

The Bible... Is it true?

The Bible has been called the greatest book ever written, containing the greatest story ever told, about the greatest person who ever lived. **Forty independent writers** wrote in **three different languages** (Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek) on **three different continents** (Africa, Asia, and Europe) thousands of miles apart **over a time span of 1,500 years**. These diverse writers produced a book which, in all its parts, is pervaded by one spirit, one doctrine, and one design. It is amazing that with such diversity, there is such unity in the Bible.

The Bible itself claims to be the very Word of God. Old Testament writers refer to what they wrote as the very words of God over 3,800 times. New Testament writers quote from 34 of the 39 Old Testament books over 320 times and refer to the Old Testament at least 1,000 times. The New Testament writers also repeatedly claim divine inspiration as did the Old Testament writers. Jesus himself quoted from 24 different Old Testament books. On several occasions Jesus rebuked certain Jews for not reading or knowing the Scriptures.

2Timothy 3:16 declares, "all scripture is God breathed." When we speak of the inspiration of the Scriptures we are talking about the process that God used to convey His message. In fact, the Greek word for "inspiration" (theopneustos) literally means "God-breathed." The authors of the Bible claimed that they were not writing of themselves or to glorify themselves, but that they were writing the words of God himself. One can see that they were all lead to write in a cohesive and consistent pattern that shows that the Bible was recorded by man but inspired by God himself.

Many people assume that the Bible has been translated and mistranslated so many times over the years that we can't trust it anymore. **That is just not true!** This is a common misconception. Some people think that the Bible was written in one language, translated to another language, then translated into yet another and so on until it was finally translated into English. The fact is, that the Bible has not been rewritten.

Through the centuries, God has preserved literally thousands of copies and fragments of initial manuscripts with only minor, insignificant mistakes made by scribes over the years. The New Testament has over 5,000 supporting Greek manuscripts existing today with another 20,000 manuscripts in other languages. Some of the manuscript evidence dates to within 50 years of the original writings.

The Bible is 98½ percent textually pure. This means that through all the copying of the Biblical manuscripts of the entire Bible, only 1½ percent has any question about it. Nothing in all of the ancient writings of the entire world even approaches the accuracy of transmission found in the biblical documents. The 1½ percent that is in question does not affect doctrine. The areas of interest are called variants and they consist mainly in variations of wording and spelling.

The Septuagint, a Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament created around 250 BC, attests to the reliability and consistency of the Old Testament when it is compared to existing Hebrew manuscripts.

The Dead Sea Scrolls, discovered in 1947, also verify the reliability of the Old Testament manuscripts. The Dead Sea scrolls contained Old Testament documents dating 1,000 years earlier. A comparison between the Masoretic Text manuscript and the scrolls revealed an incredible accuracy of transmission through 1,000 years of copying, so much so that critics were silenced. No other ancient writing can boast of having copies so close to the original time of writing. With the Bible, the difference is about 50 years. With Plato and Homer, for example, the difference is measured in hundreds of years.

So when we translate the Bible, we do not translate from a translation of a translation of a translation. We translate from the original language into our language. It is one step, not a series of steps that leads to corruption.

The Bible is historically accurate. External evidence from both archaeology and non-Christian writers confirms that the Bible--both Old and New Testaments--is a trustworthy historical document. Archaeology has confirmed countless passages which had been rejected by critics as unhistorical or contrary to known facts. It may be stated categorically that no archaeological discovery has ever controverted a biblical reference. Scores of archeological findings have been made which confirm in clear outline or exact detail historical statements in the Bible.

As for the New Testament, within 110 years of Christ's crucifixion, approximately eighteen non-Christian sources mention more than one hundred facts, beliefs, and teachings from the life of Christ and early Christendom. These items mention almost every major detail of Jesus' life, including miracles, the Resurrection, and His claims to deity.

The historical evidence clearly shows that the Bible is a reliable historical document. Since the Bible can be trusted in areas that we can check (its history), then this gives us a reason to trust it in areas that we cannot check (its claims for inspiration).

Is the Bible full of fulfilled prophecy or phony prediction? The Bible actually anticipates our need for such unique authentication and provides its own means of authentication via the phenomenon of fulfilled prophecy.

The Old Testament prophets made hundreds of predictions about the coming Messiah, most of which were beyond anyone's power to deliberately fulfill, or beyond anyone's desire to fulfill unless they were the Messiah. For instance the mode of Jesus' execution by crucifixion was predicted several centuries before crucifixion was even invented! (Ps. 22:1-18)

The odds of Jesus fulfilling only 48 of the 61 major prophecies concerning Him are 1 in 10^{157} ; that is a one with 157 zeros behind it. By comparison, the estimated number of electrons in the entire known universe is about 10^{79} ; that is a one with 79 zeros behind it.

Peter Stoner, a scientist in the area of mathematical probabilities, said in his book "Science Speaks" that if we take just eight of the Old Testament prophecies Jesus Christ fulfilled, we find that the probability of their coming to pass is one in 10^{17} . He illustrates that staggering amount this way:

We take 10^{17} silver dollars and lay them on the face of Texas. They will cover all of the state two feet deep. Now, place a mark on one of these silver dollars and stir the whole mass thoroughly. Blindfold a man and tell him he must pick up just one silver dollar. What chance would he have of picking up the marked one? The same chance that the prophets would have had of writing these eight prophecies and having them come true in any one person, 1 in 10^{17} . Jesus fulfilled hundreds more than just eight prophecies!

The historical evidence shows that the Bible can be trusted. The commonly held idea that the Bible is unreliable or "just a myth" is unfounded. The internal evidence reveals the uniqueness of the Bible, a uniqueness which would be difficult to explain if it was just a human book. These tests give credibility to the Bible's internal claims to be the word of God. The testimony of predictive prophecy, however, takes us a step further and confirms the Bible's claims to be inspired by God. Finally, the Bible has not been changed through the ages. **Since the evidence shows that there is no reason not to believe the Bible...why not read it?!**

"It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.'" Matthew 4:4