



IS THE BIBLE ✕ RELIABLE?

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ISBN 13: 978-1-61754-009-7

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CAN WE TRUST THE BIBLE?

A BRIEF BACKGROUND ON THE BIBLE

SO WHAT IS SO SPECIAL ABOUT THAT BIBLE ON YOUR BOOKSHELF? WELL, IF YOU WEREN'T AWARE, THE FACT IS, IT LITERALLY CONTAINS THE SPOKEN WORDS OF THE CREATOR OF THE UNIVERSE. YEAH, THAT'S RIGHT, THE BIBLE IS NOT JUST ANY BOOK; IT IS AN INCREDIBLE BOOK! NOT ONLY IS THE BIBLE THE WORD OF GOD IN WRITTEN FORM, BUT IT IS ALSO THE BEST-SELLING, MOST QUOTED, MOST PUBLISHED, MOST CIRCULATED, MOST TRANSLATED, AND MOST INFLUENTIAL BOOK IN THE HISTORY OF MANKIND. DESPITE THESE OUTSTANDING FACTS CONCERNING THE IMPACT THAT THE BIBLE HAS HAD ON INDIVIDUALS AROUND THE GLOBE, MANY PEOPLE TODAY ACTUALLY HAVE NO CONCEPT OF WHAT THE BIBLE IS. BECAUSE OF THIS LACK OF KNOWLEDGE CONCERNING THE BIBLE IN THE WORLD AROUND US, THIS BOOKLET WILL COVER TWO MAIN AREAS: WHAT IS THE BIBLE? AND, HOW WAS THE BIBLE ACQUIRED?

WHAT IS THE BIBLE?

The Bible is the canon of Scripture. Canon means the standard or rule of sacred writings. It's the law and decree from God, meaning it is God's standard and rule given to man. The canon of Scripture (the Bible) has been accepted by the church as the divinely-inspired Word of God.

The Bible is a compilation of 66 books with more than 40 different authors. It has been separated into two sections. The first part of the Bible contains 39 books that make up

the Old Testament. And the second part contains 27 books that make up the New Testament. Overall, the Bible was written over the course of approximately 1,500 years, and was written in three different languages: Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek.

The interesting thing about the Bible is that it is consistent through and through. The majority of the Old Testament authors never knew each other, while the New Testament authors did. Yet all their writings come together to compile one consistent story. The Bible is a unique and important book because it was a direct gift to humankind from the Creator. Within its pages, there is found fundamental truth as it relates to this life and the life that is to come.

Maybe you're wondering, how did the people long ago know which books were supposed to go in the Bible? Well, we are going to take a closer look at the collections of the New and Old Testaments, individually.

SO, HOW WAS THE BIBLE ACQUIRED?

To start out, it is important to understand that it was God who authored the Bible. In fact, the Bible asserts more than 2,000 times in the Old Testament alone that God spoke what was written within its pages. We are told how the Scripture was given to man in 2 Peter 1:20-21: "But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation, for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God."

The 66 individual books that are in the Bible today are divinely inspired (literally God-breathed, according to 2 Timothy 3:16) and therefore they belong in the Bible. In times past, there were many different writings that were circulating among the people and churches of God. So in order for the proper books to be recognized as the canon of Scripture (the standard and the rule of truth), the counsel of believers had to take the appropriate precautions.

CAN WE TRUST THE BIBLE?

First, Jewish rabbis and scholars established and assembled the scriptures of the Old Testament. Then later, the early church fathers gathered together the writings and letters of the apostles, which completed the books of the New Testament. In recognizing whether a book was inspired by God or not, the Old Testament Hebrew scholars and the early church apostles and leaders followed a detailed set of principles and questions to determine what could rightfully be called the canon of Scripture.

Here are the guidelines, or criteria, that had to be met:

1. **WAS THE BOOK WRITTEN BY A RECOGNIZED PROPHET OR APOSTLE OF GOD? (WERE THERE MIRACLES, SIGNS, AND WONDERS PERFORMED BY THIS PROPHET OR APOSTLE, OR WAS JESUS ASSOCIATED WITH THEM, AS IN THE CASE OF MARK, LUKE, JAMES, AND JUDE.)**
2. **THE WRITING COULD NOT DISAGREE WITH OR CONTRADICT PREVIOUS SCRIPTURE. (MOSES RECORDED THE FIRST FIVE BOOKS OF THE BIBLE AND SET THE STANDARD FOR THE REST.)**
3. **DOES THE BOOK HAVE SIGNIFICANCE TO THE BELIEVER? (DOES THE BOOK TEACH, EDIFY, AND EQUIP A BELIEVER'S LIFE? THE WORD OF GOD IS "LIVING AND ACTIVE," HEBREWS 4:12.)**
4. **WAS IT ACCEPTED BY THE GENERAL CONSENSUS OF HEBREW SCHOLARS AND CHURCH LEADERS AS AN INSPIRED BOOK? (OLD TESTAMENT WAS ACCEPTED IN 167 B.C. AND THE NEW TESTAMENT IN A.D. 397.)**

WHAT ABOUT THE OLD TESTAMENT?

As stated prior, the Old Testament consists of 39 books, written by approximately 32 different authors. Moses wrote the Pentateuch (the first five books of the Bible) in approximately 1405 B.C. There was an immediate acceptance of the Pentateuch, because they were

collected and preserved beside the Ark of the Covenant (see Deuteronomy 31:24–26). Because of this known acceptance by God of the first five books, it was mandatory for the rest of the Old Testament to be in accordance or in harmony with them (along with the New Testament).

Malachi was the last book of the Old Testament that was written (around 430 B.C.). The Hebrew scholars assembled and accepted the Old Testament canon as the inspired Word of God by approximately 167 B.C. It was accepted because it met all the criteria mentioned earlier.

HOW ABOUT THE NEW TESTAMENT?

The New Testament consists of 27 books written by eight different authors. The process of discovery and collection began in the first century of the Christian church. It was very early on that some of the New Testament books started being recognized as inspired Scripture.

Every book of the New Testament was written by an eyewitness of Jesus—someone who walked with Jesus, had an encounter with Jesus, or had a relationship with one who did. The apostle Paul (author of two-thirds of the New Testament) considered Luke’s writings to be just as authoritative as the Old Testament (1 Timothy 5:18; see also Deuteronomy 25:4 and Luke 10:7). The apostle Peter recognized the apostle Paul’s writings to be Scripture (2 Peter 3:15–16).

It is crucial to recognize that the criteria listed above had to be met. It is also important to note that every New Testament book was written within the first century. The first book written was the book of James (the Lord’s brother) in approximately A.D. 45, and the last book written was Revelation by the apostle John in approximately A.D. 95. Because of the concern for accuracy involving the New Testament canon, it was not certified until A.D. 397 at the Council of Carthage.

As we look back on the process of the collection of the Word of God, it is obvious that it was God who, by the Holy Spirit,

directed the hearts of His believers in assembling what He knew to be the canon (the standard and the rule of truth) that all believers should live by until He comes again. Now that we can see the painstaking effort that God has taken to keep His Word intact, we can know and trust the canon of Scripture to be the inspired Word of God!

MORE EVIDENCE FOR THE NEW TESTAMENT

It is often said by skeptics that the Bible is not a reliable document of history. You should be happy to know that nothing could be further from the truth! The Bible is completely trustworthy as a historical document. In fact, the Bible is far superior to all other historical documents.

Although we do not possess the original autographs of the New Testament, around 5,600 completed manuscript copies exist—some of which were copied less than 100 years after the original. This is staggering when compared with other documents of antiquity. For example, good secular (non-Christian) scholars consider the writings of Plato to be accurate and trustworthy. However, we only possess seven copies of Plato’s writings, the earliest of which were copied more than 1,200 years after the original! If it is a matter of credibility, the Bible clearly wins over Plato’s writings.

Therefore, the world should consider the Bible as accurate and trustworthy if they’re willing to give Plato the same privilege. Below is a chart contrasting other ancient documents with the New Testament⁵:

AUTHOR	DATE WRITTEN	EARLIEST COPY	APPROXIMATE TIME SPAN BETWEEN ORIGINAL AND COPY	NUMBER OF COPIES	ACCURACY OF COPIES
PLATO	427–347 B.C.	900 A.D.	1200 YEARS	7	—
CASEAR	100–44 B.C.	900 A.D.	1000 YEARS	10	—
ARISTOTLE	384–322 A.D.	1100 A.D.	1400 YEARS	49	—
HOMER (ILIAD)	900 B.C.	400 B.C.	500 YEARS	643	95%
NEW TESTAMENT	50–100 A.D. (1ST CENT.)	c. 130 A.D. f. (2ND CENT.)	LESS THAN 100 YEARS	5600	99.5%

⁵ Information gathered from Christian Apologetics & Research Ministry, <http://www.carm.org>

So, is the New Testament really trustworthy? The answer is yes! Although not its primary function, the Bible is a history book. We have every good reason to trust the New Testament as a historical document, ranging from the previous evidence that you just examined all the way to the archaeological proof. The New Testament mentions people, places, and events that have been confirmed to be true on several different levels.

MORE EVIDENCE FOR THE OLD TESTAMENT PROPHECY, THE BIBLE, AND JESUS

How do you respond to someone's claim that the Bible is not inspired? Is there a way to prove that God inspired the writings of the Bible, or can you at least make an argument for its inspiration? The answer is yes!

One of the best ways to prove inspiration is by examining prophecy. There are many religious books in the world that have many good things to say. But only the Bible has **fulfilled prophecies**—with more fulfillments to come. The Bible has never been wrong in the past, and it won't be wrong in the future. It claims inspiration from God (see 2 Timothy 3:16). Since God is the Creator of all things (see Isaiah 44:24), then He is also the Creator of time. It is under His control. Only God, then, would always be right about what is in the future.

Turn to **Psalm 22** and read verses 12–18. This is a detailed description of the crucifixion written 1,000 years before Jesus was born. How do you think something like that could happen?

Other prophecies from the Old Testament: where Jesus' birthplace would be (see Micah 5:2; Matthew 2:1); His virgin birth (see Isaiah 7:4; Matthew 1:18, 25); and that His side would be pierced (see Zechariah 12:10; John 19:34).

Here are some Old Testament prophecies, along with their fulfillment noted in the New Testament.

OLD TESTAMENT PROPHECY NEW TESTAMENT FULFILLMENT

Son of God

“I will proclaim the decree of the LORD’s: He said to me,
“You are my Son; today I have become your Father.”
(PSALM 2:7 NIV).

“This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased.”
(MATTHEW 3:17).

Seed of Abraham

“In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be
blessed, because you have obeyed My voice”
(GENESIS 22:18).

“The record of the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah,
the son of David, the son of Abraham”
(MATTHEW 1:1).

House of David

“Behold, the days are coming,” declares the LORD,
“When I will raise up for David a righteous Branch;
And He will reign as king and act wisely and do justice
and righteousness in the land”
(JEREMIAH 23:5).

“When He began His ministry, Jesus Himself was
about thirty years of age, being, as was supposed, the
son of Joseph, the son of Eli . . . the son of Mattatha,
the son of Nathan, the son of David”
(LUKE 3:23, 31).

He Shall Be a Priest

“The Lord has sworn and will not change His mind, ‘You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek’”
(PSALM 110:4).

“Therefore, holy brethren, partakers of a heavenly calling, consider Jesus, the Apostle and High Priest of our confession”
(HEBREWS 3:1).

“Christ did not take on himself the glory of becoming a high priest. But God said to him, ‘You are my Son; today I have become your Father.’ And he says in another place, ‘You are a priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek’”
(HEBREWS 5:5–6 NIV).

Rejected by His Own People

“He was despised and forsaken of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; and like one from whom men hide their face, He was despised, and we did not esteem Him”
(ISAIAH 53:3).

“For even his own brothers did not believe in him”
(JOHN 7:5 NIV).

“No one of the rulers or Pharisees has believed in Him, has he?”
(JOHN 7:48).

Crucifixion

“My God, my God, why have You forsaken me? . . . Be not far from me, for trouble is near; for there is none to help. Many bulls have surrounded me; strong bulls of Bashan have encircled me. They open wide their mouth at me, as a ravening and a roaring lion. I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint; my heart is like wax; it is

melted within me. My strength is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue cleaves to my jaws; and You lay me in the dust of death. For dogs have surrounded me; a band of evildoers has encompassed me; they pierced my hands and my feet. I can count all my bones. They look, they stare at me; they divide my garments among them, and for my clothing they cast lots.

[PSALM 22:1, 11–18].

“When they came to the place called The Skull, there they crucified Him and the criminals, one on the right, the other on the left”

[LUKE 23:33].

“But coming to Jesus, when they saw that He was already dead, they did not break His legs”

[JOHN 19:33].

“The soldiers, when they had crucified Jesus, took His outer garments and made four parts, a part to every soldier and also the tunic; now the tunic was seamless, woven in one piece. So they said to one another, ‘Let us not tear it, but cast lots for it, to decide whose it shall be’; this was to fulfill the Scripture, ‘THEY DIVIDED MY OUTER GARMENTS AMONG THEM, AND FOR MY CLOTHING THEY CAST LOTS’”

[JOHN 19:23–24].

In his book **Science Speaks**, Peter Stoner uses the following probabilities to show that coincidence is ruled out by the science of probability. Stoner says that by using the modern science of probability in reference to eight prophecies, “we find that the chance that any man might have lived down to the present time and fulfilled all eight prophecies is 1 in 10^{17} .” That would be **1 in 100,000,000,000,000,000**.

In order to help us comprehend this staggering probability, Stoner illustrates it by supposing that “we take 10^{17} silver dollars and lay them on the face of Texas. They will cover all of the state two feet deep.

This system helps carry moisture and precipitation to every part of the earth, no matter how remote, providing just the right amount of water for humans and animals alike.

It wasn't until the first century B.C. that the first theory regarding the hydrologic cycle appeared. Yet the Bible describes the cycle twice in the Old Testament.

**“HE DRAWS UP THE DROPS OF WATER,
WHICH DISTILL AS RAIN TO THE STREAMS;
THE CLOUDS POUR DOWN THEIR MOISTURE.”
—JOB 36:27-28 (NIV)**

**“ALL STREAMS FLOW INTO THE SEA,
YET THE SEA IS NEVER FULL.
TO THE PLACE THE STREAMS COME FROM,
THERE THEY RETURN AGAIN.”
—ECCLESIASTES 1:7 (NIV)**

By itself, the hydrologic cycle is an indication of God's miraculous design to keep every part of His creation hydrated. Scripture's references to this system, more than 1,000 years before the first theory of the hydrologic cycle, go to show that the Bible was inspired by God.

The Stars Are Uncountable⁷

Around 600 B.C., the prophet Jeremiah wrote, “the stars of the sky cannot be counted” (Jeremiah 33:22 NLT).

Over the centuries, scholars have attempted to do just that: count the number of stars. Around A.D. 150, the ancient astronomer Ptolemy cataloged more than 1,000 stars in his treatise, “**Almagest**.”

A 2003 study by Australian astronomers estimated the number of stars in the universe at 70 sextillion (or 7 times 10²²). Even then, the researchers admitted that the number of stars might be infinite.

Again, science has proven that the Bible was correct.

⁷ Muncaster, 101 Reasons You Can Believe, 138.

Currents in the Ocean⁹

Matthew Fontaine Maury is regarded as the father of modern oceanography for his pioneering work in the study of ocean currents, the rivers of water that make sailing and shipping easier and more cost-effective, and affect geographical climate too.

What's interesting is Maury's motivation. A strong Christian, he is said to have been inspired to chart the winds and currents by the words of Psalm 18:15: "Then the channels of the seas were seen, the foundations of the world were uncovered" (NKJV).

Additionally, Scripture tells us in the Book of Isaiah, "This is what the LORD says—he who made a way through the sea, a path through the mighty waters" (Isaiah 43:16 NIV).

Maury's studies on ocean navigation are still commonly used today.

The Earth Is Round

The world was shocked when, in the 15th century, European explorers debunked once and for all the myth that the earth was flat. As these explorers traveled to the new world, they proved that the earth was actually round and that it had no "flat edge." This flew in the face of popular science and belief. However, the Bible had asserted more than a thousand years earlier that the earth was round. The book of Job (considered to be the oldest book in the Bible) says, "He [God] stretches out the north over empty space; He hangs the earth on nothing" (Job 26:7 NKJV). Also, the prophet Isaiah wrote these astounding words roughly 700 years B.C.

"It is He [God] who sits above the circle of the earth, and its inhabitants are like grasshoppers, who stretches out the heavens like a curtain, and spreads them out like a tent to dwell in" (Isaiah 40:22 NKJV).

⁹ Muncaster, 101 Reasons You Can Believe, 185.

CAN WE TRUST THE BIBLE?

So that's another piece of evidence that points to the fact that the Bible was indeed inspired by God.

So can we trust the Bible? Well, when you weigh out all of the evidence, it is safe to say that we can.