face of the earth; the Lord is His name. What is explained here is what science calls the hydrologic cycle: water is dumped into the ocean, condenses into clouds, which bring rain mostly to the mountains, from where the water then flows back into rivers and into the oceans. The idea of a complete water cycle was not fully understood or accepted until the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The first substantial evidence came from experiments of Pierre Perrault and Edme Mariotte. More that 2,000 years prior to their work, however, the Scriptures had indicated a water cycle.

God told Noah in Genesis 6:15 to build an ark that measured 300 cubits in length, 50 cubits in width, and 30 cubits in height. This is a ratio of 30 to 5 to 3, length to breadth to height. Until approximately 1858 the ark was the largest seagoing vessel of which we have any written record. As it turns out, the dimensions 30:5:3 are the perfect ratio for a huge boat build for seaworthiness and not for speed. In fact, shipbuilders during World War II used that 30:5:3 ratio to build the boat that eventually was nicknamed the ugly duckling a barge-like boat built to carry tremendous amounts of cargo. It had the same ratio as the ark.

How did Noah know the perfect seagoing ratio to use in building the ark? Upon whose knowledge did he draw? Brunnel and others like him had many generations of ship- building knowledge upon which to draw, but Noah s literally was the first of its kind.

Medicine: Moses told the Israelites (Leviticus 17:11-14) that the life of the flesh is in the blood. He was correct. Because the red blood cells can carry oxygen (due to hemoglobin in the cells) life is made possible. We know today that the life of the flesh is in the blood. But we didn't know that 200 years ago. People felt that the blood was where evil vapors were found, and that getting rid of the blood would make a person well again. Today, of course, we know that is not true. Think of how often blood transfusions have made life possible for those who otherwise would have died. Today we know the truth of the matter. How did the biblical writer know it?

While the Old Testament placed no restrictions on the eating of fruits and vegetables, severe limitations were given for the eating of certain meats. Among land animals, only those that had a split hoof and chewed the cud were approved as edible (Leviticus 11:3). Of the water-living animals, only those with fins and scales were acceptable (Leviticus 11:9; of interest is the fact that poisonous fish have no scales). Birds of prey were prohibited, as were almost all insects.

Perhaps the best known among these biblical injunctions was eating the meat of a pig. To the Jew, pork was considered unclean, and thus was inedible. Today, we know there is good scientific reasoning behind such a prohibition. The pig is a scavenger and will eat almost anything. In so doing, on occasion it ingests the parasite, *Trichinella spiralis*, which is the cause of trichinosis in humans. Left untreated, this disease can be debilitating and even deadly. Pigs also are known carriers of the tapeworm *Taenia solium*, and of the parasite *Echinococcus granulosus*, which causes tumors in the liver, lungs, and other parts of the body. Raw or undercooked pork can be quite dangerous when consumed by humans. Pigs can provide safe meat if they are fed properly and if the muscle tissue is cooked correctly. But even then it is not as safe as beef or lamb (there is plenty of research about the long-term side effects of eating too much pork). Interestingly, even today in some countries (like Germany) raw pork is considered a delicacy in spite of the knowledge we possess about the potential dangers of eating it. It's human arrogance, believing that by extremely strict laws (8 hour limit from grinding to selling), proper investigation of the raw meat, irradiation etc. you can avoid all problems. Hygiene: In Deuteronomy 23:12-14, Moses instructed the Israelites always to bury human waste products. Today, of course, with centuries of experience behind us, we know that this is an excellent sanitary hygienic practice. But the common course of action in Moses day, and for centuries to follow, was to dump waste products in any convenient place.

History has recorded the folly of this kind of action. In Europe, during the Middle Ages, Black Plague swept over the continent on two different occasions, slaughtering more than 13 million people in the process. Europeans routinely dumped waste of all kinds out their windows and into the public streets where decomposition took place and microorganisms flourished. One of those microorganisms the one we know today as *Yersinia pestis* grew in the waste products and contaminated the fleas associated with those waste products. The fleas, using rats as their hosts, subsequently traveled into the people's houses. Once inside a dwelling, the fleas then jumped from the rats onto the humans, biting them and infecting them with the plague organism. As this cycle was repeated over and over, millions perished. Yet if the people simply had obeyed God's injunction, as given by Moses to the Israelites, all of the death and horror of two separate epidemics could have been avoided. How did Moses know to instruct the Israelites regarding such public health hygiene laws, when none of the nations surrounding God's people enlisted such practices and would not for centuries?

Of course, there are still a lot of people claiming that we read too much into these passages (the Hebrew is pretty unique here), that the text's were written much later than we believe (we refuted that), that this was common knowledge at the time (absolutely no evidence), or that it was just a lucky guess (one, two – but over and over again?).

But all these claims only express that they don't like to look at evidence that could contradict their belief system – while they have no problems accepting a scientifically un- proven and even unlikely theory like evolution theory. Occasionally, however, people's eyes get opened by looking at the fact, they get curious and check the Bible out — and then the Word speaks to them by itself.

2. Strong Evidence: Predictive Prophecies. But there is more evidence than just scientific foreknowledge. In Isaiah 41:21-23 God himself issues a challenge:

Present your case, says the Lord. Set forth your arguments, says Jacob's King. Bring in your idols to tell us what is going to happen. Tell us what the former things were so that we may consider them and know their final outcome. Or declare to us the things to come, tell us what the future holds, so that we may know that you are gods.

One of the most impressive internal proofs of the Bible's inspiration is its prophetic utterances. It is the highest evidence of divine revelation. The one thing that mortal man cannot do is to know and report future events in the absence of a train of circumstances that naturally suggest certain possibilities. So if the Bible is inspired of God, one would expect it to contain valid, predictive prophecy.

And in fact, this is what we find. The Bible contains prophecies about individuals, lands, nations, and even the predicted Messiah. Its prophecy — completely foretold to the minutest detail, and painstakingly fulfilled with the greatest precision — has confounded its critics for generations.

Q: But what is prophecy? What should we require to make sure it's genuine?

1. First, it must be a specific, detailed declaration, as opposed to being nebulous, vague, or general in nature like today's psychics, astrologers, or horoscopes to which so many people fall trap. There shall be no possibility of accounting by shrewd guesswork for the accuracy of the fulfillment. It must be more than a good guess or a conjecture. It must possess sufficient precision as to be capable of verification by means of the fulfillment.
2. The prophecy must be stated in clear, understandable terms. Prophecies must be sufficiently clear in order for the observer to be able to link pronouncement with fulfillment. If a prophecy is not understandable enough so as to allow the observer to depict its fulfillment, then what good would the prophecy be?
3. There must be a sufficient amount of time between the prophetic statement and its fulfillment. Suggestions as to what might happen in the future do not qualify as prophetic pronouncements. Rather, the prophecy must precede the fulfillment in a significant fashion, and there must be no chance whatsoever of the prophet having the ability to influence the outcome.
4. True prophecy should not be based on past (or current) societal or economic conditions. There should have been nothing in previous history which makes it possible to forecast a like event in the future.
5. A clear, understandable, exact prophecy must have a clear, understandable, exact fulfillment. It is not enough to suggest that a certain event came true with a high degree of probability. The fulfillment must be unmistakable, and must match the prophecy in every detail. (Deuteronomy 18:20-22)

So, does the Bible employ predictive prophecy? And if it does, can the predictive prophecy be proven true? The answer to both questions is a resounding yes. The Bible contains numerous (more than 6000) prophetic predictions. Many of these are fulfilled already and this to the precise detail – others are still open for the future, and none ever failed.

Fear not, neither be afraid: have not I told thee from that time, and have declared it? You are even my witnesses. Is there a God beside me? yea, there is no God; I know not any. (Isaiah 44:8)

“You have heard; look at all this.

And you, will you not declare it?

I proclaim to you new things from this time,

Hidden things which you have not known.

⁷ They are created now and not long ago;

And before today you have not heard them,

So that you will not say, ‘Behold, I knew them.’

⁸ You have not heard, you have not known.

Even from long ago your ear has not been open,

Because I knew that you would deal very treacherously;

And you have been called a ^[a]rebel from ^[b]birth.” (Isaiah 48:6-8)

Consider just a few brief examples.

A. The Bible foretells the destruction of the city of Tyre with miraculous precision. Ezekiel predicted that Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, would destroy the city (Ezekiel 26:7- 8). Many nations were to come up against Tyre (26:3). The city would be leveled and scraped clean like a bare rock (26:4). The city's stones, timbers, and soil would be cast into the sea (26:12). The surrounding area would become a place for the spreading of fishermen's nets (26:5). And, finally, the city never would be rebuilt to its former glory (26:14).

History records that each of these predictions came true. Tyre, a coastal city from ancient times, had a somewhat unusual arrangement. In addition to the inland city, there was an island about three-fourths of a mile offshore. Nebuchadnezzar besieged the mainland city in 586 B.C., but when he finally was able to inhabit the city in about 573 B.C., his victory was hollow. Unbeknownst to him, the inhabitants had vacated the city and moved to the island a situation that remained virtually unchanged for the next 241 years. Then, in 332 B.C., Alexander the Great conquered the city but not with ease. To get to the island, he literally had his army scrape clean the inland city of its debris, and he then used those materials (stones, timbers, and soil) to build a causeway to the island. But even though Alexander inflicted severe damage on the city, it still remained intact. In fact, it waxed and waned for the next 1,600 years until finally, in A.D. 1291, the Muslims thoroughly crushed Tyre.

1. King Josiah had his life's work foretold (his name even being provided within the prophetic utterance) more than three hundred years before he was born (1 Kings 13:2).
2. The Old Testament contains more than three hundred Messianic prophecies. Testimony about Jesus was the chief purpose of prophecy. To him all the prophets gave witness (Acts 10:43). Here is a brief list of some key prophecies and their fulfillment:

(a) born of the seed of a woman (Genesis 3:15; Galatians 4:4)

(b) born of a virgin (Isaiah 7:14, Matthew 1:22–24)

(c) of the seed of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Judah (Genesis 22:18, Genesis

- 21:12, Numbers 24:7 Genesis 49:10; Matthew 1:1–3, Luke 3:32–34)
- (d) son of God (Psalm 2:7; Matthew 3:17, Luke 9:35)
 - (e) of the royal lineage of David (2 Samuel 7:12, Jeremiah 23:5; Luke 1:32, 3:23, 3:31)
 - (f) born in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2; Matthew 2:1)
 - (g) shall be called Lord (Psalm 110:1; Luke 2:11, Jeremiah 23:5) 31
 - (h) a king (Psalm 2:6, Jeremiah 23:5; Matthew 27:37) (i) zeal for God (Psalm 69:9; John 2:15–17)
 - (j) Proceeded by a messenger (Isaiah 40:3; John 1:23)
 - (k) Miracles (Isaiah 35:5–6; Matthew 9:35 and many others) (l) During the Roman reign (Daniel 2:40,44; Luke 2:1)3
 - (m) Betrayed by a friend (Psalm 41:9; Matthew 26:14,49)
 - (n) For 30 pieces of silver (Zechariah 11:12; Matthew 26:15)
 - (o) Money thrown into the house of God (Zechariah 11:13; Matthew 27:5) (p) Used to buy the Potter's field (Zechariah 11:13; Matthew 27:7)
 - (q) Silent before his accusers (Isaiah 53:7; Matthew 27:26)
 - (r) Hands and feet pierced (Psalm 2:16; Luke 23:33, John 20:25) (s) Hated without cause (Psalm 69:4; John 15:25)
 - (t) Garments parted and lots cast (Psalm 22:18; John 19:23–24)
 - (u) Bones not broken (Psalm 34:20; John 19:33)
 - (v) Side pierced (Zechariah 12:10; John 19:34)
 - (w) Darkness over the land (Amos 8:9; Matthew 27:45)
 - (x) Buried with the rich (Isaiah 53:9; Matthew 27:57–60)
 - (y) Would not see decay (Psalm 16:10; Matthew 28:6, Acts 2:31) (z) Ascended into heaven (Psalm 68:18; Acts 1:9)

Time and again biblical prophecies are presented, and fulfilled, with exacting detail. Jeremiah 28:9 wrote: “when the word of the prophet shall come to pass, then shall the prophet be known, that Jehovah has truly sent him.”

While skeptics may disregard the uniqueness as a sign that the Bible is from God, they have a hard time explaining its supernatural content. That doesn't mean you can convince them with these hard facts, but at least you can force them to reconsider their own position. They may give you some lame excuses why they don't want to accept the evidence you presented (after all it would require a major shift in their world view to accept it) but there is a chance that they will think about it later and begin changing their views. Actually the prophecies in Daniel 9:24–26, Nehemiah 2:1–8 are precise enough to predict the time- frame AD 30–33.

The Bible is not only a unique book, the Book of books, but it is divinely inspired and miraculously given. No other book in history attests to such early ancient scientific or predictive prophetic accuracy. No other book in the world is like the Bible. It claims for itself divine Authorship and divine authority. The Bible renders incredible historical narrative and prophetic promises that have been historically verified and analyzed as factually plausible and reliably fulfilled. The Bible proves within its pages what it claims for itself, that it is a divinely inspired source of truth with which every person on the earth must accept or deny. The Bible makes claims to inspiration, authority and inerrancy: “From childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings which are able to instruct you for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness.” (2 Timothy 3:15-16) **What is your decision?**

Author	Date Written	Earliest Copy	Approximate Time Span between original & copy	Number of Copies	Accuracy of Copies
Lucretius	died 55 or 53 B.C.		1100 yrs.	2	----
Pliny	A.D. 61-113.	A.D. 850.	750 yrs.	7	----
Plato	427-347 B.C.	A.D. 900.	1200 yrs.	7	----
Demosthenes	4th Cent. B.C.	A.D. 1100.	800 yrs.	8	----
Herodotus	480-425 B.C.	A.D. 900.	1300 yrs.	8	----
Suetonius	A.D. 75-160.	A.D. 950.	800 yrs.	8	----
Thucydides	460-400 B.C.		1300 yrs.	8	----
Euripides	480-406 B.C.	A.D. 1100.	1300 yrs.	9	----
Aristophanes	450-385 B.C.	A.D. 900.	1200 yrs.	10	----
Caesar	100-44 B.C.	A.D. 900.	1000 yrs.	10	----
Livy	59 BC-AD 17	----	???	20	----
Tacitus	circa A.D. 100.	A.D. 1100.	1000 yrs.	20	----
Aristotle	384-322 B.C.	A.D. 1100.	1400 yrs.	49	----
Sophocles	496-406 B.C.	A.D. 1000.	1400 yrs.	193	----
Homer (<i>Iliad</i>)	900 B.C.	400 B.C.	500 yrs.	643	95%
New Testament	1st Cent. A.D. (A.D. 50-100)	2nd Cent. A.D. (c. A.D. 130 f.)	less than 100 years	5600	99.5%

The DETAILS of the RELIABILITY OF SCRIPTURE

The following graph is helpful to see how the Bible compares to every other significant ancient document and the extant manuscripts and time lapsed between the original and oldest copies:

Many people do not believe that the Bible is a reliable document of history. But, the fact is the Bible is very trustworthy as a historical document comparing the number of extant copies with the oldest and closest to the originals. If we were to look at a chart that compared the biblical documents with other ancient documents, we would see that the Bible is in a class by itself regarding the number of ancient copies and their reliability.

Reliability of the Old and New Testament: NOTES

SUMMARY:

The historicity of the manuscripts only goes to prove that the bible is the most widely attested book in history with the most and closest manuscripts from the originals. This attests to the fact that what we have is what was said/written in the originals. = non-corruption!!

*Because of copyist errors (called Uncials), we actually have 102% of the NT. With 99% accuracy = (only 1400 words 'in question' as authentic out of 138,000 words in NT).

Thus, putting the Bible to the TESTS of Systematic Consistency:

A. The Bible is proved "Reliable" = in that what we have today is what was original. But this doesn't automatically make the words or claims of Scripture true?? Or Historically Accurate.

B. "Truth" = The Veracity of the claims **within** (the Content needs to be proven historically accurate and consistent without any contradiction, inconsistencies, or errors).

We need to determine the credibility of the eyewitness accounts and historical narrative of events: = Therefore, we need to demonstrate historically authentic features = **Indications of authenticity:**

- 1) one should operate from the perspective that a document is truthful until proven inaccurate or untrustworthy (CONTENT) -Sufficient Criteria for conditions of historicity:
- 2) Historical Congruence (claims fit the facts of known/experienced context)
- 3) Independent & early attestation (appears in multiple unrelated testimony not from a common source. = many witnesses)
- 4) Dissimilarity: uniqueness as a source i.e. not borrowing from another source, copying other claims)
- 5) Semitisms: can be traced as accurate within the historical Aramaic and Hebrew linguistic forms
- 6) Embarrassment: The claims may not paint the source or event in the best light (awkward/counter-productive).

**THE FOLLOWING NOTES ARE A COLLECTION OF IN-DEPTH
HISTORICAL NOTES ON THE RELIABILITY OF SCRIPTURE IN GREAT
DETAIL:**

What Makes the Bible So Unique?

1. The Bible is Unique in its Amazing Consistency and Unity

The Bible – Old and New Testaments – was written by 40 different authors over a 5,000 year period. It contains many different kinds of “books”...

Historical works

Legal documents

Poetry

Biography

Prophecy

Personal correspondence

.. by a variety of writers, from poor to wealthy, from many walks of life.¹

And yet, the Bible is amazingly unique in its “unity” – the Old Testament prefigures the coming of the Messiah documented in the New Testament, and the books of the New Testament continually refer back to and fulfill the writings of the Old Testament. In fact, the Bible itself asserts that **“All scripture [is] given by inspiration of God, and [is] profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.”** (2 Tim 3:16).

2. The Bible’s Reliability is Attested to by Thousands of Ancient Manuscripts

Old Testament Ancient Manuscripts

Although the Old Testament does not have quite the number of ancient manuscripts that the New Testament has, the number of documents available is still quite remarkable (given the time span of 2-3,000 years that these documents had to endure).

Collection	Number of Manuscripts
Benjamin Kennicott (1776-1780), published by Oxford	Listed 615
Giovanni de Rossi (1784-1788)	List of 731
Second Firkowitch Collection, Leningrad	1,582 Biblical manuscripts and Masora on parchment, plus 1,200 Hebrew manuscripts in the Antonin Collection
British Museum	161 Hebrew Old Testament manuscripts
Oxford University, the Bodleian Library	146 Old Testament manuscripts, with a large number of ragments
Dead Sea Scrolls (300 B.C to 100 A.D.)	A complete copy of Isaiah, plus thousands of fragments (representing every book except Ester – see below)

New Testament Supporting Manuscripts

One of the criteria for the authority of ancient documents is the extent of supporting ancient manuscripts – the more the better, and the closer to the time of the original documents as possible. In light of these tests, the New Testament is the best attested to work from the ancient world.

It has by far the greatest number of existing ancient manuscripts. Ancient classical works are attested to by very few ancient copies, usually less than 10. In contrast, the New Testament is attested to by over 5,000 full or partial Greek manuscripts. In addition,

thousands of other copies in other languages exist, especially Latin.

Ancient Greek Manuscripts

- Unicals: 307
- Minuscules: 2,860
- Lectionaries: 2,410
- Papri: 109
-
- **SUBTOTAL: 5,686**

Other Ancient Manuscripts

- Latin Vulgate: 10,000+
- Ethiopic: 2,000+
- Slavic: 4,101
- Armenian: 2,587
- Syriac Pashetta: 350+
- Bohairic: 100
- Arabic: 75
- Old Latin: 50
- Anglo Saxon: 7
- Gothic: 6
- Sogdian: 3
- Old Syriac: 2
- Frankish: 1
-
- **SUBTOTAL: 19,284+**

The total number of ancient manuscripts supporting the New Testament amounts to 24,970+. *Far more* than any other book of antiquity. And while it is true that *“there are no known extent (currently existing) original manuscripts of the Bible, the abundance of manuscript copies make it possible to **reconstruct the original with virtually complete accuracy.**”*

According to Biblical scholar John Warwick Montgomery,

“to be skeptical of the resultant text of the New Testament books is to allow all of classical antiquity to slip into obscurity, for no documents of the ancient period are as well attested bibliographically as the New Testament.”

The New Testament manuscripts exhibit a relatively small gap of time between the original writings and the earliest copies. While other classical works usually exhibit gaps of literally hundreds of years, the earliest New Testament manuscript copies date within 100-150 years of the originals.

A few examples: The [Bodmer Papyrus II](#) (A.D. 150-200), purchased in the 1950s and 60s from a dealer in Egypt, is located in the Bodmer Library of World Literature. It contains most of John’s Gospel, and dates from about 200 A.D. or earlier. P 72, the earliest copy of Jude and the two epistles of Peter, are included, as well as P 75 -a single codex of Luke and John. Scholars date P 75 to between 175 and 225 A.D.

The [Chester Beatty Papyri](#), discovered in 1931, contains most ALL of the New Testament. And it is dated to within 100-150 years of the original documents.

The [Codex Sinaiticus](#), shown to [Constantin von Tischendorf](#) on his third visit to the [Monastery of Saint Catherine](#), at the foot of [Mount Sinai](#) in Egypt, in 1859, contains a

complete copy of the New Testament. It is dated roughly 250 years after the originals. **It was so often quoted by the early church fathers in the 1st and 2nd centuries, that the entire New Testament can virtually be reconstructed from their quotations alone!**

Early Church Writer	Number of N.T. Quotes
Eusebias	
Iranaeus	
Justin Martyr	
Chrysostometc.	
Grand Total Quotations:	36,289

These quotations by the early church fathers **give strong support for the New Testament canon of 27 books**, to the exclusion of others documents. Its amazing how God ensured that His Word would survive for generations to come: – even if all of the early manuscripts were not available, **we would still be able to reconstruct the entire New Testament from these very quotations – nearly intact and complete!**

A Look at the Bible's Composition & Origins

The Books of the Old Testament

Note: Mention is made in the right hand column of the number of manuscripts found among the “Dead Sea Scrolls”, which have thus far further established the reliability of the Old Testament (albeit many of which are still under study).

According to scholars, the Old Testament has shown to be reliably accurate in three ways⁴:

1 Because of the **manner of textual transmission** (the accuracy of the copying process) down through history

2 Due to the confirmation of the Old Testament **by hard archaeological evidence**

3 By corroborating **documentary evidence** uncovered through archaeology

Amazingly Accurate Textual Transmission

While it is true that we do not have the original documents of the Old Testament, the **accuracy of the Hebrew copyists is astonishing** when comparing the scriptures

Canonical Division	Old Testament Book	Number of Qumran Manuscripts
Pentateuch (Torah)	Genesis	18+3?
	Exodus	18
	Leviticus	17
	Numbers	12
	Deuteronomy	31+3?
Prophets (Nevi'im)	Joshua	2
	Judges	3
	1-2 Samuel	4
Former Prophets	1-2 Kings	3
	Isaiah	22
Latter Prophets	Jeremiah	6
	Ezekiel	7
	Twelve (Minor Prophets)	10+1?
	Psalms	39+2?
	Proverbs	2
Writings	Job	4
	Song of Songs	4
	Ruth	4
The Five Scrolls	Lamentations	4
	Ecclesiastes	3
	Esther	0
	Daniel	8+1?
	Ezra-Nehemiah	1
	1-2 Chronicles	1
Total		223 (233)

to other literature of antiquity.

For example, while you can find wide variations in the few copies of the “Egyptian Book of the Dead”, the discovery of the [Great Isaiah Scroll](#) among the Dead Sea Scrolls amazed the scholarly community:

*“Even though the two copies of **Isaiah discovered in Qumran Cave 1 near the Dead Sea in 1947 were a thousand years earlier** than the oldest dated manuscript previous known (A.D. 980), they proved to be **word for word identical with our standard Hebrew Bible** in more than 95 percent of the text. The 5 percent variation consisted chiefly of obvious slips of the pen and variations in spelling. They do not affect the message of revelation in the slightest.”*(Archer, SQT, 23-25).

Supported by Archaeological Evidence numerous discoveries have confirmed the historical accuracy of the New and Old Testament documents. Many books have been written on the subject, and there are some excellent web sites devoted to this – for example, visit the [Biblical Archeological Society](http://www.biblicalarcheologicalsociety.org). Rather than refuting the biblical record, archaeology had consistently supported the biblical record. Here are just a few examples:

- **The destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah** – once thought to be spurious until evidence revealed that all five of the cities mentioned in the Bible were in fact centers of commerce in the area and were situated as the Scriptures



- describe. Evidence points to earthquake activity, and that the various layers of the earth were disrupted and hurled into the air. Bitumen is plentiful in the area, and an accurate description would be that “brimstone” (bituminous pitch) had fallen down on those cities that had rejected God. There is also evidence that layers of sedimentary layer rock have been molded together by intense heat. (Geisler, BECA, 50-52).
- **Confirmation of “The House of David”**. Avaraham Birum (Biram, BAR, 26) speaks of a recent discovery: “A remarkable inscription from the ninth century BCE that refers to both the [House of David], and to the [King of Israel]. This is the first time that the name of David has been found in any inscription outside the Bible.”

- **The Tower of Babel.** There is now considerable scientific evidence that the world at one time did indeed have one language. Sumerian literature alludes to this fact several times, and today's linguists find this theory useful in categorizing languages. But what of the "Tower of Babel"? Archaeology has discovered that Ur-Nammu, king of Ur from about 2,044 to 2,007 B.C., supposedly received orders to build a great ziggurat (temple tower) as an act of worship to the moon god Nannat. One panel discovered shows him setting out with a mortar basket to begin construction of the great tower. Another states that the erection of the tower offended the gods, so they threw down what men had built, scattered them abroad, and made their speech strange. This is remarkably similar to the record in the Bible.

Of course there are many other examples of archaeological evidence that could be listed. But this should not surprise us, if indeed the Bible is what it claims to be – the Word of God. We should expect that archaeology would be consistent with and confirm His Word.

Corroborated by Other Documentary Evidence

Finally, there is much corroborating documentation to support the Old Testament.

- **Various Old Testament translations** The Septuagint, or LXX – a textual tradition from the third century B.C. Samaritan Pentateuchal tradition – dating from perhaps the fifth century B.C. The Masoretic text
- **Aramaic Targums** (written forms appear about A.D. 500) – paraphrases of the Old Testament in the Aramaic language
- **The Mishnah** (A.D. 200) – a digest of all the oral laws from the time of Moses.
- **The Gemara** (Palestinian A.D. 200) – written in Aramaic, an expanded commentary on the Mishnah
- **The Midrash** (100 B.C – A.D. 300) – doctrinal studies of the Old Testament Hebrew text.

The Books of the New Testament

The Gospels				The History	Epistles of Paul				General Epistles				Prophecy
					Romans 1 Corinthians 2								
					Corinthians Galatians								
					Ephesians Philippians								
Matthew	Mark	Luke	John	Acts	Colossians 1 Thessalonians 2				James	1 Peter	2 Peter	1 John	Revelation
					Thessalonians 1 Timothy 2								
					Timothy Hebrews Titus								
					Philemon								

to me also, having had a perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write to you an orderly account, most excellent Theophilus.”

2 Peter 1:16: *“For we did not follow cunningly devised fables when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, **but were eyewitnesses of His majesty.**”*

1 John 1:3: *“That which **we have seen and heard** we declare unto you ...”*

John 19:35: *“And **he who has seen has testified**, and his testimony is true; and he knows that he is telling the truth, so that you may believe.”*

The earliest preachers of the gospel knew the value of first hand testimony, and they appealed to it time and again in their writings.

Evidence for Early Dating of the New Testament

Most scholars agree that the New Testament documents were NOT written a century or more after the events, but **during the lifetimes of those involved in the accounts themselves**.⁶ This means that while the gospels, the letters of Paul, and the other epistles were circulating among the churches during the first century (A.D. 33 – A.D. 90, many of those who had seen the risen Christ were still alive and could corroborate the truthfulness or falsity of documents. The NT writers confidently appeal to the knowledge of the readers concerning the facts they had recorded: *“As you yourselves know...”* (Acts 2:22).

According to New Testament scholars cited by Josh McDowell in his book “New Evidence that Demands a Verdict”, there is strong evidence that the four gospels and Paul’s letter were all written during the lifetimes of those who would have witnessed the events of Jesus’ life:

N.T. Books	Conservative Dating	Source
Paul’s Epistles	A.D. 50-66	Hiebert
Matthew	A.D. 70-80	Harrison
Mark	A.D. 50-60 A.D. 58-65	Harnak T.W. Manson
Luke	Early 60’s	Harrison
John	A.D. 80-100	Harrison

According to William Foxwell Albright, one of the world’s foremost biblical archaeologists, *“We can already say emphatically that there is **no longer any solid basis for dating any book of the New Testament after about A.D. 80**, two full generations before the date between 130 and 150 given by the more radical New Testament critics of today.”*

Corroborating Evidence for Those Who Wrote the New Testament

The Bible declares that all Scripture is inspired by God, and men chosen by God were moved by His Spirit as they wrote His Word. The question remains however as to the human authorship of the various books. Here is early first and second century corroborating evidence for the authorship of the various New Testament books:

The Gospels: Matthew, Mark, Luke and John

Eusebius, in his *“Ecclesiastical History”* 111.39, quotes the writing of Papias (A.D. 130), bishop of Heirapolis, in which Papias quotes “the Elder” (who most believe to be the Apostle John) as saying the following about how the **Gospel of Mark** was written:

*“The Elder used to say this also: ‘**Mark, having been the interpreter of Peter, wrote down accurately all that he (Peter) mentioned**, whether sayings or doings of Christ, not, however, in order. For he was neither a hearer nor a companion of the Lord; but afterwards, as I said, he accompanied Peter, who adapted his teachings as necessity required, not as though he were making a compilation of the sayings of the Lord. So then Mark made no mistake writing down in this way some things as he (Peter) mentioned them; for he paid attention to this one thing, not to omit anything that he had heard, not to include any false statement among them.”*

Regarding **Matthew’s Gospel**, Papias records:

“Matthew recorded the oracles in the Hebrew (ie., Aramaic) tongue.”

Irenaeus, Bishop of Lyons (A.D. 180), was a student of Polycarp, Bishop of Smyrna (martyred in A.D 156). Irenaeus, a disciple of John the Apostle, has been a Christian for 86 years when he wrote about the authority of the four gospels:

“the gospel is the pillar and base of the Church and the breath of life, so it is natural that it should have four pillars..”

He further recounted how the other Gospels came about:

*“**Matthew** published his Gospel among the Hebrews (ie., Jews) in their own tongue, when Peter and Paul were preaching the gospel in Rome and founding the church there. After their departure, (ie., their death), **Mark**, the disciple and interpreter of Peter, himself handed down to us in writing the substance of Peter’s preaching. **Luke**, the follower of Paul, set down in a book the gospel preached by his teacher. Then **John**, the disciple of the Lord, who also leaned on His breast (a reference to John 13:25 and 21:20), himself produced his Gospel, while he was living at Ephesus in Asia.”*

The History: Acts

According to the Muratorian Canon fragment, A.D. 190, “...the **Acts of all the Apostles** are **comprised by Luke** in one book, and addressed to the most excellent Theophilus, because **these different events took place when he was present himself**; and he shows this clearly-i.e., that the principle on which he wrote was, to give only what fell under his own notice-by the omission³³ of the passion of Peter, and also of the journey of Paul, when he went from the city-Rome-to Spain.”

The Epistles of Paul

According to the Muratorian Cannon (A.D. 190):

*“As to the epistles³⁴ of Paul, again, to those who will understand the matter, they indicate of themselves what they are, and from what place or with what object they were directed. **He wrote first of all**, and at considerable length, to the **Corinthians**, to check the schism of heresy; and then to the **Galatians**, to forbid circumcision; and then to the **Romans** on the rule of the Old Testament Scriptures, and also to show them that Christ is the first object³⁵ in these;-which it is needful for us to discuss severally,³⁶ as the blessed Apostle Paul, following the rule of his predecessor John, writes to no more than seven churches by name, in this order: the first to the Corinthians, the second to the **Ephesians**, the third to the **Philippians**, the fourth to the **Colossians**, the fifth to the Galatians, the sixth to the **Thessalonians**, the seventh to the Romans. Moreover, though **he writes twice to the Corinthians and Thessalonians for their correction**, it is yet shown-i.e., by this sevenfold writing-that there is one Church spread abroad through the whole world. And John too, indeed, in the Apocalypse, although he writes only to seven churches, yet addresses all. He wrote, besides these, one to **Philemon**, and **one to Titus**, and **two to Timothy**, in simple personal affection and love indeed; but yet these are hallowed in the esteem of the Catholic Church, and in the regulation of ecclesiastical discipline.”*The Muratorian Cannon fragment, A.D. 190

Evidence of forged documents circulating as though written by Paul (but rejected because of this):

*“There are also in circulation one to the Laodiceans, and another to the Alexandrians, **forged under the name of Paul**, and addressed against the heresy of Marcion; and there are also several others which cannot be received into the Catholic Church, for it is not suitable for gall to be mingled with honey.”* The Muratorian Cannon fragment, A.D. 190

The General Epistles: of James, Peter, John, and Jude

*“The **Epistle of Jude**, indeed,³⁷ and two belonging to the above-named **John**-or bearing the name of John-are reckoned among the Catholic epistles.”* The Muratorian Cannon fragment, A.D. 190

Prophecy: Revelation

The Muratorian Cannon fragment, A.D. 190: *“We receive also the **Apocalypse of John** and that of Peter, though some amongst us will not have this latter read in the Church.”*

What Was the Criteria for Acceptance into the Canon?

From the writings of biblical and church historians we can discern at least **five principles** that were used to determine whether or not a writing was to be included in “the canon”⁴. If the book met these criteria, it became part of the canon. If not, it ended up being excluded.

Key Criteria:

- 1. Was the book written by a prophet of God?** The notion was that if the book was written by an authentic prophet of God (Isaiah, Zechariah, et.), then it was “the Word of God.”
- 2. Was the writer confirmed by acts of God?** Frequently miracles separated the true prophets from the false ones. For example, Moses was given miraculous powers to prove to the Egyptians that he was called by God. (Ex 4:1-9) Elijah triumphed over false prophets by a supernatural act (1 Kings 18). Jesus was attested to by God “with miracles and wonders and signs which God performed through Him” (Acts 2:22).
- 3. Did the message tell the truth about God?** God cannot contradict Himself (2 Cor 1:17-18), nor can He utter what is false (Heb 6:18). Hence no book with false claims can be the Word of God. For these reasons, the early church fathers maintained the policy “if in doubt, throw it out”.
- 4. Does it come with the power of God?** The apostles, disciples, and early church fathers believed that the Word of God is “living and active” (Heb 4:12). As a result, it ought to have a transforming force for bringing people to the faith (1 Per 1:23), as well as building them up (2 Tim 3:17). Those that became part of the canon manifested these qualities; those that did not failed in this and other areas.
- 5. Was it accepted by the people of God?** The people in the best position to know a book’s prophetic credentials were those who knew the prophet who wrote it. The four gospels were accepted early on because those living at the time knew the writers – Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. They also accepted Acts due to Luke’s authorship. Paul’s writings were accepted as He was known and well regarded as one of the Apostles, although the last to come to that state. The other epistles were accepted due to having been written by disciples (actually the Lord’s half brothers) – James, and Jude. Thus, when a book was received, collected, read, and used by the people of God as the Word of God, it was regarded as canonical.

Development of the Canon and The New Testament

In contrast to what “**The Da Vinci Code**” and other modern sources would have you **believe**, the list of books of the New Testament were settled and recognized as authoritative by the church **long before** the Council of Nicea in 325 A.D.

During the second century many “cults” started to spring up among the early Christian community, their leaders seeking to draw away many from the faithful. One of these groups, led by a man from Asia Minor named **Montanus**, claimed to have received revelations from God about the apocalypse. By this time, the four gospels and the writings of Paul had received widespread acceptance among the church as being authoritative – the problem was **they hadn’t been bound into a single book yet**. Montanus took the opportunity to claim authority for his revelations, hoping to gain acceptance along with the four gospels and Paul’s writings. The church met this challenge in 190 A.D. by defining what was called the “**Muratorian Canon**”³, after its modern discover. **This canon, dated to 190 A.D., is nearly identical to the New Testament we have today** — the difference being that it included two books that were later excluded from the canon – 1) the Revelation of Peter, and 2) the Wisdom of Solomon. **By the time of the Council of Nicea (in 325 A.D.), the New Testament canon**

was pretty much settled – the only debate was concerning a few books, chief of which were Hebrews and Revelation (due to questions of authorship).

A.D. 367 – Athanasius of Alexandria

Athanasius, one of the early church fathers, provided us with the earliest list of the SAME New Testament canon we have today in one of his letters to the local churches. Extracts from this **39th Festal Letter, written in AD 367**, are below. This is very same list of books that we have today in our New Testament.

*“Continuing, I must without hesitation mention the scriptures of the New Testament; they are the following: **the four Gospels according to Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John**, after them the **Acts of the Apostles** and the seven so-called catholic epistles of the apostles — namely, one of **James**, two of **Peter**, then **three of John** and after these **one of Jude**. In addition there are **fourteen epistles of the apostle Paul** written in the following order: the first to the **Romans**, then **two to the Corinthians** and then after these the **one to the Galatians**, following it the **one to the Ephesians**, thereafter the **one to the Philippians** and the **one to the Colossians** and **two to the Thessalonians** and the epistle to the **Hebrews** and then immediately **two to Timothy**, **one to Titus** and lastly the **one to Philemon**. Yet further the **Revelation of John**.”*

*“These are the springs of salvation, in order that he who is thirsty may fully refresh himself with the words contained in them. In them alone is the doctrine of piety proclaimed. **Let no one add anything to them or take anything away from them...**”*

How Did the Early Church View the “Other Books”?

Athanasius, one of the most prolific of the early church fathers, makes a distinction between the “divine writings” of the New Testament and “other books” in circulation at the time. He divides these “other books” into two groups:

- 1 He indicates that a small collections should not be recognized as part of “the canon”, but are **acceptable as “reading matter”** for instruction.
- 2 Others – ie., “the apocrypha” – **should not be made mention**, since they are a “fabrication of the heretics” intended to deceive.

Here is his characterization of the “other books” outside the canon:

*“But for the sake of greater accuracy I add, being constrained to write, **that there are also other books besides these, which have not indeed been put in the canon, but have been appointed by the Fathers as reading-matter for those who have just come forward and which to be instructed in the doctrine of piety: the Wisdom of Solomon, the Wisdom of Sirach, Esther, Judith, Tobias, the so-called Teaching [Didache] of the Apostles, and the Shepherd. And although, beloved, the former are in the canon and the latter serve as reading matter, yet mention is nowhere made of the apocrypha; rather they are a fabrication of the heretics, who write them down when it pleases them and generously assign to them an early date of composition in order that they may be able to draw upon them as supposedly ancient writings and have in them occasion to deceive the guileless.**”*

The Reliability of the Bible: Count on it as God's Word

Yes, indeed, the Bible is reliable and trustworthy – more than any other book in all of history! It is literally God's "love letter" to His people, kept intact and maintained carefully through His providence over thousands of years of human history.

Although many have tried to contaminate it, corrupt it, and otherwise do away with it, it has remained – intact, unscathed, and unrivaled. It IS truly God's Word, unique among all the so-called scriptures of the ages.

So back to our initial point – if the Bible truly IS the written word of God – and these other books are just that – other books – then **listen to what the Lord is telling you in His love letter!** Pick up a copy of the Bible, and start with the book of John. Read about how God "so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever would believe in Him should not perish, but have eternal life." (John 3:16).

Though the world would have you believe that there are many books, and many ways to God, Jesus Christ made claims – and performed acts – that no other "holy man" of history can come close to matching. He said "**I am the WAY, the TRUTH, and the LIFE.**" If this Bible is what it claims to be – a testimony to God's plan of salvation for human kind, and Jesus is that "Word made flesh" (as John 1 describes), then **don't delay – give Jesus a chance in your life!**

Don't put it off. Allow Jesus to come into your life and make you "a new creation"! You have nothing to lose everything to gain. Here is a link to Billy Graham's web site that can show you how you can invite Jesus into your life and be the person He has always intended you to be. You won't regret it – you'll have abundant life in this world, and an eternity of joy in the hereafter!

Use M-A-P-S to guide you through Bible reliability:

Manuscripts, Archaeology, Prophecy, Statistics

Have you tried to show someone the historical reliability of the Scriptures, and not known where to start? A quick trip to your local well-stocked Christian bookstore likely will overwhelm you. Where among the dozens of impressive, comprehensive reference books should you start?

Fortunately, while there is a wealth of information available to support the reliability of Scripture, you don't have to burn the midnight oil to give a reasonable answer to those who ask, "How can we know the Bible is reliable?" Four basic principle chart your way to understanding basic biblical reliability.

To help you remember, I've developed the simple acronym "**MAPS.**" Remember the word **MAPS** and you will be able to chart Bible reliability.

Bible Reliability-Manuscripts

Manuscripts relates to the tests used to determine the reliability of the extant manuscript copies of the *original* documents penned by the Scripture writers (we do not possess these originals). In determining manuscript reliability, we deal with the question: How can we test to see that the text we possess in the manuscript *copies* is an accurate rendition of the *original*? There are three main manuscript tests: the **B**ibliographic, **E**yewitness, and **E**xternal (a second acronym — **BEE** — will help you remember these).

The bibliographic test considers the quantity & quality of manuscripts and manuscript fragments, and also the time span between the original documents and our earliest copies. The more copies, the better able we are to work back to the original. The closer the time span between the copies and the original, the less likely it is that serious textual error would creep in. The Bible has stronger bibliographic support than any classical literature — including Homer, Tacitus, Pliny, and Aristotle.

We have more than 14,000 manuscripts and fragments of the Old Testament of three main types: (a) approximately 10,000 from the Cairo Geniza (storeroom) find of 1897, dating back as far as about AD. 800; (b) about 190 from the Dead Sea Scrolls find of 1947-1955, the oldest dating back to 250-200 B.C.; and (c) at least 4,314 assorted other copies. The short time between the original Old Testament manuscripts (completed around 400 B.C.) and the first extensive copies (about 250 B.C.) — coupled with the more than 14,000 copies that have been discovered — ensures the trustworthiness of the Old Testament text. The earliest quoted verses (Num. 6:24-26) date from 800-700 B.C.

The same is true of the New Testament text. The abundance of textual witnesses is amazing. We possess over 5,300 manuscripts or portions of the (Greek) New

Testament — almost 800 copied before A.D. 1000. The time between the original composition and our earliest copies is an unbelievably short 60 years or so.

The overwhelming *bibliographic* reliability of the Bible is clearly evident.

*The eyewitness document test (“E”), sometimes referred to as the *internal test*, focuses on the eyewitness credentials of the authors. The Old and New Testament authors were eyewitnesses of — or *interviewed* eyewitnesses of — the majority of the events they described. Moses participated in and was an eyewitness of the remarkable events of the Egyptian captivity, the Exodus, the forty years in the desert, and Israel’s final encampment before entering the Promised Land. These events he chronicled in the first five books of the Old Testament.

The New Testament writers had the same eyewitness authenticity. Luke, who wrote the Books of Luke and Acts, says that he gathered eyewitness testimony and “carefully investigated everything” (Luke 1:1-3). Peter reminded his readers that the disciples “were eyewitnesses of [Jesus’] majesty” and “did not follow cleverly invented stories” (2 Pet. 1:16). Truly, the Bible affirms the *eyewitness* credibility of its writers.

**The external evidence test looks *outside* the texts themselves to ascertain the historical reliability of the historical events, geographical locations, and cultural consistency of the biblical texts. Unlike writings from other world religions which make no historical references or which fabricate histories, the Bible refers to historical events and assumes its historical accuracy. The Bible is *not only* the inspired Word of God, it is also a history book — and the historical assertions it makes have been proven time and again.

Many of the events, people, places, and customs in the New Testament are confirmed by secular historians who were almost contemporaries with New Testament writers. Secular historians like the Jewish Josephus (before A.D. 100), the Roman Tacitus (around A.D. 120), the Roman Suetonius (A.D. 110), and the Roman governor Pliny Secundus (A.D. 100-110) make direct reference to Jesus or affirm one or more historical New Testament references.

Early church leaders such as Irenaeus, Tertullian, Julius Africanus, and Clement of Rome — all writing before A.D. 250 — shed light on New Testament historical accuracy. Even skeptical historians agree that the New Testament is a remarkable historical document. Hence, it is clear that there is strong *external evidence* to support the Bible's manuscript reliability.

Bible Reliability-Archaeology

Returning to our **MAPS** acronym, we have established the first principle, manuscript reliability. Let us consider our second principle, archaeological evidence. Over and over again, comprehensive field work (archaeology) and careful biblical interpretation affirms the reliability of the Bible. It is telling when a secular scholar must revise his biblical criticism in light of solid archaeological evidence.

For years critics dismissed the Book of Daniel, partly because there was no evidence that a king named Belshazzar ruled in Babylon during that time period. However, later archaeological research confirmed that the reigning monarch, Nabonidus, appointed Belshazzar as his co-regent while he was away from Babylon.

One of the most well-known New Testament examples concerns the Books of Luke and Acts. A biblical skeptic, Sir William Ramsay, trained as an archaeologist and then set out to disprove the historical reliability of this portion of the New Testament. However, through his painstaking Mediterranean archaeological trips, he became converted as — one after another — of the historical statements of Luke were proved accurate. Archaeological evidence thus confirms the trustworthiness of the Bible.

Bible Reliability-Prophecy

The third principle of Bible reliability is Prophecy, or predictive ability. The Bible records predictions of events that could not be known or predicted by chance or common sense. Surprisingly, the predictive nature of many Bible passages was once a popular argument (by liberals) *against* the reliability of the Bible. Critics argued that the prophecies actually were written after the events and that editors had merely dressed up the Bible text to look like they contained predictions made before the events. Nothing could be further from the truth, however. The many predictions of Christ's birth, life and death (see below) were indisputably rendered more than a century before they occurred as proven by the Dead Sea Scrolls of Isaiah and other prophetic books as well as by the Septuagint translation, all dating from earlier than 100 B.C.

Old Testament prophecies concerning the Phoenician city of Tyre were fulfilled in ancient times, including prophecies that the city would be opposed by many nations (Ezek. 26:3); its walls would be destroyed and towers broken down (26:4); and its stones, timbers, and debris would be thrown into the water (26:12). Similar prophecies were fulfilled concerning Sidon (Ezek. 28:23; Isa. 23; Jer. 27:3-6; 47:4) and Babylon (Jer. 50:13, 39; 51:26, 42-43, 58; Isa. 13:20-21).

Since Christ is the culminating theme of the Old Testament and the Living Word

of the New Testament, it should not surprise us that prophecies regarding Him outnumber any others. Many of these prophecies would have been impossible for Jesus to deliberately conspire to fulfill — such as His descent from Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Gen. 12:3; 17:19;

Num. 24:21-24); His birth in Bethlehem (Mic. 5:2); His crucifixion with criminals (Isa. 53:12); the piercing of His hands and feet at the crucifixion (Ps. 22:16); the soldiers' gambling for His clothes (Ps. 22:18); the piercing of His side and the fact that His bones were not broken at His death (Zech. 12:10; Ps. 34:20); and His burial among the rich (Isa. 53:9). Jesus also predicted His own death and resurrection (John 2:19-22). *Predictive Prophecy* is a principle of Bible reliability that often reaches even the hard-boiled skeptic!

Bible Reliability-Statistics

Our fourth **MAPS** principle works well with predictive prophecy, because it is Statistically preposterous that any or all of the Bible's very specific, detailed prophecies could have been fulfilled through chance, good guessing, or deliberate deceit. When you look at some of the improbable prophecies of the Old and New Testaments, it seems incredible that skeptics — knowing the authenticity and historicity of the texts — could reject the statistical verdict: the Bible is the Word of God, and Jesus Christ is the Son of God, just as Scripture predicted many times and in many ways.

The Bible was written over a span of 1500 years by forty different human authors in three different languages (Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek), on hundreds of subjects. And yet there is one consistent, noncontradictory theme that runs through it all: *God's redemption of humankind*. Clearly, Statistical probability is a powerful indicator of the trustworthiness of Scripture.

The next time someone denies the reliability of Scripture, just remember the acronym **MAPS**, and you will be equipped to give an answer and a reason for the hope that lies within you (1 Pet. 3:15). **Manuscripts**, **Archaeology**, **Prophecy**, and **Statistics** not only chart a secure course on the turnpikes of skepticism but also demonstrate definitively that the Bible is indeed divine rather than human in origin.

Manuscript Support for the Bible's Reliability

by Ron Rhodes

Manuscript Evidence for the New Testament

There are more than 24,000 partial and complete manuscript copies of the New Testament. These manuscript copies are very ancient and they are available for inspection now. There are also some 86,000 quotations from the early church fathers and several thousand Lectionaries (church-service books containing Scripture quotations used in the early centuries of Christianity). Bottom line: the New Testament has an overwhelming amount of evidence supporting its reliability.

The Variants in the New Testament Manuscripts Are Minimal

In the many thousands of manuscript copies we possess of the New Testament, scholars have discovered that there are some 150,000 "variants."

This may seem like a staggering figure to the uninformed mind.

But to those who study the issue, the numbers are not so damning as it may initially appear.

Indeed, a look at the hard evidence shows that the New Testament manuscripts are amazingly accurate and trustworthy.

To begin, we must emphasize that out of these 150,000 variants, 99 percent hold virtually no significance whatsoever.

Many of these variants simply involve a missing letter in a word; some involve reversing the order of two words (such as "Christ Jesus" instead of "Jesus Christ"); some may involve the absence of one or more insignificant words.

Really, when all the facts are put on the table, only about 50 of the variants have any real significance - and even then, no doctrine of the Christian faith or any moral commandment is effected by them.

For more than ninety-nine percent of the cases the original text can be reconstructed to a practical certainty.

Even in the few cases where some perplexity remains, this does not impinge on the meaning of Scripture to the point of clouding a tenet of the faith or a mandate of life.

Thus, in the Bible as we have it (and as it is conveyed to us through faithful translations) we do have for practical purposes the very Word of God, inasmuch as the manuscripts do convey to us the complete vital truth of the originals. By practicing the science of textual criticism - comparing all the available manuscripts with each other - we can come to an assurance regarding what the original document must have said.

Let us suppose we have five manuscript copies of an original document that no longer exists. Each of the manuscript copies are different. Our goal is to compare the manuscript copies and ascertain what the original must have said. Here are the five copies:

Manuscript #1: Jesus Christ is the Savior of the whole *worl*.

Manuscript #2: Christ Jesus is the Savior of the whole world.

Manuscript #3: Jesus Christ s the Savior of the whole world.

Manuscript #4: Jesus Christ is *th* Savior of the *whle* world.

Manuscript #5: Jesus Christ is the Savor of the whole *wrld*.

Could you, by comparing the manuscript copies, ascertain what the original document said with a high degree of certainty that you are correct? Of course you could. This illustration may be extremely simplistic, but a great majority of the **150,000 variants** are solved by the above methodology. By comparing the various manuscripts, all of which contain very minor differences like the above, it becomes fairly clear what the original must have said. Most of the manuscript variations concern matters of spelling, word order, tenses, and the like; no single doctrine is affected by them in any way. We must also emphasize that the sheer volume of manuscripts we possess greatly narrows the margin of doubt regarding what the original biblical document said. If the number of [manuscripts] increases the number of scribal errors, it increases proportionately the means of correcting such errors, so that the margin of doubt left in the process of recovering the exact original wording is not so large as might be feared; it is in truth remarkably small.

The New Testament Versus Other Ancient Books

By comparing the manuscript support for the Bible with manuscript support for other ancient documents and books, it becomes overwhelmingly clear that no other ancient piece of literature can stand up to the Bible. Manuscript support for the Bible is unparalleled! There are more [New Testament] manuscripts copied with greater accuracy and earlier dating than for any secular classic from antiquity.

Rene Pache adds, "The historical books of antiquity have a documentation infinitely less solid."

Dr. Benjamin Warfield concludes, "If we compare the present state of the text of the New Testament with that of no matter what other ancient work, we must...declare it marvelously exact."

Norman Geisler makes several key observations for our consideration:

No other book is even a close second to the Bible on either the number or early dating of the copies. The average secular work from antiquity survives on only a handful of manuscripts; the New Testament boasts thousands.

The average gap between the original composition and the earliest copy is over 1,000 years for other books.

The New Testament, however, has a fragment within one generation from its original composition, whole books within about 100 years from the time of the autograph [original manuscript], most of the New Testament in less than 200 years, and the entire New Testament within 250 years from the date of its completion.

The degree of accuracy of the copies is greater for the New Testament than for other books that can be compared. Most books do not survive with enough manuscripts that make comparison possible.

From this documentary evidence, then, it is clear that the New Testament writings are superior to comparable ancient writings. "The records for the New Testament are vastly more abundant, clearly more ancient, and considerably more accurate in their text."

Support for the New Testament from the Church Fathers

As noted at the beginning of this chapter, in addition to the many thousands of New Testament manuscripts, there are over 86,000 quotations of the New Testament in the early church fathers. There are also New Testament quotations in thousands of early church Lectionaries (worship books). There are enough quotations from the early church fathers that even if we did not have a single copy of the Bible, scholars could still reconstruct all but 11 verses of the entire New Testament from material written within 150 to 200 years from the time of Christ.

Manuscript Evidence for the Old Testament

"There is more than sufficient evidence to establish the fact that the Old Testament we have today is an accurate copy of the original. The Jewish men who copied the scriptures knew exactly how many letters were in every line of every book and how many times each word occurred in each book. This enabled them to check for errors.

The first century Roman historian, Flavius Josephus, who was also a Jew, stated: "We have given practical proof of our reverence for our own Scriptures. For although such long ages have now passed, no one has ventured either to add, or to remove, or to alter a syllable; and it is an instinct with every Jew, from the day of his birth, to regard them as the decrees of God, to abide by them, and, if need be, cheerfully to die for them" (*Against Apion*, Book I, sec., 8, p. 158). —**Charlie H. Campbell**

The Dead Sea Scrolls prove the accuracy of the transmission of the Bible. In fact, in these scrolls discovered at Qumran in 1947, we have Old Testament manuscripts that date about a thousand years earlier (150 B.C.) than the other Old Testament manuscripts then in our possession (which dated to A.D. 900).

The significant thing is that when one compares the two sets of manuscripts, it is clear that they are essentially the same, with very few changes.

The fact that manuscripts separated by a thousand years are essentially the same indicates the incredible accuracy of the Old Testament's manuscript transmission.

A full copy of the Book of Isaiah was discovered at Qumran.

Even though the two copies of Isaiah discovered in Qumran Cave 1 near the Dead Sea in 1947 were a thousand years earlier than the oldest dated manuscript previously known (A.D. 980), they proved to be word for word identical with our standard Hebrew Bible in more than 95 percent of the text.

The 5 percent of variation consisted chiefly of obvious slips of the pen and variations in spelling."

From manuscript discoveries like the Dead Sea Scrolls, Christians have undeniable evidence that today's Old Testament Scripture, for all practical purposes, is exactly the same as it was when originally inspired by God and recorded in the Bible. Combine this with the massive amount of manuscript evidence we have for the New Testament, and it is clear that the Christian Bible is a trustworthy and reliable book. The Dead Sea Scrolls prove that the copyists of biblical manuscripts took great care in going about their work. These copyists knew they were duplicating God's Word, so they went to incredible lengths to prevent error from creeping into their work.

The scribes carefully counted every line, word, syllable, and letter to ensure accuracy.

God's Preservation of the Bible

The Westminster Confession declares: "The Old Testament in Hebrew and the New Testament in Greek, being immediately inspired by God and, by His singular care and providence kept pure in all ages, are therefore authentical; so in all controversies of religion, the Church is finally to appeal unto them." The Westminster Confession makes a very important point here.

The fact is, the God who had the power and sovereign control to inspire the Scriptures in the first place is surely going to continue to exercise His power and sovereign control in the preservation of Scripture. Actually, God's preservation work is illustrated in the text of the Bible.

By examining how Christ viewed the Old Testament, we see that He had full confidence that the Scriptures He used had been faithfully preserved through the centuries.

Because Christ raised no doubts about the adequacy of the Scripture as His contemporaries knew them, we can safely assume that the first-century text of the Old Testament was a wholly adequate representation of the divine word originally given.

Jesus regarded the extant copies of His day as so approximate to the originals in their message that He appealed to those copies as authoritative.

The respect that Jesus and His apostles held for the extant Old Testament text is, at base, an expression of the confidence in God's providential preservation of the copies and translations as substantially identical with the inspired originals.

Hence, the Bible itself indicates that copies can faithfully reflect the original text and therefore function authoritatively.

Manuscript evidence for superior New Testament reliability

by Matt Slick

The New Testament is constantly under attack, and its reliability and accuracy are often contested by critics. If the critics want to disregard the New Testament, then they must also disregard other ancient writings by Plato, Aristotle, and Homer. This is because the New Testament documents are better-preserved and more numerous than any other ancient writings. Because they are so numerous, they can be [cross checked](#) for accuracy . . . and they are very consistent.

There are presently 5,686 Greek manuscripts in existence today for the New Testament.¹ If we were to compare the number of New Testament manuscripts to other ancient writings, we find that the New Testament manuscripts far outweigh the others in quantity.²

As you can see, there are thousands more New Testament Greek manuscripts than any other ancient writing. The internal consistency of the New Testament documents is about 99.5% textually pure. That is an amazing accuracy. In addition, there are over 19,000 copies in the Syriac, Latin, Coptic, and Aramaic languages. The total supporting New Testament manuscript base is over 24,000.

Almost all biblical scholars agree that the New Testament documents were all written before the close of the First Century. If Jesus was crucified in A.D. 30., then that means the entire New Testament was completed within 70 years. This is important because it means there were plenty of people around when the New Testament documents were penned--people who could

Important Manuscript Papyri	Contents	Date Original Written	MSS Date	Appr ox. Time Span	Location
p52 (John Rylands Fragment) ³	John 18:31-33, 37-38	circa A.D. 96	circa A.D. 125	29 yrs	John Rylands Library, Manchester, England
P46 (Chester Beatty Papyrus)	Rom. 5:17-6:3, 5-14; 8:15-25, 27-35; 10:1-11, 22, 24-33, 35; 16:1-23, 25-27; Heb.; 1 & 2 Cor., Eph., Gal., Phil., Col.; 1 Thess. 1:1, 9-10; 2:1-3; 5:5-9, 23-28	50's-70's	circa A.D. 200	Appro x. 150 yrs	Chester Beatty Museum, Dublin & Ann Arbor, Michigan, University of Michigan library
P66 (Bodmer Papyrus)	John 1:1-6:11, 35-14:26; fragment of 14:29-21:9	70's	circa A.D. 200	Appro x. 130 yrs	Cologne, Geneva
P67	Matt. 3:9, 15; 5:20-22, 25-28		circa A.D. 200	Appro x. 130 yrs	Barcelona, Fundacion San Lucas Evangelista, P. Barc.1

have contested the writings. In other words, those who wrote the documents knew that if they were inaccurate, plenty of people would have pointed it out. But, we have absolutely no ancient documents contemporary with the First Century that contest the New Testament texts.

Furthermore, another important aspect of this discussion is the fact that we have a fragment of the gospel of John that dates back to around 29 years from the original writing (John Rylands Papyri A.D. 125). This is extremely close to the original writing date. This is simply unheard of in any other ancient writing, and it demonstrates that the Gospel of John is a First Century document.

Below is a chart with some of the oldest extant New Testament manuscripts compared to when they were originally penned. Compare these time spans with the next closest, which is Homer's *Iliad*, where the closest copy from the original is 500 years later. Undoubtedly, that period of time allows for more textual corruption in its transmission. How much less so for the New Testament documents?

If the critics of the [Bible](#) dismiss the New Testament as reliable information, then they must also dismiss the reliability of the writings of Plato, Aristotle, Caesar, Homer, and the other authors mentioned in the chart at the beginning of the paper. On the other hand, if the critics acknowledge the historicity and writings of those other individuals, then they must also retain the historicity and writings of the New Testament authors; after all, the evidence for the New Testament's reliability is far greater than the others. The Christian has substantially superior criteria for affirming the New Testament documents than he does for any other ancient writing. It is good evidence on which to base the trust in the reliability of the New Testament.

1. Norman Geisler & Peter Bocchino, *Unshakeable Foundations*, (Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House Publishers, 2001) p. 256.

2. The above chart was adapted from three sources: 1) *Christian Apologetics*, by Norman Geisler, 1976, p. 307; 2) the article "*Archaeology and History attest to the Reliability of the Bible*," by Richard M. Fales, Ph.D., in *The Evidence Bible*, Compiled by Ray Comfort, Bridge-Logos Publishers, Gainesville, FL, 2001, p. 163; and 3) *A Ready Defense*, by Josh McDowell, 1993, p. 45.

3. "Deissmann was convinced that p52 was written well within the reign of Hadrian (A.D. 117-38) and perhaps even during the time of Trajan (A.D. 98-117)" (Footnote #2 found on pg. 39 of *The Text of the New Testament*, by Bruce M. Metzger, 2nd Ed. 1968, Oxford University Press, NY, NY). Bruce Metzger has authored more than 50 books. He holds two Masters Degrees, a Ph.D. and has been awarded several honorary doctorates. "He is past president of the Society of Biblical Literature, the International Society for New Testament Studies, and the North American Patristic Society." -- From, *The Case for Christ*, by Lee Strobel, Zondervan Publishers, 1998, Grand Rapids, MI: pg. 57.

Manuscript Evidence. There are way more copies of the biblical manuscripts, with remarkable consistency between them, than there are for any of the classics like Plato, Aristotle and Socrates. "There is no body of ancient literature in the world which enjoys such a wealth of good textual attestation as the New Testament." F.F. Bruce, [*The New Testament Documents: Are They Reliable?*](#)

Archaeological Evidence. Again and again archaeological discoveries have verified the accuracy of the historical and cultural references in the Bible. The more they dig, the more it confirms the Bible. "It is important to note that Near Eastern archaeology has demonstrated the historical and geographical reliability of the Bible in many important areas." E.M. Blaiklock, [*The New International Dictionary of Biblical Archaeology*](#).

Eyewitness Accounts. The Bible was written by people who witnessed the events it describes; many were persecuted or martyred but never changed their story. Would you die for something you knew was untrue? "It is no moderate approbation of Scripture that it has been sealed by the blood of so many witnesses, especially when we reflect that they died to render testimony to the faith ...with a firm and constant, yet sober, zeal toward God." John Calvin, [*Institutes of the Christian Religion*](#).

Corroborating Accounts. There are plenty of references in non-biblical sources to the events described in the Bible. The Jewish historian Josephus, born in 37 AD, "provide(s) indispensable background material for the student of...New Testament history. In them, we meet many figures well known to us from the New Testament. Some of his writings provide direct commentary on New Testament references." J.D. Douglas, ed., [*The New Bible Dictionary*](#).

Literary Consistency. The Bible contains 66 books written over 1,500 years by 40 different writers but it tells one "big story" of God's plan of salvation that culminated in Jesus Christ. You can't even pass a secret around a circle of 12 people and get the same message at the end. "There is indeed a wide variety of human authors and themes (in the Bible). Yet behind these...there lies a single divine author with a single unifying theme." John R.W. Stott, [*Understanding the Bible*](#).

Prophetic Consistency. There are over 300 specific prophecies in the Old Testament that are fulfilled in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ in the New Testament. "The very dimension of the sheer fulfillment of prophecy of the Old Testament Scriptures should be enough to convince anyone that we are dealing with a supernatural piece of literature....God has himself planted within the scriptures an internal consistency that bears witness that this is his Word." R.C. Sproul, [*Now That's a Good Question*](#).

Expert Scrutiny. The early church had extremely high standards for what books were judged to be authentic and therefore included in the Bible. A book had to have been written by an Apostle or someone in their immediate circle, had to conform to basic Christian faith and had to be in widespread use among many churches. This was a

careful process of “the people of God in many different places, coming to recognize what other believers elsewhere found to be true”; these writings were truly God’s word. G.J. Wenham, J.A. Motyer, D.A. Carson and R.T. France, [*The New Bible Commentary*](#).

Leader Acceptance. A majority of the greatest leaders and thinkers in history have affirmed the truth and impact of the Bible. “I believe the Bible is the best gift God has ever given man. All the good from the Savior of the world is communicated to us through this book. But for it we could not know right from wrong.” [*Abraham Lincoln*](#).

Global Influence. The Bible has had a greater influence on the laws, art, ethics, music and literature of world civilization than any other book in history. Can you think of one that even comes close? “Christianity”, as set forth in the Bible “is responsible for a disproportionately large number of the humanitarian advances in the history of civilization—in education, medicine, law, the fine arts, working for human rights and even in the natural sciences....” Craig L. Blomberg, in [*Christian Apologetics: A Comprehensive Case for Biblical Faith*](#).

Changed Lives. From St. Augustine to Martin Luther to Joni Eareckson Tada to countless everyday men, women and children, the words of the Bible have transformed lives unmistakably and forever. “As unnamed masses of Christians down through the ages have shown us, the Bible is the most reliable place to turn for finding the key to a life of love and good works.” T.M. Moore, [*The Case for the Bible*](#).

I hope this list helps you become more confident about the Bible. But don’t forget: whenever you have an opportunity to defend God’s Word, be sure to “speak the truth in love” (Eph. 4:15). No one listens to an angry Bible reader. (If I missed any reasons that are important to you, please add them in the comment section below. I’d love to hear from you.)

by Whitney T. Kuniholm

By comparison with secular texts, the manuscript evidence for the New Testament is stunning. The most recent count (1980) shows 5,366 separate Greek manuscripts represented by early fragments, uncial codices (manuscripts in capital Greek letters bound together in book form), and minuscules (small Greek letters in cursive style)! [7]

Among the nearly 3,000 minuscule fragments are 34 complete New Testaments dating from the 9th to the 15th Centuries. [8]

Uncial manuscripts provide virtually complete codices (multiple books of the New Testament bound together into one volume) back to the 4th Century, though some are a bit younger. Codex Sinaiticus, purchased by the British government from the Soviet government at Christmas, 1933, for £100,000, [9] is dated c. 340. [10] The nearly complete Codex Vaticanus is the oldest uncial, dated c. 325-350. [11] Codex Alexandrinus contains the whole Old Testament and a nearly complete New Testament and dates from the late 4th Century to the early 5th Century.

The most fascinating evidence comes from the fragments (as opposed to the codices). The Chester Beatty Papyri contains most of the New Testament and is dated mid-3rd Century.[12] The Bodmer Papyri II collection, whose discovery was announced in 1956, includes the first fourteen chapters of the Gospel of John and much of the last seven chapters. It dates from A.D. 200 or earlier.[13]

The most amazing find of all, however, is a small portion of John 18:31-33, discovered in Egypt known as the John Rylands Papyri. Barely three inches square, it represents the earliest known copy of any part of the New Testament. The papyri is dated on paleographical grounds at around A.D. 117-138 (though it may even be earlier),[14] showing that the Gospel of John was circulated as far away as Egypt within 30 years of its composition.

Keep in mind that most of the papyri are fragmentary. Only about 50 manuscripts contain the entire New Testament, though most of the other manuscripts contain the four Gospels. Even so, the manuscript textual evidence is exceedingly rich, especially when compared to other works of antiquity.

Ancient Versions and Patristic Quotations

Two other cross checks on the accuracy of the manuscripts remain: ancient versions and citations by the early church Fathers known as "patristic quotations."

Early in the history of the Church Greek documents, including the Scriptures, were translated into Latin. By the 3rd and 4th Centuries the New Testament was translated into Coptic, Syriac, Armenian, Georgian, etc. These texts helped missionaries reach new cultures in their own language as the Gospel spread and the Church grew.[15] Translations of the Greek manuscripts (called "versions") help modern-day textual critics answer questions about the underlying Greek manuscripts.

In addition, there are ancient extra-biblical sources--characteristically catechisms, lectionaries, and quotes from the church fathers--that record the Scriptures. Paul Barnett says that the "Scriptures...gave rise to an immense output of early Christian literature which quoted them at length and, in effect, preserved them." [16] Metzger notes the amazing fact that "if all other sources for our knowledge of the text of the New Testament were destroyed, [the patristic quotations] would be sufficient alone for the reconstruction of practically the entire New Testament." [17]

The Verdict

What can we conclude from this evidence? New Testament specialist Daniel Wallace notes that although there are about 300,000 individual variations of the text of the New Testament, this number is very misleading. Most of the differences are completely inconsequential--spelling errors, inverted phrases and the like. A side by side comparison between the two main text families (the Majority Text and the modern critical text) shows agreement a full 98% of the time.[18]

Of the remaining differences, virtually all yield to vigorous textual criticism. This means that our New Testament is 99.5% textually pure. In the entire text of 20,000 lines, only 40 lines are in doubt (about 400 words), and none affects any significant doctrine.[19]

Greek scholar D.A. Carson sums up this way: "The purity of text is of such a substantial nature that nothing we believe to be true, and nothing we are commanded to do, is in any way jeopardized by the variants." [20]

This issue is no longer contested by non-Christian scholars, and for good reason. Simply put, if we reject the authenticity of the New Testament on textual grounds we'd have to reject every ancient work of antiquity and declare null and void every piece of historical information from written sources prior to the beginning of the second millennium A.D.

Has the New Testament been altered? Critical, academic analysis says it has not.

Histories	Oldest Manuscripts	Number Surviving
Livy 59 B.C.–A.D. 17	4th century	27
Tacitus A.D. 56–120	9th century	3
Suetonius A.D. 69–140	9th century	200+
Thucydides 460–400 B.C.	1st century A.D.	20
Herodotus 484–425 B.C.	1st century A.D.	75
New Testament	c. 100–150	c. 5,700 (counting only Greek manuscripts) (plus more than 10,000 in Latin, more than a million quotations from the church fathers, etc.)

The first assumption is that the transmission is more or less linear, as in the telephone example—one person communicating to a second who communicates with a third, etc. In a linear paradigm people are left with one message and many generations between it and the original. Second, the telephone game example depends on oral transmission which is more easily distorted and misconstrued than something written.

Neither assumption applies to the written text of the New Testament. First, the transmission was not linear but geometric—e.g., one letter birthed five copies which became 25 which became 200 and so on. Secondly, the transmission in question was done in writing, and written manuscripts can be tested in a way that oral communications cannot be.

Reconstructing Aunt Sally's Letter

Let me illustrate how such a test can be made. It will help you to see how scholars can confidently reconstruct the text from existing manuscript copies even though the copies themselves have differences and are much older than the autograph (i.e., the original). Pretend your Aunt Sally has a dream in which she learns the recipe for an elixir that would continuously maintain her youth. When she wakes up, she scribbles the directions on a scrap of paper, then runs into the kitchen to make up her first glass. In a few days her appearance is transformed. Sally is a picture of radiant youth because of her daily dose of what comes to be known as "Aunt Sally's Secret Sauce."

Sally is so excited she sends hand-written instructions to her three bridge partners (Aunt Sally is still in the technological dark ages--no photocopier) giving detailed instructions on how to make the sauce. They, in turn, make copies which each sends to ten of her own friends. All is going well until one day Aunt Sally's pet schnauzer eats the original copy of the recipe. Sally is beside herself. In a panic she contacts her three friends who have mysteriously suffered similar mishaps. Their copies are gone, too, so the alarm goes out to their friends in attempt to recover the original wording.

They finally round up all the surviving hand-written copies, twenty-six in all. When they spread them out on the kitchen table, they immediately notice some differences. Twenty-three of the copies are exactly the same. One has a misspelled word, though, one has two phrases inverted ("mix then chop" instead of "chop then mix") and one includes an ingredient that none of the others has on its list.

Here is the critical question: Do you think Aunt Sally can accurately reconstruct her original recipe? Of course she could. The misspelled words can easily be corrected, the single inverted phrase can be repaired, and the extra ingredient can be ignored.

Even with more numerous or more diverse variations, the original can still be reconstructed with a high level of confidence given the right textual evidence. The misspellings would be obvious errors, the inversions would stand out and easily be restored, and the conclusion drawn that it's more plausible that one word or sentence be accidentally added to a single copy than omitted from many.

This, in simplified form, is how the science of textual criticism works. Textual critics are academics who reconstruct a missing original from existing manuscripts that are generations removed from the autograph. According to New Testament scholar F.F. Bruce, "Its object [is] to determine as exactly as possible from the available evidence the original words of the documents in question."^[2]

The science of textual criticism is used to test all documents of antiquity--not just religious texts--including historical and literary writings. It's not a theological enterprise based on haphazard hopes and guesses; it's a linguistic exercise that follows a set of established rules. Textual criticism allows an alert critic to determine the extent of possible corruption of any work.

How Many and How Old?

The ability of any scholar to do effective textual criticism depends on two factors. First, how many existing copies are there to examine and compare? Are there two copies, ten, a hundred? The more copies there are, the easier it is to make meaningful comparisons. Second, how close in time are the oldest existing documents to the original?

If the numbers are few and the time gap is wide, the original is harder to reconstruct with confidence. However, if there are many copies and the oldest existing copies are reasonably close in time to the original, the textual critic can be more confident he's pinpointed the exact wording of the autograph.

To get an idea of the significance of the New Testament manuscript evidence, note for a moment the record for non-biblical texts. These are secular texts from antiquity that have been reconstructed with a high degree of certainty based on the available textual evidence.

The important First Century document *The Jewish War*, by Jewish aristocrat and historian Josephus, survives in only nine complete manuscripts dating from the 5th Century--four

centuries after they were written.[3] Tacitus' Annals of Imperial Rome is one of the chief historical sources for the Roman world of New Testament times, yet, surprisingly, it survives in partial form in only two manuscripts dating from the Middle Ages.[4] Thucydides' History survives in eight copies. There are 10 copies of Caesar's Gallic Wars, eight copies of Herodotus' History, and seven copies of Plato, all dated over a millennium from the original. Homer's Iliad has the most impressive manuscript evidence for any secular work with 647 existing copies.[5]

Bruce's comments put the discussion in perspective: "No classical scholar would listen to an argument that the authenticity of Herodotus or Thucydides is in doubt because the earliest manuscripts of their works which are of any use to us are over 1300 years later than the originals." [6]

For most documents of antiquity only a handful of manuscripts exist, some facing a time gap of 800-2000 years or more. Yet scholars are confident of reconstructing the originals with some significant degree of accuracy. In fact, virtually all of our knowledge of ancient history depends on documents like these.

The Biblical Manuscript Evidence

By comparison with secular texts, the manuscript evidence for the New Testament is stunning. The most recent count (1980) shows 5,366 separate Greek manuscripts represented by early fragments, uncial codices (manuscripts in capital Greek letters bound together in book form), and minuscules (small Greek letters in cursive style)! [7]

Among the nearly 3,000 minuscule fragments are 34 complete New Testaments dating from the 9th to the 15th Centuries. [8]

Uncial manuscripts provide virtually complete codices (multiple books of the New Testament bound together into one volume) back to the 4th Century, though some are a bit younger. Codex Sinaiticus, purchased by the British government from the Soviet government at Christmas, 1933, for £100,000, [9] is dated c. 340. [10] The nearly complete Codex Vaticanus is the oldest uncial, dated c. 325-350. [11] Codex Alexandrinus contains the whole Old Testament and a nearly complete New Testament and dates from the late 4th Century to the early 5th Century.

The most fascinating evidence comes from the fragments (as opposed to the codices). The Chester Beatty Papyri contains most of the New Testament and is dated mid-3rd Century. [12] The Bodmer Papyri II collection, whose discovery was announced in 1956, includes the first fourteen chapters of the Gospel of John and much of the last seven chapters. It dates from A.D. 200 or earlier. [13]

The most amazing find of all, however, is a small portion of John 18:31-33, discovered in Egypt known as the John Rylands Papyri. Barely three inches square, it represents the earliest known copy of any part of the New Testament. The papyri is dated on paleographical grounds at around A.D. 117-138 (though it may even be earlier), [14] showing that the Gospel of John was circulated as far away as Egypt within 30 years of its composition.

Keep in mind that most of the papyri are fragmentary. Only about 50 manuscripts contain the entire New Testament, though most of the other manuscripts contain the four Gospels. Even so, the manuscript textual evidence is exceedingly rich, especially when compared to other works of antiquity.

Ancient Versions and Patristic Quotations

Two other cross checks on the accuracy of the manuscripts remain: ancient versions and citations by the early church Fathers known as "patristic quotations."

Early in the history of the Church Greek documents, including the Scriptures, were translated into Latin. By the 3rd and 4th Centuries the New Testament was translated into Coptic, Syriac, Armenian, Georgian, etc. These texts helped missionaries reach new cultures in their own language as the Gospel spread and the Church grew.^[15] Translations of the Greek manuscripts (called "versions") help modern-day textual critics answer questions about the underlying Greek manuscripts.

In addition, there are ancient extra-biblical sources--characteristically catechisms, lectionaries, and quotes from the church fathers--that record the Scriptures. Paul Barnett says that the "Scriptures...gave rise to an immense output of early Christian literature which quoted them at length and, in effect, preserved them."^[16]

The Verdict

What can we conclude from this evidence? New Testament specialist Daniel Wallace notes that although there are about 300,000 individual variations of the text of the New Testament, this number is very misleading. Most of the differences are completely inconsequential--spelling errors, inverted phrases and the like. A side by side comparison between the two main text families (the Majority Text and the modern critical text) shows agreement a full 98% of the time.^[18]

Of the remaining differences, virtually all yield to vigorous textual criticism. This means that our New Testament is 99.5% textually pure. In the entire text of 20,000 lines, only 40 lines are in doubt (about 400 words), and none affects any significant doctrine.^[19]

Greek scholar D.A. Carson sums up this way: "The purity of text is of such a substantial nature that nothing we believe to be true, and nothing we are commanded to do, is in any way jeopardized by the variants."^[20]

This issue is no longer contested by non-Christian scholars, and for good reason. Simply put, if we reject the authenticity of the New Testament on textual grounds we'd have to reject every ancient work of antiquity and declare null and void every piece of historical information from written sources prior to the beginning of the second millennium A.D.

Has the New Testament been altered? Critical, academic analysis says it has not.

[1] Larry King with Shirley MacLaine, spring 1989.

[2] Bruce, F. F., *The New Testament Documents: Are They Reliable?* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974), 19.

[3] Barnett, Paul, *Is the New Testament History?* (Ann Arbor: Vine Books, 1986), 45.

[4] Geisler, Norman L., Nix, William E., *A General Introduction to the Bible* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1986), 405. Note: Bruce records two existing copies of this document (p. 16) but Barnett claims there's only one (p. 45) and that single copy exists in partial form. To be conservative, I've cited Geisler & Nix's statistics.

[5] Metzger, Bruce M., *The Text of the New Testament* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1968), 34. This number consists of 457 papyri, 2 uncials and 188 minuscule manuscripts.

[6] Bruce, 16-17.

[7] Geisler & Nix, 402.

[8] Ibid.

[9] Metzger, 45.

- [10] Geisler & Nix, 392.
[11] Ibid., 391.
[12] Ibid., 389-390.
[13] Metzger, 39-40.
[14] Geisler & Nix, 388.
[15] Barnett, 44.
[16] Ibid., p. 46-47.
[17] Metzger, 86.
[18] Wallace, Daniel, "The Majority Text and the Original Text: Are They Identical?,"
Bibliotheca Sacra, April-June, 1991, 157-8.
[19] Geisler and Nix, 475.
[20] Carson, D.A., The King James Version Debate (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1979), 56.

"The Bible towers in content above all earlier religious literature; and it towers just as impressively over all subsequent literature in the direct simplicity of its message and...its appeal to men of all lands and times." –**W. F. Albright** (Quoted by Don Stewart, *The Ten Wonders of the Bible*, 1990, p. 24)

ARCHAEOLOGY:

"There are dozens of writings outside of the Bible that verify the historical accuracy of many of the names of people, places, and events mentioned in the Bible. In fact, external sources verify that at least eighty persons mentioned in the Bible were actual historical figures. Fifty people from the Old Testament, and thirty people from the New Testament." –**Charlie H. Campbell**

QUOTES ON THE BIBLE'S IMPECCABLE AND MIRACULOUS RELIABILITY

"Archaeologists and other scholars have long probed the hemisphere's past, and the Society does not know of anything found so far that has substantiated the Book of Mormon."
–**The National Geographic Society**

"The evidence for our New Testament writings is ever so much greater than the evidence for many writings of classical authors, the authenticity of which no one dreams of questioning. And if the New Testament were a collection of secular writings, their authenticity would generally be regarded as beyond all doubt." – **F.F. Bruce**

"The Bible is like a telescope. If a man looks through his telescope, then he sees the worlds beyond; but if he looks at his telescope, then he does not see anything but that. The Bible is a thing to be looked through, to see that which is beyond; but most people only look at it; and so they see only the dead letter." – **Phillips Brooks**

"Many people are being persuaded that they cannot be considered intelligent or well educated if they insist on the doctrine of the verbal inspiration of the Book. Let me say to you that truth has always lived with the minority; what the majority says at a given moment is usually wrong. The crowd one day cried, "Crucify him," and the whole world united to murder the Son of God, because in their ignorance they knew Him not." –**Alan Redpath**, *Victorious Christian Service: Studies in the Book of Nehemiah*, p. 113.

“There are dozens of writings outside of the Bible that verify the historical accuracy of many of the names of people, places, and events mentioned in the Bible. In fact, external sources verify that at least eighty persons mentioned in the Bible were actual historical figures. Fifty people from the Old Testament, and thirty people from the New Testament.” –**Charlie H. Campbell**
“I have a fundamental belief in the Bible as the Word of God, written by those who were inspired. I study the Bible daily.” –**Isaac Newton**

“The Bible's historical accuracy is a reminder that while “the heavens declare the glory of God,” there’s also plenty of evidence among the rubble and ruins.” –**Charles Colson**

“All I am in private life is a literary critic and historian, that's my job...And I'm prepared to say on that basis if anyone thinks the Gospels are either legends or novels, then that person is simply showing his incompetence as a literary critic. I've read a great many novels and I know a fair amount about the legends that grew up among early people, and I know perfectly well the Gospels are not that kind of stuff.” –**C. S. Lewis**

“Holy Scripture could never lie or err...its decrees are of absolute and inviolable truth.” –
Galileo Galilei

"I feel no hesitation in avowing, that I believe in the plenary inspiration of every word of the original text of Holy Scripture. I hold not only that the Bible contains the Word of God, but that every jot of it was written, or brought together, by Divine inspiration, and is the Word of God. I entirely disagree with those who maintain that the writers of the Bible were partially inspired, or inspired to such a limited extent that discrepancies, inaccuracies, and contradictions to the facts of science and history, must be expected and do exist in their writings. I utterly repudiate such a theory. I consider that it practically destroys the whole value of God's Word, puts a sword in the hand of infidels and sceptics, and raises far more serious difficulties than it pretends to solve."–**J.C. Ryle** (1816-1900)

“To talk of comparing the Bible with other "sacred books" so called, such as the Koran...or the book of Mormon, is positively absurd. You might as well compare the sun with a rushlight, or Skiddaw with a molehill, or St. Paul's with an Irish hovel, or the Portland vase with a garden pot, or the Kohinoor diamond with a bit of glass. God seems to have allowed the existence of these pretended revelations, in order to prove the immeasurable superiority of His own Word.”
–**J.C. Ryle** (1816-1900)

“I was brought up to believe that the Bible was the Word of God. In early life I accepted it as such upon the authority of my parents, and never gave the question any serious thought. But later in life my faith in the Bible was utterly shattered through the influence of the writings of a very celebrated, scholarly and brilliant skeptic. I found myself face to face with the question, *Why* do you believe the Bible is the Word of God? I had no satisfactory answer. I determined to go to the bottom of this question. If satisfactory proof could not be found that the Bible was God's Word I would give the whole thing up, cost what it might. If satisfactory proof could be found that the Bible was God's Word I would take my stand upon it, cost what it might. I doubtless had many friends who could have answered the question satisfactorily, but I was unwilling to confide to them the struggle that was going on in my own heart; so I sought help from God and from books, and after much painful study and thought came out of the darkness of skepticism into the broad daylight of faith and certainty that the Bible from beginning to end is God's Word.” –**R. A. Torrey**

“The Bible towers in content above all earlier religious literature; and it towers just as impressively over all subsequent literature in the direct simplicity of its message and...its appeal to men of all lands and times.” –**W. F. Albright** (Quoted by Don Stewart, *The Ten Wonders of the Bible*, 1990, p. 24)

“Born in the East and clothed in Oriental form and imagery, the Bible walks the ways of all the world with familiar feet and enters land after land to find its own everywhere. It has learned to speak in hundreds of languages to the heart of man. Children listen to its stories with wonder and delight, and wise men at its warnings, but to the wounded and penitent it has a mother’s voice. It has woven itself into our dearest dreams; so that love, friendship, sympathy, devotion, memory, hope, put on the beautiful garments of its treasured speech. No man is poor or desolate who has this treasure for his own. When the landscape darkens, and the trembling pilgrim comes to the Valley of the Shadow, he is not afraid to enter; he takes the rod and staff of Scripture in his hand; he says to friend and comrade, ‘Goodbye; we shall meet again’; and confronted by that support, he goes toward the lonely pass as one who walks through darkness into light.” –**Henry Van Dyke** (Quoted by Don Stewart, *The Ten Wonders of the Bible*, 1990, p. 9)

“It’s natural to be skeptical of a story like Noah. However, the greatest miracle in the Bible is not Noah and the flood. The greatest miracle in the Bible is recorded in the first verse: “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” If that miracle is true, then every miracle in the Bible is at least possible (including Noah’s Ark). If God created the universe, then He can do whatever He wants inside it.” –**Frank Turek**

“Is the Bible the Word of God? Then let us all resolve from this day forward to prize the Bible more. Let us not fear being idolaters of this blessed book. Men may easily make an idol of the Church, of ministers, of sacraments, or of intellect. Men cannot make an idol of the Word. Let us regard all who would damage the authority of the Bible, or impugn its credit, as spiritual robbers. We are traveling through a wilderness: they rob us of our only guide. We are voyaging over a stormy sea: they rob us of our only compass. We are toiling over a weary road: they pluck our staff out of our hands. And what do these spiritual robbers give us in place of the Bible? What do they offer as a safer guide and better provision for our souls? Nothing! absolutely nothing! Big swelling words! Empty promises of new light! High sounding jargon; but nothing substantial and real! They would fain take from us the bread of life, and they do not give us in its place so much as a stone. Let us turn a deaf ear to them. Let us firmly grasp and prize the Bible more and more, the more it is assaulted....God has given us the Bible to be a light to guide us to everlasting life. Let us not neglect this precious gift. Let us read it diligently, walk in its light, and we shall be saved.” –**J.C. Ryle** (1816-1900)

“There are six women with that name “Mary” in the pages of the New Testament. There are so many Mary’s in the New Testament, it can be challenging keeping them all straight. By the way, this is another somewhat odd indicator that the authors of the New Testament were not making up a fictional story. Who in their right mind, if they were writing a work of fiction, would use the same first name for six different characters? That would be ludicrous. No one would do that. The disciples, because they were writing a non-fictional historical account, recorded the way things really were. They were dealing with cold, honest facts. So they said, ‘There are six Mary’s, and so that is what we’re going to call them. “Mary.”’ Confusing? Somewhat. True? Yes.” –**Charlie H. Campbell**, in response to the *The Jesus Family Tomb*.

"The fact that the first three Gospels were written prior to the fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 and the Gospel of John not long thereafter, makes impossible the attempt of liberal Bible critics and secularists to argue that they are the product of a developing oral tradition in which the early church modified Jesus' life and teachings." —**John Warwick Montgomery**, *If God Made the Universe, Who Made God?*, p. 59

"The New Testament books did not become authoritative for the Church because they were formally included in a canonical list; on the contrary, the Church included them in her canon because she already regarded them as divinely inspired." —**F.F. Bruce**

BIBLE, ALLEGED ERRORS & CONTRADICTIONS

"Men do not reject the Bible because it contradicts itself, but because it contradicts them." —**E. Paul Hovey**

"I have said many times that if you want to look very wise in the world's eyes and are willing to risk looking foolish years from now, you can make a reputation for yourself by pointing out the "errors" in the Bible. There are always facts we do not know and things we fail to understand, so it will always be possible to point to certain items and say that they are errors. But these things tend to become explained. As time passes and the data from archaeology, historical investigations, numismatics, and other disciplines accumulate, these alleged "errors" tend to explode in the faces of those who propound them, and the position of these who have taken their stand upon the historical accuracy and inerrancy of this book is vindicated. The Bible is seen to be more reliable, not less reliable, as time passes." —**James Montgomery Boice**, *Daniel: An Expositional Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2003), 60.

"While many have doubted the accuracy of the Bible, time and continued research have consistently demonstrated that the Word of God is better informed than its critics. In fact, while thousands of finds from the ancient world support in broad outline and often in detail the biblical picture, not one incontrovertible find has ever contradicted the Bible." —**Norman Geisler**, *Baker Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics*

"In my experience when critics raise these objections, they invariably violate one of seventeen principles for interpreting the Scriptures....For example, assuming the unexplained is unexplainable....failing to understand the context of the passage....assuming a partial report is a false report....neglecting to interpret difficult passages in light of clear ones; basing a teaching on an obscure passage; forgetting that the Bible uses nontechnical, everyday language; failing to remember the Bible uses different literary devices..." —**Norman Geisler**

BIBLE, EXTRABIBLICAL TESTIMONY

"According to some of the church fathers, the supernatural darkness that accompanied the crucifixion was noticed throughout the world at the time. Tertullian mentioned this event in his *Apologeticum*, a defense of Christianity written to pagan skeptics: "At the moment of Christ's death, the light departed from the sun, and the land was darkened at noonday, which wonder is related in your own annals and is preserved in your archives to this day." —**John MacArthur**

“There exists no document from the ancient world witnessed by so excellent a set of textual and historical testimonies, and offering so superb an array of historical data on which the intelligent decision may be made. An honest [person] cannot dismiss a source of this kind. Skepticism regarding the historical credentials of Christianity is based upon an irrational bias.”
—**Dr. Clark Pinnock**, *Skeptics Who Demanded a Verdict*, Josh McDowell, p. 84.
Click here to read **more about extrabiblical evidence** for the Bible.

BIBLE, FULFILLED PROPHECIES

“No other book in the world is able to substantiate its claims with this kind of supernatural ability to rightly foretell human events. There are no fulfilled prophecies in the Quran, the Hindu Vedas, the Book of Mormon, or any other sacred religious writings. Not one. Fulfilled prophecy is something that sets the Bible apart from every other religious book.” —**Charlie H. Campbell**
“The Old Testament contains over 300 references to the Messiah that were fulfilled in Jesus Christ. Computations using the science of probability on just 8 of these prophecies show the chance that someone could have fulfilled all 8 prophecies is 10 (to the 17th power), or 1 in 100 quadrillion.” —**Fritz Ridenour**, *So What’s the Difference?*, p. 28.

BIBLE, MANUSCRIPT EVIDENCE FOR

“There is more than sufficient evidence to establish the fact that the Old Testament we have today is an accurate copy of the original. The Jewish men who copied the scriptures knew exactly how many letters were in every line of every book and how many times each word occurred in each book. This enabled them to check for errors. The first century Roman historian, Flavius Josephus, who was also a Jew, stated: “We have given practical proof of our reverence for our own Scriptures. For although such long ages have now passed, no one has ventured either to add, or to remove, or to alter a syllable; and it is an instinct with every Jew, from the day of his birth, to regard them as the decrees of God, to abide by them, and, if need be, cheerfully to die for them” (*Against Apion*, Book I, sec., 8, p. 158). —**Charlie H. Campbell**

“The popular belief that the text of the Bible has not been accurately preserved, can be disproved by the manuscript evidence and a comparison of what the Bible says today with what the early church fathers quoted it as saying back in the earliest centuries of church history.” —**Charlie H. Campbell**

“Today there survives more than 25,000 partial and complete, ancient handwritten manuscript copies of the New Testament. These hand written manuscripts have allowed scholars and textual critics to go back and verify that the Bible we have in our possession today is the same Bible that the early church possessed 2,000 years ago.” —**Charlie H. Campbell**

BIBLE, POWER TO CHANGE LIVES

“The simple record of these three short years of active life has done more to regenerate and soften mankind than all the discourses of philosophers and all the exhortations of moralists.”
—**William Lecky**, one of Great Britain’s most noted historians and a dedicated opponent of organized Christianity writing about Jesus’ ministry, *Skeptics Who Demanded a Verdict*, Josh McDowell, p. 87

“My father’s life was changed right before my eyes [when he trusted Christ]. It was like someone reached down and switched on a light inside him. He touched alcohol only once after that. He got the drink only as far as his lips and that was it—after forty years of drinking! He didn’t need it any more. Fourteen months later, he died from complications of his alcoholism.

But in that fourteen-month period over a hundred people in the area around my tiny hometown committed their lives to Jesus Christ because of the change they saw in the town drunk, my dad.”

—**Josh McDowell**, *The New Evidence that Demands a Verdict*, xxvii.

BIBLE, SCIENTIFIC ACCURACY AND FORSIGHT

“One of the things that sets the Bible apart from all other ancient religious writings is its scientific accuracy. Without exception, every other ancient religious writing contains certain scientific errors. For example, Muhammad taught in the Qur’an that the sun descends down into a muddy spring. The Hindu Vedas state that the Earth is flat and triangular, that earthquakes are caused by elephants shaking themselves under it. You’ll never read absurd statements like those in the Bible.” —**Charlie H. Campbell**

“It’s ironic that Isaac Newton, discoverer of the laws of motion that were later used by others to attempt to contradict parts of the Bible, was one of its greatest defenders. He wrote several papers supporting the accuracy of the text and spoke out against the Biblical critics of his day.” —**Ralph O. Muncaster**, *The Bible: Scientific Insights*, p. 20.

“A well-known scientist, a very decorated scientist named Herbert Spencer died in 1903. In his scientific career he had become noted for one great discovery, it was a categorical contribution that he made. He discovered that all reality, all reality, all that exists in the universe can be contained in five categories: time, force, action, space and matter. Herbert Spencer said everything that exists, exists in one of those categories: time, force, action, space and matter. Nothing exists outside of those categories. That was a very astute discovery and didn’t come until the nineteenth century. Now think about that. Spencer even listed them in that order: time, force, action, space and matter. That is a logical sequence. And then with that in your mind, listen to **Genesis 1:1**. “In the beginning [that’s time], God [that’s force] created [that’s action] the heavens [that’s space] and the earth [that’s matter].” In the first verse of the Bible God said plainly what man didn’t catalog until the nineteenth century. Everything that could be said about everything that exists is said in that first verse.” —**John MacArthur**

“For the scientist who has lived by his faith in the power of reason, the story ends like a bad dream. He has scaled the mountains of ignorance; he is about to conquer the highest peak; as he pulls himself over the final rock, he is greeted by a band of theologians who have been sitting there for centuries.” —**Robert Jastrow**, agnostic astronomer, and founder of NASA’s Goddard institute for Space Studies