

# How We Got the Bible

The Bible is one of the most revered and yet the most hated book ever written.

For centuries, men have treated this book with reverence, awe and respect while at the same time other men have gone to great lengths to discredit it and if possible, even destroy it.

- In AD 303, the Roman Emperor, Diocletian (AD 245-312), sought to wipeout any trace of Christianity from the face of the earth. He ordered churches to be burned, Christians to be executed, and the Scriptures to be confiscated and burned.<sup>1</sup>
- Voltaire (1694-1778), a French writer, essayist and philosopher, boasted in the 1700s that within 100 years, Christianity and the Bible would disappear – implying that his works would remain much longer.<sup>2</sup>
  - Ironically, twenty years after Voltaire's death, the Geneva Bible Society bought his house and used it for printing Bibles.

R.A. Torrey (1856-1928), Dean of the Bible Institute of Los Angeles said:

- "For eighteen centuries every engine of destruction that human science, philosophy, wit, reasoning or brutality could bring to bear against a book has been brought to bear against that book to stamp it out of the world, but it has a mightier hold on the world today than ever before. If that were man's book it would have been annihilated and forgotten hundreds of years ago..."<sup>3</sup>

And yet despite the persecution and criticism that the Bible has endured, it is today the world's number one bestselling book. It is the most quoted, the most translated, and the most influential book ever written and as we will see, it can be demonstrated that the Bible is divine rather than human in origin.

The word *Bible* means "book." The English name came to us from the Latin *biblia* and from the Greek *biblos*. It was the original name of the outer skin of the papyrus reed that people used to write upon in antiquity times and

around the second century AD, the word was used by Christians to describe their sacred writings.

The Bible is made up of 66 separate books and letters, 39 Old Testament and 27 New Testament.

These two major parts, the Old Testament and the New Testament, could better be called *covenants* since they are taken from the Hebrew and Greek words that mean "a compact or agreement between two parties."

The Old Testament or Covenant is what is referred to as a *Suzerain-Vassal* covenant. This is when a great king [a suzerain] ruled over and demanded loyalty from a subject king [a vassal] and an example of this "conditional" covenant is the Mosaic or Sinaitic Covenant as seen in the following verse:

- Exodus 19:5 says, "Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all the nations you will be my treasured possession."

The New Testament or Covenant is what is referred to as a *Royal Grant* covenant. An example is when love and forgiveness is offered unconditionally to a subject or heir as seen in the following verses:

- Jeremiah 31:31-34 says, "'Behold, the days are coming,' says the LORD, 'when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah – not according to the covenant I made with their fathers...For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more.'"

It's important to remember that for there to be a testament or covenant, something or someone has to die to cover our sins.

- Hebrews 9:16-17 says, "For where there is a testament, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator. For a testament is in force after men are dead, since it has no power at all while the testator lives."
- The Old Testament was validated with the death and blood of sacrificial animals.

- The New Testament was validated with the death and blood of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

This is one reason why “The Book of Mormon – Another Testament of Jesus Christ” is invalid. Who died for it? Someone has to die for it to be valid.

The Bible was written across a time span of approximately 1,600 years, by more than 40 different people with varying educations, backgrounds and occupations. For example:

- David was a king.
- Moses and Hosea were shepherds.
- Joshua was a military general.
- Isaiah, Ezekiel and Jeremiah were prophets.
- Daniel was a prime minister.
- Luke was a doctor.
- Peter and John were fishermen.

The Bible was written on three different continents, Africa, Asia and Europe in three different languages, Hebrew, Greek and Aramaic.

Yet, in spite of the diversity of the people writing over a span of 1,600 years from different cultures, occupations, continents and languages, the Bible has one consistent message applicable not only for the time in which it was written but also for today.

Imagine if we were to look at a Medical Dictionary that spanned just 500 years over three continents and written by 40 different individuals; the variations we would find would be enormous. In Africa, we might read of witch doctors using spells to relieve pain, in Europe we might read of leaches and blood lettings to relieve the same symptoms while somewhere else, surgery would be the required medical procedure.

My point is this, the Bible is the Word of God, it is consistent and without contradictions and the original autographs are essentially the same today, as we will see, as when they were written by the original authors.

# What the Bible is About

The Bible has one consistent message from Genesis to Revelation and that is God's message of love, grace, mercy, salvation and redemption in the person of His Son, Jesus Christ.

- Jesus Christ testified that He is the theme of the Bible in John 5:39, 46-47 – "You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me...For if you believed Moses, you would believe Me; for he wrote about Me. But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe My words?"
- In Luke 24:27, Jesus says, "And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself."
- And in Luke 24:44, Jesus "said to them, 'These are the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning Me.'"
- In Matthew 5:17 Jesus says, "Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill."
- And again in Hebrews 10:7, Jesus affirmed Himself to be the theme of the Old Testament, "Then I said, 'Behold I have come – In the volume of the book it is written of Me – to do Your will, O God.'"

As Josh McDowell explains: <sup>4</sup>

- The Old Testament is the preparation (Isaiah 40:3)
- The Gospels are the manifestation (John 1:29)
- The Book of Acts is the propagation (Acts 1:8)
- The Epistles give the explanation (Colossians 1:27)
- And the Book of Revelation is the consummation (Revelation 1:7)

The Bible is all about Jesus. The Old Testament points forward to Jesus and the New Testament is about Jesus. The Bible is His-story.

## The Bible – Inspired Word of God

In 2 Timothy 3:16-17 we read, “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 complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.”

- *by inspiration of God* [Greek: *theopneustos*] literally means *breathed out by God* or simply *God-breathed*.
- profitable for doctrine – This means that *all scripture* is profitable for knowing what is right.
- profitable for reproof – This means that *all scripture* is profitable for knowing what is wrong.
- profitable for correction – This means that *all scripture* is profitable in how to get right.
- profitable for instruction – This means that *all scripture* is profitable in how to stay right.

Also, the Bible was given once.

Jude 1:3 tells us, “I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints.”

- Notice the “definite article” (i.e., *the*) in front of the word faith. It means the “one and only faith.”
- The word *once* [Greek: *hapax*] means “one (or a single) time.”

## Old Testament Inspiration

We can see two methods of determining that the Old Testament is the inspired word of God.

1. Old Testament claims of Inspiration.
2. Old Testament claims of Inspiration found in the New Testament.

First, Old Testament claims of inspiration begin with the prophet of God who was the mouthpiece of God. He was the one who declared what God had disclosed to Him.

We can see various descriptions of a prophet of God in the following verses when he's called...

- "man of God" (1 Kings 12:22)
- "servant" (1 Kings 14:18)
- "messenger" (Isaiah 42:19)
- "seer" (Isaiah 30:10)
- "spiritual man" (Hosea 9:7)
- "watchman" (Ezekiel 3:17)

And these men of God wrote down what God had told them:

- Exodus 24:4 says that Moses "wrote all the words of the LORD."
- Deuteronomy 31:24-26 says that Moses' Law was written in a book.
- Joshua 1:8 says, "This *Book* of the Law shall not depart from your mouth."
- Joshua 24:26 says that he also "wrote in the *Book* of the Law of God."
- Jeremiah 36:28 says to "take another *scroll* and write on it all the former words that were in the first *scroll*."
- In Isaiah 8:1, he was commanded to "Take...a large *tablet* and write upon it"
- God told Habakkuk, "Write the vision; make it plain upon *tablets*, so he may run who reads it."

All the traditional authors of the Old Testament are designated prophet by either title or function.<sup>5</sup>

And thus, around 2,000 times we read of the men of God stating, "God said..." or "Thus says the LORD..."

Second, New Testament Claims of Inspiration of the Old Testament as determined by Jesus and the apostles referring to and quoting from the Old Testament.

Remember, Jesus was Jewish and when He refers to the *Scriptures*, He's referring to the Old Testament.

Jesus claimed Scripture as His authority for...

- cleansing the temple (Mark 11:17)
- rebuking the tradition of the Pharisees (Matthew 15:3, 4)
- settling doctrinal disputes (Matthew 22:29)
- and in Matthew 4:4, 7, 10 Jesus rebuked the devil 3 times by responding, "It is *written*...It is *written*...It is *written*"
- Jesus said in John 10:35, "The Scripture cannot be broken."
- Jesus also said that, "Everything written...must be fulfilled" in Luke 24:44.
- He also said that, "It is easier for heaven and earth to pass away than for one dot of the law to become void" in Luke 16:17.

Jesus often spoke on the authority that the Old Testament was inspired and gives final authority on all matters.

For example: <sup>6</sup>

- Jesus refers to Scripture as an authority 56 times.

- Jesus quotes directly from Scripture, implying even that specific words are from God, more than 81 times.

Not only can we see that Jesus knew Scripture was authoritative but we can also see the inspiration of...

- The *whole* Old Testament:
  - The apostle Paul “reasoned with them from the *Scriptures*” (Acts 17:2).
  - Paul also “vigorously refuted...showing from the *Scriptures* that Jesus is the Christ” (Acts 18:28).
  - The Bereans “searched the *Scriptures* daily” (Acts 17:11).
  - John 10:35 uses the “the word of God” as a synonym for the Scriptures.
- The *sections* of the Old Testament:
  - The *Law* (the first five books of the O.T.) is referred to in Matthew 12:5; Acts 13:39; Hebrews 10:28.
  - The *Prophets* (the second half of the O.T.) is referred to in John 1:45; Luke 18:31; Matthew 26:56 and Acts 7:42.
  - The *Writings* (Jesus refers to “The law of Moses, and the prophets, and the psalms.”) in Luke 24:44.
- And *specific books* of the Old Testament:
  - 18 of the 22 books in the Jewish canon are cited as authoritative in the New Testament with the rest having references or referential support in the New Testament.

## New Testament Inspiration

As Norman Geisler and William Nix explain New Testament inspiration:

“The apostles and prophets of the New Testament did not hesitate to classify their writings as inspired along with the Old Testament. Their books were revered, collected, and circulated in the early church as sacred scripture. What Jesus claimed about the Old Testament inspiration He also promised His disciples for the New [Testament].”<sup>7</sup>

There are two basic claims of inspiration regarding the New Testament:

1. Jesus’ promise that He would guide the apostles by His Holy Spirit into remembrance and teaching truth to establish His church.
2. The fulfillment of Jesus’ promises by the writing of the New Testament.
  - Christ’s Promise About Inspiration – He gave the Holy Spirit:
    - When sending out the twelve in Matthew 10: 19-20, Jesus says, “For what you are to say will be given to you in that hour; for it is not you who speak, but the *Spirit of your Father* speaking through you.” (emphasis added)
    - When predicting the temple’s destruction in Mark 13: 11, Jesus reaffirmed, “But say whatever is given you in that hour, for it is not you who speak, *but the Holy Spirit.*” (emphasis added)
    - In John 14: 26, Jesus told his disciples, “But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to remembrance all that I have said to you.”
    - In Matthew 28: 19-20 Jesus commissioned His disciples to “make disciples of all nations...*teaching* them to observe *all I have commanded you.*” (emphasis added)

Again, Jesus promised that the apostle’s teachings would be truth filled and Spirit lead.

- Continued Claims of Christ’s Teachings after Jesus:

- In Acts 1:1, Luke says that he recorded the things that “Jesus began to both do and to teach.” And that these were accurate accounts in Luke 1:3-4.
- In fact, the early church was characterized by “the apostle’s teachings” in Acts 2:42.
- Even Paul says his teachings are based on revelation from God:
  - Galatians 1:11-12 says, “But I make known to you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man...but it came through the revelation of Jesus Christ.”
- Ephesians 2:20; 3:5 says that the New Testament church was “built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone...as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to His holy apostles and prophets.”
- In 2 Peter 3:16, Peter classes Paul’s other epistles along with “the rest of the Scriptures.”
- In 1 Timothy 5:18, Paul quotes Luke’s gospel (Luke 10:7) calling it “Scripture.”
- Paul gives his own writings equal authority with “Scripture.”
  - 1 Timothy 4:11, 13 says, “These things [speaking of the things he just taught] command and teach...give attention to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine.”
- In Titus, Paul exhorts to “Speak these things, exhort, and rebuke with all authority.”
- Revelation 1:1 states, “The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave”
  - In fact, no book claims to have divine inspiration more than Revelation with the warning not to tamper with its contents or else face divine judgment (Revelation 22:18, 19).

When you work your way through the New Testament, it becomes clear that the books claim apostleship, inspiration and that they’re authoritative and they have explicit claims of divine authorship.

In summary, the Bible is the Word of God, it's inspired or literally *God-breathed* and Jesus and the New Testament authors often quoted from the Old Testament.

And since it's *God-breathed*, here's what the Bible claims about itself:

Psalms 19:7-9 says, "The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul; The testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple; The statutes of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart; The commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes; The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever; The judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether."

## Where Did We Get the Bible?

When we speak of the *canon of Scripture*, what are we talking about?

Canon comes from the Greek word *kanon* and means "a rod or ruler" which in turn comes from the Hebrew word *kaneh* meaning "a measuring rod" and over time came to mean the books that were "measured" and recognized as God's inspired Word.

Today, when someone says *canon of Scripture*, they mean that body of Scripture that is accepted as authoritative.

It's important to note that canonicity is determined by God. A book is not inspired because man made it canonical, it's canonical because God inspired it and man discovered it.

In other words, "It is God who *regulated* the canon; man merely *recognized* the divine authority God gave to it."<sup>8</sup>

Tests for Canonicity are as follows: <sup>9</sup>

1. Was the book written or backed by a prophet or apostle of God?
2. Is the book authoritative?

3. Does the book tell the truth about God and doctrine as it is already known by previous revelation?
4. Does the book give evidence of having the power of God?
5. Was the book accepted by the people of God?

## **The Old Testament**

From the time they were composed to present, the books of the Old Testament have always been considered holy to the Jewish people.

We are told in the Bible that it was the responsibility of the priests of Israel, the Levites, to ensure the preservation of the Law. They were to place it in or along side the Ark of the Covenant in the Holy of Holies in the tabernacle.

- Deuteronomy 31:26 says, "Take this Book of the Law, and put it beside the ark of the covenant of the LORD your God, that it may be there as a witness against you."
- After Moses placed his books there, Joshua added his to the collection in Joshua 24:26.
- Samuel added his writings to the collection when "[he] wrote it in a book and laid it up before the LORD" in 1 Samuel 10:25.
- David's story was recorded in the "book of Samuel the seer" in 1 Chronicles 29:29.

These writings were considered so holy by the Jewish people that the Kings of Israel were required to write out an entire copy during their reign.

- Deuteronomy 17:18-19a says, "Also it shall be, when [the King] sits on the throne of his kingdom, that he shall write for himself a copy of this law in a book, from the one before the priests, the Levites. And it shall be with him, and he shall read it all the days of his life"

Since these early writings were considered holy to the Jewish people, they were preserved with the most cautious care imaginable.

The Mishnah, compiled around AD 200, is a written record of Jewish tradition from around Exodus and the time Moses to around AD 100. Here's what the Mishnah says:

"Moses received the Law from Sinai and committed it to Joshua and Joshua to the elders, and the elders to the Prophets, and the Prophets committed it to the men of the Great Synagogue. They said three things; be deliberate in judgment, gather up many disciples, and make a fence around the Law."<sup>10</sup>

The Mishnah also informs us that from the completion of the Old Testament around 400 BC, until around AD 500, the care of the Old Testament was in the hands of a group of scribes called the *Sopherim* ("counters").<sup>11</sup>

These scribes were so meticulous that they counted every letter and every word of the completed text that they were copying to the original just to ensure that they had not missed anything.

It cannot be over emphasized how extremely careful the scribes were in copying the text because they recognized they were handling the Word of God. For example we read:

"Numerous examples can be cited to show the passion of scribes for minute details of the text. When for some reason a manuscript has a letter too large or too small, these letters of unusual size were carefully duplicated. If, for example, a scribe found an extra letter in a word, *he would leave the word the same but put a dot above the letter or word that he questioned*. The dots show the scribal uncertainty about a word or letter, but the scribes did not alter the text because it was regarded as unalterable."<sup>12</sup> (emphasis added)

A group called the *Massorettes* ("tradition") eventually succeeded the *Sopherim* from about AD 500 to AD 900.

The Massorettes are probably best known for their vowel and accent system devised for the Hebrew language, since Hebrew is written without vowels.

Eventually, in order to preserve the language when Hebrew was no longer spoken, the Massoretes devised a way of inserting vowel points above and below the lines of text without altering the original text itself and thus, they only added a means to ensure correct pronunciation of the text.

Like the Sopherim, the Massoretes were careful not to change the original text. For example we read:

*“the Massoretes collected all the textual-critical remarks of the rabbis, all the additional marks added in the margins of the sacred texts (which include memory devices, and pronunciation aids), and entered these in the side margins of the copies they made. They also did extensive tabulations concerning the contents of the text which were added to the upper and lower margins of the page. These specialists considered the text so holy that they never altered it even when the text they were copying contained an obvious error. In such an instance, the procedure was to enter the error into the text they were producing and then enter remarks in the margin concerning how it could be corrected.”*<sup>13</sup>  
(emphasis added)

This system of Massorete notation is called the *Kethiv-Qere* or “*what is written – what is read*” and it enabled the scribes to place in the margins of the text what they thought was the correct (or original) spelling or rendering while not making any changes to the text itself.

The observations in the margins were an intense zeal and desire to not change the text and thus safeguard the accurate transmission of the texts involved.

Below are rules that are listed in the Talmud for copying the Hebrew Scriptures similar to those of the Massoretes.

*“An authentic copy must be the exemplar, from which the transcriber ought not in the least deviate. No word or letter, not even a yod (a vowel mark), must be written from memory, the scribe not having looked at the codex before him...Between every consonant the space of a hair or thread must intervene; between every word, the breadth of a narrow consonant; between every new section, the breadth of nine consonants; between every book, three lines. The fifth book of Moses must terminate exactly with a line, but the rest need not do so. Besides*

this, the copyist must sit in full Jewish dress, wash his whole body, not begin to write the name of God with a pen newly dipped in ink, and should a king address him while writing that name he must take no notice of him...The rolls in which these regulations are not observed are condemned to be buried in the ground or burned; or they are banished to the schools, to be used as reading books." <sup>14</sup>

Evidence shows the Hebrews accepted the current Old Testament books as Scripture as early as 400 BC and no later than 167 BC. The books were chosen because of their recognition by the Jews as being divine, authoritative and marked with inspiration.

Altogether, Jesus and the *apostles* refer to Old Testament Scripture authoritatively nearly 300 times in the New Testament.

## **The Dead Sea Scrolls**

Even though the work of the Sopherim and the Massoretes was extremely important in the complete and correct transmission of the Old Testament, the oldest copy of the Old Testament that we had was from around AD 1000 which was a full 1,400 years after the last Old Testament book was written.

That is until the discovery, in 1947, by a young Bedouin shepherd in the caves out in the desert at a site known as Qumran which is about a mile southwest of the northwest corner of the Dead Sea.

What was discovered in those caves would later be called by the late Dr. W.F. Albright, one of the world's leading archaeologists:

"the most important Old Testament manuscript discovery ever made."<sup>15</sup>

What was found in the two foot jars were a collection of 931 documents that have come to be called the *Dead Sea Scrolls*. This collection contained the oldest known copies of the Old Testament made between 125 BC and AD 68.

In those jars, they found:

- Every Old Testament book (except Esther)
- Commentaries on the Old Testament
- Extra biblical works
- Secular documents and business records

They were left in the caves by a Jewish Sect similar to the Pharisees and Sadducees called the "Essenes" around AD 68, just prior to the fall of Jerusalem.

The Dead Sea Scrolls prove the accuracy and care of the transmission of the Old Testament through the centuries by the scribes and keepers of the Law.

Before the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls, the earliest known copy of the Book of Isaiah was the Masoretic Text of Isaiah dated around AD 916. When these two copies, the Masoretic copy and the Dead Sea copy, one thousand years apart were compared, what was found was the amazing accuracy of the copyists at their task. For example we read:

"Of the 166 *words* in Isaiah 53, there are only seventeen *letters* in question. Ten of these letters are simply a matter of spelling, which does not affect the sense. Four more letters are minor stylistic changes, such as conjunctions. The remaining three letters comprise the word "light," which is added in verse 11, and does not affect the meaning greatly. Furthermore, this word is supported by the LXX [Septuagint – an ancient translation of the Old Testament into Greek] and IQ Is (one of the Isaiah scrolls found in the Dead Sea caves). Thus, in one chapter of 166 words, there is only one word (three letters) in question after a thousand years of transmission – and this word does not significantly change the meaning of the passage."<sup>16</sup>

In other words, the copies of Isaiah proved to be identical in more than 95 percent of the text with the 5 percent variation consisting of obvious slips of the pen, variations in style and spelling but not substance.

## The New Testament

The New Testament was written in the common Greek “street” language of the day called *Koine* Greek.

Although we do not possess the original “autographs”, just as with the Old Testament, we can be assured that the New Testament we have today is the same as what was written 2000 years ago by looking at the evidence to reconstruct the originals by using:

- The Greek Manuscripts - A manuscript is simply a hand written copy of an ancient document that predates the invention of the printing press in AD 1455.
- The Versions or Translations – A manuscript that has been translated into a different language.
- The Writings of the Early Church Fathers – Sermons, commentaries and correspondences show the accuracy of today’s New Testament when compared to their writings.

### The Greek Manuscripts

As we will see, getting back to the original “autographs” is not an issue because of the abundance of manuscripts that we can use to reconstruct the original texts. We can confidently get back to the original texts based on five types of manuscript evidence.

- *Uncial Manuscripts* – These types of manuscripts, written between the fourth and tenth centuries, consists of upper-case letters that look like the following example of John 1:1:

ΕΝΑΡΧΗΗΝΟΛΟΓΟΣΚΑΙΟΛΟΓΟΣΗΝΙΙΡΟΣΤΟΝΘΕΟΝΚΑΙΘΕΟΣΗΝΟΛΟΓΟΣ

- *Miniscule Manuscripts* – These types of manuscripts, written from the ninth to the sixteenth centuries, replaced the uncial type of writing because it was faster but not as carefully executed.
- *Lectionary Manuscripts* – Fragments and complete manuscripts date from around the sixth to the eighth centuries. These are Scripture lessons used by the Christians on Sundays and Holy Days.

- *Papyri Manuscripts* – This is what the original autographs were written on and these copies of fragments are very perishable and contain some of the earliest manuscript evidence.

Number of manuscripts we have available for reconstruction:

<b>Type of Manuscript</b>	<b>Number Surviving<sup>17</sup></b>
Uncial	317
Minuscule	2,877
Lectionaries	2,433
Papyri	118
Total	5,745 (to date)

### **The Versions or Translations**

Versions or Translations are copies of the Greek Manuscripts into another language. It was rare that ancient literature was copied into another language. The New Testament was the exception to this rule. This was because early missionaries would translate them into languages of the people they would encounter.

We have an overwhelming amount of fragment and manuscript evidence in which we can utilize to get back to the original “autographs” that were written.

<b>Versions</b>	<b>Number of Manuscripts<sup>18</sup></b>
Latin Vulgate	10,000+ (possibly 25,000)
Ethiopic	2,000+
Slavic	4,101+
Armenian	2,587+
Syriac Peshitta	350+ (possibly thousands more uncatolged)
Coptic (Bohairic & Sahidic)	Approx. 1,000 although not all have been cataloged
Total	20,000±

Compare this to other ancient works:

<b>Author (Work)</b>	<b>Date Written</b>	<b>Earliest Copy</b>	<b>Time Span (Years)</b>	<b>Number of Copies<sup>19</sup></b>
Caesar (Gallic Wars)	100-44 BC	AD 900	1000	10
Euripides	450 BC	AD 1000	1500	9
Sophocles	450 BC	AD 1000	1400	193
Catullus	54 BC	AD 1550	1550	3
Homer (Iliad)	900 BC	400 BC	500	643
N.T.	AD 40-100	AD 125	50	24,000+

And yet you never hear of any corruption discussed in the works of Homer for example. It's not even a topic of debate.

Biblical scholar F.F. Bruce (1910-1990) said, "If the New Testament were a collection of secular writings, their authenticity would generally be regarded as beyond all doubt."<sup>20</sup>

### **The Writings of the Early Church Fathers**

When we talk about the "church fathers", we are talking about the early leaders in the church around the first two centuries AD that followed the original disciples. In fact, some of the early church fathers were taught by the original disciples. For example, Polycarp, was a disciple of the apostle John.

Other church fathers include Justin Martyr, Tertullian, Eusebius and Irenaeus.

In their writings and correspondence with other believers, these men over and over again quote from the New Testament Scriptures.

In fact, the four Gospels alone are quoted by the church fathers, and others, an astonishing 19,368 times<sup>21</sup> while the other New Testament Scriptures are quoted over 86,000 times.<sup>22</sup>

Charlie Campbell, Director of the *Always Be Ready Apologetics Ministry* said:

“There are enough quotations from the early church fathers that even if we did not have a single manuscript copy of the Bible, scholars could still reconstruct 99.86% of the New Testament that we have today. There were only 11 verses in the New Testament that were never quoted by the Church Fathers.”

The overall amount of citations from the New Testament in the sermons, commentaries, and correspondence of the church fathers as early as the first century AD and as late as the thirteenth century exceeds one million.<sup>23</sup>

While most New Testament books were accepted as Scripture at least by the early 200s, the final New Testament, as we know it today, became standard and fixed when Athanasius (AD 297-373) who is considered the “father of orthodoxy,” listed the books of the New Testament in his thirty-ninth Paschal Letter (AD 367). The canon of the New Testament today was also *ratified* at the Council of Hippo (AD 393) and again at the Council of Carthage (AD 397).

Now, keep in mind that Athanasius and these councils didn’t determine which books were to be included in the New Testament canon. As I mentioned before, they “merely *recognized* the divine authority God gave to [them]” and then *ratified* the 27 books of the New Testament.

Ratified means: <sup>24</sup>

- To approve and give formal sanction to; confirm.
- To confirm and adopt the act of another even though it was not approved before hand.

And as for Dan Brown, author of the *DaVinci Code*, implying that the *Council of Nicaea* in AD 325 or the Roman emperor Constantine the Great (AD 274 – 337) had anything to do with the books that made it into the Bible – the early church had already determined which books were inspired and which were not.

With the completion of the last New Testament book around AD 90, the canon of Scripture was well known nearly 200 years before Constantine was even born.

The *Council of Nicaea* was not concerned about what books to include or exclude in the Scriptures but to discuss what those books taught in regards to the nature of Jesus Christ.

The debate centered around the teachings of Arius (AD 256-336) who claimed that Jesus' nature was "similar" to the Fathers but not the "same" as the Bible teaches (Hebrews 1:3a) and that Jesus was a created being. The *Council of Nicaea* rejected Arius' heretical theological teachings in the end.

As we have seen, we have numerous amounts of manuscript evidence and early church fathers quotes that serve as evidence against any Biblical corruption.

Indeed, even the Bible itself argues against the possibility of its corruption:

- In Isaiah 40:8 we read, "The grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of God stands forever."
- Jesus says in Matthew 24:35, "Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away."

## **Chapter and Verse Breaks**

When the books of the Bible were originally written, there were no chapter and verse breaks that we see today in our modern translations.

Modern chapter divisions were developed by Stephen Langton (1150-1228), Archbishop of Canterbury and in 1382, the Wycliffe Bible; the first English Bible translated from the Latin Vulgate, was the first to use Langton's chapter divisions.

As for verse divisions, the Hebrew Scripture divisions had been around for quite sometime with extensive use of paragraph, section, vocal and phrase breaks but the Old Testament verse divisions that we use today have been credited to Rabbi Isaac Nathan and were developed around 1440 to 1448.

Robert Estienne (1503-1559), also called *Stephanus*, was a 16<sup>th</sup> century Catholic who is credited as being the first to divide the New Testament into the verse divisions that are commonly used in today's Bibles.

Stephanus essentially used the same verse division approach that Rabbi Nathan used for the Old Testament and the Geneva Bible, circa 1550-1570, was the first English Bible to use verse numbers based on the work of Stephanus.

It's important to note that the chapter and verse divisions were dictated by men and are thus not inspired.

There are a few places where the chapter divisions are poorly placed resulting in divided content that reduces the flow of what the original author, led by the Holy Spirit, was trying to convey.

## How Do We Know it's the Word of God

Earlier we looked at Scripture that showed that the Bible is the Inspired Word of God but we can also demonstrate that it's divine in origin rather than human in origin, based on the following acronym M.A.P.S.<sup>25</sup>

1. **M**anuscript Evidence
2. **A**rcheological Evidence
3. **P**rophetic Evidence
4. **S**tatistical Probability Evidence

### 1. Manuscript Evidence

As we have seen earlier, the manuscript evidence we have for the Old and New Testament is far beyond other manuscript evidence for other literature from antiquity.

We have what one scholar calls *an embarrassment of riches* when it comes to the manuscript and transcript evidence we have in our possession.

I cannot stress this enough considering both Mormons and Muslims will argue that the Christian Scriptures have been corrupted in the past and thus their scriptures, The Book of Mormon and the Qur'an, respectively, have a greater weight in their religion.

Consider the following quotes: <sup>26</sup>

- Norman L. Giesler, dean and professor of theology and apologetics at Southern Evangelical Seminary tells us, "There are more [New Testament] manuscripts copied with greater accuracy and earlier dating than for any other secular classic from antiquity."
- Rene Pache (1904-1979), Protestant theologian adds, "The historical books of antiquity have documentation infinitely less solid."
- And Theologian Dr. Benjamin Warfield (1851-1921) 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."

Also, we can rest assured that the manuscript evidence we have is accurate by looking at several other eyewitness accounts in the Bible:

- The New Testament eyewitness events also bear witness to the accurate manuscript evidence as Luke says that he "carefully investigated everything" (NIV Luke 1:1-3).
- Peter concurred when he reminded his readers that the disciples "did not follow cleverly invented stories...but were eyewitness of [Jesus'] majesty" (2 Peter 1:16).
- The apostle John stated, "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, concerning the Word of life--the life was manifested, and we have seen, and bear witness, and declare to you that eternal life which was with the Father and was manifested to

us--that which we have seen and heard we declare to you." (1 John 1:1-3a)

Even secular historians can confirm many of the customs, people, places, and events that are contained within the Bible:

"Secular historians like Josephus (before AD 100), the Roman Tacitus (around AD 120), the Roman Suetonius (AD 110), and the Roman governor Pliny the Younger (AD 110) all affirm historical New Testament references. Early church leaders such as Irenaeus, Tertullian, Julius Africanus, and Clement of Rome – all writing before AD 250 – also shed light on the New Testament historical accuracy. Even skeptical historians agree that the New Testament is a remarkable historical document." <sup>27</sup>

## 2. Archeological Evidence

Time and time again, archaeology has confirmed people, places, events and customs that are mentioned in the bible as historical and reliable.

The science of archaeology, along with the Bible and secular literature, helps to chart a course that demonstrates the reliability of the Biblical record.

Consider the following quotes from Biblical and archaeological experts:

- The late Nelson Glueck (1900-1971), archaeologist and president of the Jewish Theological Seminary, said, "It can be stated categorically that no archaeological discovery has ever controverted a biblical reference. Scores of archaeological findings have been made which confirm in clear outline or in exact detail historical statements in the Bible...Proper evaluation of Biblical descriptions has often led to amazing discoveries." <sup>28</sup>
- Bible scholar Donald J. Wiseman said, "The geography of Bible lands and visible remains of antiquity were gradually recorded until today more than 25,000 sites within this region and dating to Old Testament times, in their broadest sense, have been located..." <sup>29</sup>
- Bible scholar William F. Albright said, "Discovery after discovery has established the accuracy of innumerable details, and has brought increased recognition of the value of the Bible as a source of history." <sup>30</sup>

## Examples of Old Testament archeological evidence: <sup>31</sup>

<b>Archaeological Find</b>	<b>Description of Find</b>	<b>Importance of Find</b>
<p>Horned Alters – Excavations have turned up some excellent examples of horned alters.</p> <p>Canaanite gods and goddesses – Between 1929-1939, excavators found clay tablets among the ruins in the ancient city of Ugarit, Syria</p>	<p>Horned alters made of stone have been found in Dan and Beersheba.</p> <p>These finds reveal the details of the Canaanite religion and helps us understand the challenge for the children of Israel to worship the one true God.</p>	<p>The Old Testament speaks of horned alters at least 20 times. (Exodus 27:2; 1 Kings 1:50)</p> <p>The O.T. repeatedly refers to gods and goddesses being worshiped by the Canaanites living among the Israelites. The prophets warned the people not to worship these false gods in Numbers 25, 1 Kings 11, Jeremiah 23 and Hosea 13.</p>
<p>Pool of Gibeon – This pool, dating to before 1000 BC, was found largely intact in Gibeon, six miles north of Jerusalem in excavations around 1956.</p>	<p>The Pool goes down some 80 feet. The original diggers removed 300 tons of limestone. A tunnel for the pool runs under the city to an outside spring.</p>	<p>2 Samuel 2:13 and Jeremiah 41:12 speak of a great water pool at Gibeon. The find verifies the location of the Pool as mentioned in the Bible and shows the great effort taken to have a secure source of water.</p>
<p>The House of David Inscription – In 1993 and 1994 an archaeologist working at the O.T. site of the city of David found three pieces of an inscribed stone referring to David.</p>	<p>The stones that were found were inscribed in Aramaic with the expression “the house of David” and refers to King David’s descendants...the stone has been dated to about two to three centuries after David’s time.</p>	<p>This Tel Dan inscription is a very important find because it is the first reference to King David found outside the Bible.</p>

## Examples of New Testament archeological evidence: <sup>32</sup>

<b>Archaeological Find</b>	<b>Description of Find</b>	<b>Importance of Find</b>
<p>The House Church at Capernaum – While excavating an early church building at Capernaum in 1968, archaeologists found that the building had been placed over a house from the time of Jesus</p>	<p>Words were found scratched on the walls of the house indicating that the early Christians believed the house had been that of the apostle Simon Peter.</p>	<p>Matthew 8:14, Mark 1:29, and Luke 4:38 all speak of Peter’s house and Jesus’ visits there. This probably is the reason Christians began to worship at this site.</p>
<p>Bethany, Where Jesus Raised Lazarus – A village grew around the first century AD tombs that once comprised Bethany’s cemetery. Since early</p>	<p>By the AD 300s a church had been built over the tomb of Lazarus, with steps leading down into the tomb.</p>	<p>The village of Bethany is mentioned 13 times in the N.T...It was from Bethany’s cemetery that Jesus raised Lazarus in John 11.</p>

Christian times one tomb has been said to be that of Lazarus.

The Pontius Pilate Inscription - In 1961 archaeologists working at the ruins of Caesarea Maritima, In Israel, found a stone slab bearing the name of Pontius Pilate, who was involved in the trial of Jesus.

Crucifixion Evidence – In 1968, the bones of a young man who had been crucified during N.T. times were found in the Jerusalem area. The bones were found in a stone box bearing the name “Yohanan.”

The stone, bearing Pilate’s name...commemorated his dedication of a temple to Emperor Tiberius.

A 7-inch nail was still embedded in the heel bone.

This is the oldest appearance of Pilate’s name to be found, and it actually dates to the time of Jesus. Luke 3: 1 says: “Now in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judea, and Herod being tetrarch of Galilee...”

This find shows the gruesome evidence of how the Romans crucified persons such as Jesus. Luke 23: 33 NIV says, “When they came to the place called the Skull, there they crucified him [Jesus], along with the criminals – one on his right, the other on his left.”

These are just a few examples but time and time again, archaeological evidence has confirmed the authenticity of the Word of God.

We would expect to find people, places, and objects that confirm the Word of God since these are mentioned in the Biblical record and since God does not lie.

- Numbers 23: 19 says, “God is not a man, that he should lie, nor a son of man that he should change his mind.”
- 1 Samuel 15: 29 says, “He who is the Glory of Israel does not lie or change his mind; for he is not a man, that he should change his mind.”

Where the Bible speaks historically, it is of course historically accurate.

### **3. Prophetic Evidence**

One of the most compelling and strongest cases for accepting the trustworthiness of the Bible as the inspired Word of God is predictive prophecy.

Before certain events took place, God would tell us about them so that when they took place, we would have no reason to doubt His existence and authority over history.

The purpose of predictive prophecy can be seen in the following two verses:

- Isaiah 46:9, 10 says, "Remember the former things of old, for I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like Me, declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times things that are not yet done."
- Isaiah 48:3-5 says, "I have declared the former things from the beginning; they went forth from My mouth, and I caused them to hear it. Suddenly I did them, and they came to pass....Even from the beginning I have declared it to you...Lest you should say 'My idol has done them, and my carved image and my molded image have commanded them.'"

The Bible records many events that were given, not as vague prophecies but specific in nature. God, who is outside our time-space existence, has infinite knowledge and He is able to accurately and consistently reveal the future.

We can see in the following verse that true prophecy is given by God and not by mans will:

- 2 Peter 1:19-21 says, "And so we have the prophetic word confirmed, which you do well to heed...knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit."
  - The word *moved* [Greek: enegko] literally means "to be driven; carried along" and is used in Acts 27:15 and 17 in relation to the winds driving a ship along.

- J. Vernon McGee says, "The Greek actually portrays the idea of a sailing vessel. The wind gets into those great sails, bellies them out, and moves the ship along. That is the way the Holy Spirit moved these men."<sup>33</sup>

Let's look at some examples of the predictive prophecy contained in the Bible:

1. *Cyrus Decrees Rebuilding Jerusalem* - In Isaiah 44:28 – 45:1, written about 700 BC, Isaiah writes that a man named Cyrus will declare to the destroyed city of Jerusalem "You shall be built," and to the temple, "Your foundation shall be laid."
  - What is amazing is that at the time of this writing, Jerusalem and the temple were still standing. It was around 100 years later that both were destroyed at the hand of Babylonian armies.
  - Babylon was then conquered by the Persians in 539 BC and shortly after, a Persian King named Cyrus gave the decree to rebuild Jerusalem and the temple 160 years after Isaiah wrote this prophecy.
  
2. *The Destruction of Tyre* – Tyre, an important Eastern Mediterranean sea port, was a great city in its day yet Ezekiel prophesied her doom and entire demolition hundreds of years in advance in Ezekiel 26:3-14.
  - "Therefore thus says the Lord God: 'Behold, I *am* against you, O Tyre, and will cause many nations to come up against you, as the sea causes its waves to come up. And they shall destroy the walls of Tyre and break down her towers; I will also scrape her dust from her, and make her like the top of a rock. It shall be *a place for* spreading nets...They will plunder your riches and pillage your merchandise; they will break down your walls and destroy your pleasant houses; they will lay your stones, your timber, and your soil in the midst of the water...I will make you like the top of a rock; you shall be *a place for* spreading nets, and you shall never be rebuilt, for I the Lord have spoken,' says the Lord God."
  - The prophecy was first partially fulfilled by King Nebuchadnezzar when he destroyed the city on the mainland and the people fled to their island, a half mile off shore. The debris was left on the mainland and the rubble was not thrown into the sea.

- It was completely fulfilled 250 years later when Alexander the Great, infuriated at their response after requesting supplies, attacked the island city by taking the debris left from King Nebuchadnezzar's invasion and built a causeway out to the island and destroyed the city.
- The city was never rebuilt, and today, it literally is used by local fishermen for "spreading [their fishing] nets."

The Bible has a lot to say about Jesus, the coming Messiah in the Old Testament. In fact, the Old Testament contains around three hundred references or prophecies to the Messiah. We will look at a few of these in the next heading and the statistical probability that one man could fulfill even a few of them.

Predictive Prophecy is so convincing that skeptics will conclude that after the events happened, literary editors went back and "doctored" the original events to make them look like they were written before hand.

Of course, as we have seen, the trustworthiness of the Bible is evident in the scribe's reverential awe of the text as the literal Word of God.

## 4. Statistical Probability Evidence

It is statistically preposterous that any or all of the Bible's specific, detailed prophecies could have been fulfilled through chance, good guessing, or deliberate deceit.<sup>34</sup>

Indeed, anybody with a statistical background or an understanding of the odds involved in the following statistical probabilities would be hard pressed to shrug off the following evidence.

For example, if we look at just eight of the Old Testament prophecies fulfilled by Jesus Christ, we can conclude that the odds of their coming to pass are 1 in  $10^{17}$  or 1 with 17 zeros after it or 100,000,000,000,000,000 chances in one!

Peter Stoner, in his book *Science Speaks* says:

“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 mark one of these silver dollars and stir the whole mass thoroughly...Blindfold a man and tell him...he must pick up the one silver dollar...What chance would he have of getting the right one? Just the same chance that the prophets would have had of writing these eight prophecies and having them come true in any one man.”<sup>35</sup>

Norman Geisler, dean and professor of theology and apologetics at Southern Evangelical Seminary, says of the Old Testament Messianic prophecies:

“These include where he would be born (Micah 5:2), how he would die, (Isaiah 53), when he would die (Daniel 9), that he would rise from the dead (Psalm 16). The odds that forty-eight of these prophecies were fulfilled in one man are about  $1/10^{157}$ . That is 1 with 157 zeros after it. If a gambler had managed to guess forty-eight horses right without a single mistake, it would be reasonable to suspect that he had inside information.”<sup>36</sup>

And Jesus fulfilled more than just forty eight prophecies and as for having inside information...“all Scripture is given by inspiration of God” (2 Timothy 3:16).

Let’s take a look at some of the prophecies that even an ordinary person would not have control over such as where they were born, from which tribe and family line.

1. Born of the seed of woman (Genesis 3:15; Galatians 4:4)
2. Born of a virgin (Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 1:18, 24, 25)
3. Son of God (Psalm 2:7; Matthew 3:17)
4. Seed of Abraham (Genesis 22:18; Matthew 1:1)
5. Son of Isaac (Genesis 21:12; Luke 3:23, 34)
6. Son of Jacob (Numbers 24:17; Luke:3:23, 34)
7. Tribe of Judah (Genesis 49:10; Luke 3:23, 33)
8. Family tree of Jesse (Isaiah 11:1; Luke 3:23, 32)
9. House of David (Jeremiah 23:5; Luke 3:23, 31)
10. Born in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2; Matthew 2:1)
11. Presented with gifts at birth (Psalm 72:10; Matthew 2:1, 11)

12. Herod kills the children (Jeremiah 31:15; Matthew 2:16)

Let's take a look at the Statistical Probability as it relates to the Genesis account.

It's been said that if you can believe the first verse of the Bible, you will have no trouble believing the rest of the Bible.

Genesis 1:1 says, "In the beginning, GOD created the heavens and the earth."

When we look at the creation account, as written down in Genesis, by Moses, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, we can see that the odds of this sheep herder, some 3,500 years ago, getting the correct order of creation accounts which are in perfect accord with the findings of modern science, are roughly 1 in 40 million or 1 in  $11 \times 10 \times 9 \times 8 \times 7 \times 6 \times 5 \times 4 \times 3 \times 2 \times 1$ .<sup>37</sup>

1. Creation of the physical universe (space, time, matter, energy, galaxies, planets, etc.)
2. Transformation of the earth's atmosphere from opaque to translucent
3. Formation of a stable water cycle
4. Establishment of continent(s) and ocean(s)
5. Production of plants on the continent(s)
6. Transformation of the atmosphere from translucent to transparent
7. Production of small sea animals
8. Creation of sea mammals
9. Creation of birds
10. Making of land mammals
11. Creation of man

Clearly, Moses was inspired by God as were the other writers of the Old and New Testaments in order for the Bible to be so concise, so accurate in its predictive prophecy and statistical probability.

## Conclusion

The Bible has been called the Christians **(B)**iblical **(I)**nstruction **(B)**efore **(L)**eaving **(E)**arth.

Scripture is God's Word to us. In it, He reveals His plan of redemption and salvation, His standards to live by, His rules for everyday living – His Son Jesus Christ.

We looked at the **manuscript evidence** which overwhelmingly demonstrates that through the work of textual critics, we have the most accurate copies of the originals possible. The accuracy of the manuscript copying done by the scribes is simply amazing. The scribes were just too meticulous in their practices and the quotes from the early church fathers further demonstrate that the Scripture they had back then is the same that we read today in our Bibles.

The **archaeological evidence** only assures us that the places, people, customs, and events are truly accurate in historical precision and that the archaeological findings only confirm the detailed historical statements contained in the Bible.

The **prophetic evidence** is so accurate and detailed, not vague and ambiguous, that only God, who is sovereign and in control of history and not confined or limited by space and time, could tell us what's going to happen before it does.

And finally, the **statistical probability evidence** is overwhelming. The chances that these events as described in the Bible could happen without God's intervention are, as we've seen, astronomical and indeed statistically improbable to dismiss as pure chance.

And in closing, Sir Fredrick G. Kenyon (1863-1952), former director and principal librarian of the British Museum, and one of the leading authorities on the reliability of ancient manuscripts said:

"the last foundation for any doubt that the Scriptures have come down to us substantially as they were written has now been removed. Both the authenticity and the general integrity of the books of the New Testament may be regarded as finally established." <sup>38</sup>

Sir Fredrick also noted that:

“It is reassuring at the end to find that the general result of all of these discoveries and all this study is to strengthen the proof of the authenticity of the Scriptures, and our conviction that we have in our hands, in substantial integrity, the veritable Word of God.”<sup>39</sup>

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