

# Is the Bible Truly God's Word?

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## *A Study Outline*



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**If** the Bible is truly God's Word, then we should cherish it, study it, obey it, and ultimately trust it.



If the Bible is the Word of God then to dismiss it is to dismiss God Himself. The question we must ask ourselves is how can we know that the Bible is the Word of God and not just another good book? What is unique about the Bible that sets it apart from all other religious books ever written? Is there any evidence that the Bible is truly God's Word?

## I. WHAT YOU BELIEVE, DOES IT MATTER?

Charles Stanley summarizes the results of a poll concerning beliefs in America today. He writes:

*"A large percentage of Americans no longer believe in the truth of God's Word. Most think any belief is acceptable as long as it satisfies those who hold to that view. As a result, people no longer have a clear sense of right and wrong. Violence, greed, and immorality are rampant. However, God's standards haven't changed. The consequences of sin—now and in eternity—remain the same. It's vitally important to base our beliefs on the Word of God so that you and I can be a light to this dark world."*<sup>1</sup>

### A. Only a third of adults believe that the Bible is the fully inspired Word of God ...

*...and can be taken literally word for word.*

### B. More than half of all adults surveyed believe that a good person can earn a place in heaven.

*Christ said, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me" (John 14:6, Acts 4:12).*

### C. Forty-two percent of Americans believe Jesus was merely human...

*...not divine—and that He rebelled against the Father during His lifetime.*

*But Christ had to be absolutely holy for His death to pay the sin-debt of humanity.*

### D. Six out of ten adults believe Satan doesn't really exist...

*...that he is merely a symbol of evil.*

*As a result, they will find it almost impossible to identify and avoid evil.*

### E. Of those surveyed, the majority of men and women under the age of 25 think that all beliefs are equally valid.

*The hopelessness they feel is reflected in school shootings and other crimes committed by young people.*

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## II. IS THE BIBLE TRULY GOD'S WORD?

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### A. Yes, because of its fulfilled prophecies.

1. The Bible, which is about 25% prophecy, contains hundreds of fulfilled prophecies, 322 amazing prophecies relating just to the Messiah.
2. Many of these prophecies were made as much as 1,500 years before the predicted event, yet each was fulfilled perfectly just as prophesied in the Bible.
3. The chances of the Messianic prophecies being coincidental are 1 in 1,048.<sup>2</sup>
4. The coincidence of the prophecies concerning the cities of Tyre and Petra are like the odds of finding one specially marked silver dollar from a ten-foot pile covering the state of Texas.

### B. Yes, because of its amazing unity.

1. Its unity is mind boggling!
2. The Bible is not one book, but a library of sixty-six books, written over a 1,500-year period in three different languages (Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek) by forty authors living in ten different countries.
3. The authors' had vastly different occupations (kings, fishermen, tax collectors, shepherds, prophets, and a physician).
4. They had vastly different levels of education (Moses, Paul were highly educated, Peter was a humble fisherman). It was written on three continents: Asia, Africa, and Europe.
5. Their writings include literary genres such as: history, mystery, romance, poetry, and prose. This unity is unique from all other books and is evidence of the divine origin of the words as God moved men in such a way that they recorded His very words.
6. Berkeley Mickelsen presents four amazing aspects of the Bible's unity (Mickelsen 86-89):
  - a) The action of God as creator throughout the Bible.
  - b) The action of God with his people, Israel.
  - c) The action of God in Christ.
  - d) The action of God with those in Christ.

### C. Yes, because of its historical accuracy.<sup>1</sup>

1. The Bible has better manuscript evidence than any other ancient book in history. Only 1/1000th of the Bible's text is in doubt yet no doctrinal teaching is affected.<sup>3</sup>
  2. Josh McDowell cites Joseph Free, a professor of archaeology and history at Bemidji State College, as stating that each of the fifty chapters of the book of Genesis is either illuminated or confirmed by some archaeological discovery.<sup>4</sup>
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3. Nelson Gleuck, a well-known Israeli archeologist stated, "It can be stated categorically that no archeological discovery has ever controverted a Biblical reference."<sup>5</sup>
4. While perceived internal and external biblical contradictions have been raised, each has been given a sound response.

**D. Yes, because of its transforming power.**

1. Look within yourself and you will discover how the Bible has transformed your own life. This occurs because the Holy Spirit illuminates the Bible to us in a special way. "My sheep know my voice," (John 10:27), and you know that the voice that speaks to you from the pages of the Bible is the voice of your Father.
2. There is more power in the Bible to save men, purify, gladden and beautify their lives, than in all other literature put together—it has more power to lift men up to God.
3. R. A. Torrey writes of one such example of a man who was the most complete victim of strong drink he had ever known; a man of marvelous intellectual gifts, but who had been stupefied and brutalized and demonized by the power of sin, and he was an infidel. "At last the light of God shone into his darkened heart, and by the power of that book he has been transformed into one of the humblest, sweetest, noblest men I know to-day."
4. What other book would have done that? What other book has the power to elevate not only individuals but communities and nations that this book has?<sup>6</sup>

**E. Yes, because of its miraculous preservation.**

1. This book has always been hated—many have tried to stamp it out. The Roman emperor Diocletian instituted the "Great Persecution" against Christians in the year 303 A.D.
2. He edicted that every Bible should be burned, and that everyone who had a Bible should be put to death. Christians were burned alive because they refused to turn over their sacred books. Diocletian had the words *extincto nomine Christianorum* ("the name of the Christians having been destroyed") put over the ashes of a copy of the Bible.
3. Soon afterward, in 324 A.D., Emperor Constantine proclaimed Christianity a legal religion, and had fifty copies of the Bible prepared at the government's expense.
4. By 413 A.D. nearly 90% of the Roman Empire had been converted to Christianity.<sup>7</sup> The Bible was miraculously preserved.
5. The noted French infidel, Voltaire, who died in 1778, declared that in one hundred years from his time Christianity would be swept from existence and passed into history. Only fifty years after his death, the Geneva Bible Society used Voltaire's press and house to produce stacks of Bibles.<sup>8</sup> The Bible was miraculously preserved.

**F. Yes, because of its propagation.**

1. It has been translated into 2,200 languages. Even though this represents only about one-third of the world's languages, these languages include over 90% of the world's population.<sup>9</sup>
2. Ted Bergman, of the Summer Institute of Linguistics, states that at the current rate of translation the Bible should be available to almost all languages between the years 2007 and 2022. This accomplishment would make the Bible the world's first universally translated text! No other book in history comes close to this.<sup>10</sup>

**G. Yes, because the Holy Spirit speaks to me through it. (1 Cor. 2:13-14)**

*"This is what we speak, not in words taught us by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit, expressing spiritual truths in spiritual words. The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned." 1 Cor. 2:13-14 (NIV)*

As we read and study the Bible, the Holy Spirit opens its truth to us. What is clear and obvious to those who belong to Christ is not always obvious to unbelievers.

### III. IS THE BIBLE ACCURATE?

**A. Yes, because it is "God-breathed," meaning inspired. (2 Tim. 3:16-17; 2 Pet. 1:20-21)**

*"All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work." 2 Tim. 3:16-17*

*"Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation. For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit." 2 Pet. 1:20-21*

**B. Yes, because all scripture is inspired, this called plenary inspiration. (2 Tim. 3:16-17; 2 Pet. 1:20-21)**

1. This is called "plenary inspiration." (plenary → full. Complete)
2. Notice in 2 Tim. 3:16-17 that *all Scripture* is God-breathed.
3. This is not the kind of inspiration like an artist who becomes inspired to paint a beautiful picture or a poet who becomes inspired to pen words of beauty. This inspiration is from God (2 Pet. 1:21).

**C. Yes, because every word is inspired.<sup>11</sup> (1 Cor. 2:13)**

This is called "verbal inspiration." Scripture is more than the revelation of God's thoughts, the actual words in the original writings are inspired.

*"This is what we speak, not in words taught us by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit, expressing spiritual truths in spiritual words." 1 Cor.*

2:13

**D. Yes, because it contains no errors or contradictions in the original writings, it is inerrant.<sup>12</sup>**

1. This means that the Bible in the original manuscripts does not affirm anything that is contrary to fact.
2. In other words, the Bible is *inerrant*.

## IV. HOW THE BOOKS OF THE BIBLE WERE SELECTED

**A. Inspired books were discovered using the Canon of Scripture.**

1. "Canon" means a standard.
2. The Greek word "*kanon*" meaning "a rod or bar, a measuring rule, standard, or limit." The root word for *kanon* is a word that meant "a reed." In Bible times a reed was used as a Hebrew unit of measure, much like the way we use rulers today.<sup>13</sup>

**B. The Canon of Scripture<sup>14</sup>**

1. Does the document claim to be divinely inspired?
  - a) Did the book claim to be divinely inspired?
  - b) Example: "Thus says the Lord"
2. Was it written by an accredited agent of God?
  - a) Prophet, the Lord Jesus Christ, or one of His apostles?
  - b) If not, did the writer have the gift of prophecy (David, Daniel) or a relation to a prophet or an apostle (Mark, Luke) that would raise his book to the level of their writings?
3. Is it consistent with all other canonized books?
  - a) Was there soundness and consistency with other canonized writings?
  - b) Did the book agree doctrinally with the teachings of known canonical books?
4. Was it universally accepted by the early church?
  - a) Was the book universally recognized by the Jews and/or by the early Christian church as being God's Word?
  - b) Does the Holy Spirit bear witness to the regenerated reader that the book is His Word?
5. Is there evidence in history of its predictions?
  - a) Is there any evidence in history, or in the known canonical books, of the fulfillment to this book's promises or predictions?
  - b) Yes, see Daniel Chapter 2 (Gentile nations & image of Nebuchadnezzar).
6. The only books that met these criteria are the 39 books in the Old Testament and the 27 books in the New Testament.

7. The sixty-six books we now have in our Protestant Bible were officially canonized by the Church at the Council at Carthage in A.D. 397.<sup>15</sup>
8. Authoritative books were discovered using the canon—they were not determined by the church. See the table below.<sup>16</sup>

Incorrect View of the Canon	Correct View of the Canon
Church determines the canon	Church discovers the canon
Church is the mother of the canon	Church is the child of the canon
Church is the magistrate of the canon	Church is the minister of the canon
Church regulates the canon	Church recognizes the canon
Church is the judge of the canon	Church is the witness of the canon
Church is the master of the canon	Church is the servant of the canon

**C. The Old Testament books were recognized in the New Testament and by the early church.**

1. The OT canonization process was completed by rabbinic sages around A.D. 100.<sup>17</sup>
2. It was recognized and quoted by Jesus (Matt. 5:17).
3. It was recognized and quoted by Paul (Acts 13:15; 24:14).
4. It was recognized and quoted by Peter (Acts 2:14-21).
5. It was recognized and quoted by the early church fathers (Clement, Ignatius Polycarp, and others).<sup>18</sup>

**D. Jews refer to the Old Testament as the “Tanakh.”<sup>19</sup>**

1. The Law (Torah): Genesis through Deuteronomy.
2. The Prophets (Nevi'im): Joshua, Judges, Samuel, Kings (Former Prophets), Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, The Twelve (Latter Prophets).
3. The Writings (Kethuvim or Hagiographa): Psalms, Proverbs, Job, Song of Songs, Ruth, Lamentations, Esther, Ecclesiastes, Daniel, Ezra-Nehemiah, Chronicles.<sup>20</sup>

**E. The canon of the Bible is now closed (i.e., books cannot be added or removed).<sup>21</sup>**

1. Writings such as the Qur'an, the Book of Moses, Mormon Doctrines & Covenants, Key to Health and the Scriptures by Mary Baker Eddy, *et. al.*, are not canonized Scriptures and will be subject to the penalties of Revelation 22:18-19.
2. Writings such as the apocryphal books, the pseudepigraphal books, and the “Gnostic gospels” did not meet the Canon of Scripture and are not inspired books of the Bible.

**F. Early writings excluded from the Bible.**

1. Apocrypha.

- a) The Apocrypha (meaning “hidden, spurious, not authentic”) consists of 15 books of Jewish literature written mostly during the intertestamental period.
  - b) Some are legendary and fantasy.
  - c) Many of them were written to reinforce post-exilic Jewish opposition to idolatry.
  - d) No major canon or church council included them as inspired books of the Bible.
  - e) Some of them have historic value, but all are spurious, of unknown authorship, and without claim of inspiration or authority.
  - f) The 15 Old Testament Apocryphal Books<sup>22</sup> and the 12 New Testament Apocryphal books<sup>23</sup> are not part of the Jewish Tanakh or the Protestant Bible.<sup>24</sup>
    - (1) They were never included by the Jews in their sacred collection.
    - (2) They were never quoted by Jesus or the Apostles in the New Testament.
    - (3) They are included in the Roman Catholic Bible, but categorized as “Deuterocanonical” books. They were never accepted by the early church, or Jerome, as Scripture.<sup>25</sup>
2. Pseudepigrapha.
- a) Fifty-two texts written between 200 BC and AD 200 but ascribed to various prophets and kings in the Hebrew Scriptures; many are apocalyptic in nature.<sup>26</sup>
  - b) Called “Apocrypha” by the Roman Catholic Church even though Jerome, who translated the Bible into Latin, viewed them as being non-canonical books.
  - c) They were not accepted as Scripture by the early church.<sup>27</sup>
3. Gnostic Gospels.
- a) The 16 Gnostic Gospels (so called “Secret Gospels”) written around the 2<sup>nd</sup> to 4<sup>th</sup> centuries, did not meet the canon criteria.
  - b) A list of the Gnostic Gospels can be found at “Early Christian Writings.”<sup>28</sup>

## V. HOW THE BIBLE IS ORGANIZED

The Bible is a collection of sixty-six books inspired by God. They consist of two testaments containing 39 book in the Old Testament and 27 books in the New Testament. John MacArthur Jr. offers an overview of the Bible's organization as follows: <sup>29</sup>

### A. Old Testament Books

Category	No.	Old Testament Book Titles
The Law	5	Genesis--Deuteronomy
History	12	Joshua--Esther
Wisdom	5	Job—Song of Solomon
Major Prophets	5	Isaiah--Daniel
Minor Prophets	12	Hosea--Malachi

**B. Old Testament flow of history**

1. Creation of the Universe.
2. Fall of man.
3. Flood over the earth.
4. Abraham, Isaac Jacob (Israel)—Primary Patriarchs of Israel.
5. The History of Israel.
  - a) Exile in Egypt (430 years).
  - b) Exodus and wilderness wanderings (40 years).
  - c) Conquest of Canaan (7 years).
  - d) Era of the Judges (350 years).
  - e) United Kingdom—Saul, David, Solomon (110 years).
  - f) Divided Kingdom—Judah and Israel (350 years).
  - g) Exile in Babylon (70 years).
  - h) Return and rebuilding of the land (140 years).

**C. New Testament Books**

Category	No.	New Testament Book Titles
The Gospels	4	Matthew--John
The Early Church	1	Acts
Paul's Letters	13	Romans--Philemon
General Letters	8	Hebrews--Jude
Apocalyptic	1	Revelation

**D. Five major themes of the Bible.**

1. The nature of God.
2. The curse for sin and disobedience.
3. The blessing for faith and obedience.
4. The Lord Savior and the sacrifice for sin.
5. The coming kingdom and glory.

**VI. THE ORIGINAL BIBLE MANUSCRIPTS****A. Original Hebrew Manuscripts (now lost)**

1. The Old Testament was written from about 1450 B.C to about 430 B.C.
  - a) Torah (Moses/Joshua): 1450 B.C. (first books of OT).
  - b) Malachi: 430 B.C. (last book of OT).

2. The original languages of the Old Testament were Hebrew and Aramaic.
  - a) Aramaic: Ezra 4:8—6:18; 7:12-26; Jer. 10:11; Dan. 2:4b-7:28.
  - b) Aramaic: Also called Chaldee or Syriac.<sup>30</sup>
3. The original Old Testament writings were for the most part written on animal skins.
  - a) Animal skins (parchment): sheep-skins or goat skins.<sup>31</sup>
  - b) Some of the earliest documents: clay tablets, some possibly on papyrus.

#### **B. Original Greek Manuscripts (now lost)**

1. The New Testament was written from about A.D. 50 to about A.D. 100.
  - a) Galatians/James (about A.D. 50).
  - b) John's writings (about A.D. 100).
2. The original language of the New Testament was Koine Greek.
  - a) Original Greek was written in all capital letters with no punctuation, accent marks, or spaces between the words.<sup>32</sup>
  - b) Koine: Greek for "common."
  - c) Arose as a common dialect within the armies of Alexander the Great.
3. The original New Testament writings were made on papyrus.<sup>33</sup>
  - a) Papyrus is a thick paper-like material produced from the pith of the papyrus plant that was once abundant in the Nile Delta of Egypt.
  - b) Long rolls were made into scrolls.

## **VII. WHAT OUR MODERN O.T. TRANSLATIONS ARE BASED ON**

#### **A. OT (Tanakh) Transcribing Process**

1. Tracy Macon Sumner<sup>34</sup> explains how copies of the Old Testament writings were originally made during the Babylonian Captivity by the Levites. Since Nebuchadnezzar removed the Temple furnishings, including the OT writings, in 586 B.C., the Levites began making copies and distributing them to the Jews living in Babylon. The painstaking scribal process of making copies is described in the Talmud. Since the Jewish scribes knew they weren't handling just any set of writings they developed a strict process for ensuring accuracy when making these copies.
2. These Levites came to be known as *scribes*. Sumner describes this transcribing process as follows:
  - a) The scribe was required to prepare a parchment and dedicate it to the Lord before he began his work. The parchment would be clean, using the skins of only clean animals, both for writing on and binding the manuscripts.
  - b) Each column on the parchment could include no fewer than 48 lines, and no more than 60 lines. Letters and words alike had to be spaced at a certain distance, and no word could touch another. This helped avoid confusion in reading as well as errors in future copying.
  - c) The ink used in the process was always black and of a special mixture used only

- for copying scripture
- d) Even when the scribe had memorized a passage of scripture by heart, he was not allowed to write it down from memory. He was still required to copy from an authentic copy of scripture; and as he wrote, he had to pronounce every word aloud.
  - e) Every time the scribe wrote the Hebrew name of God, he was required to wipe his pen clean and wash his entire body. This was in reverence for God and for his Word.
  - f) After the copying was completed, the scroll was to be examined and checked for accuracy within 30 days. If the scribe made even one error, the entire sheet on which the mistake was made was destroyed. If mistakes were found on three separate pages, the entire manuscript was condemned.
  - g) The scribe counted not just every word and paragraph in the manuscript, but every letter. Each paragraph, word, and letter had to correspond perfectly to the original.
  - h) Once the process of copying a manuscript was completed, the new copy could be stored only in sacred places, such as in a synagogue.
  - i) No parchment containing the name of God could be destroyed, so when a copy became worn out and illegible in time, it was stored or buried in a *genizah*,<sup>35</sup> which is a Hebrew word meaning a "hiding place," which was usually located in a synagogue or Jewish cemetery. This is why no original Old Testament manuscripts survive today.
3. J. W. Moore<sup>36</sup> further states that the Talmudists, during the Masoretic Period between A.D. 500--900, were not sufficiently comfortable with the rigid Talmudic rules for transcribing Scripture, so these Masoretes augmented an incredibly complex system of safeguards against mistakes in transcription.
- a) A synagogue scroll must be written on the skins of clean animals, that were
  - b) Prepared for the particular use of the synagogue by a Jew;
  - c) The skins must be fastened together with the strings taken from clean animals;
  - d) Every skin must contain a certain number of columns, equal throughout the entire codex.
  - e) The length of each column must not extend over less than 48 or more than 60 lines; and, the breadth must consist of thirty letters;
  - f) The whole copy must be first lined; and if three words be written without a line, it is worthless;
  - g) The ink should be black, neither red, green, nor any other color, and be prepared according to a definite recipe;
  - h) An authentic copy must be the exemplar, from which the transcriber ought not in the least deviate;
  - i) No word or letter, not even a *yod*, must be written from memory, the scribe not having looked at the codex before him;
  - j) Between every consonant the space of a hair or thread must intervene;
  - k) Between every new *parashah*, or section, the breadth of nine consonants;
  - l) Between every book, three lines;
  - m) The fifth book of Moses must terminate exactly with a line; but the rest need not

do so;

- n) Besides this, the copyist must sit in full Jewish dress;
- o) Wash his whole body;
- p) Not begin to write the name of God with a pen newly dipped in ink;
- q) And should a king address him while writing that name, he must take no notice of him.
- r) The Masoretes were indeed anxious that not one jot nor tittle, not one smallest letter nor one tiny part of a letter of the Law should pass away or be lost." Indeed, for many years the oldest MSS of the Old Testament was a Masoretic copy dated to A.D. 916.

## **B. Hebrew Masoretic Manuscripts**

1. The *Masoretic Text* (A.D. 500-1000)<sup>37</sup> is the authoritative Hebrew text of the Jewish Bible and is regarded as Judaism's official version of the Tanakh.
2. While the Masoretic Text defines the books of the Jewish canon, it also defines the precise letter-text of these biblical books, with their vocalization and accentuation known as the *Masorah* ("vowel pointings").
3. The MT is also widely used as the basis for translations of the Old Testament in Protestant Bibles, and in recent years (since 1943) also for some Catholic Bibles, although the Eastern Orthodox continue to use the Septuagint, as they hold it to be divinely inspired.
4. In modern times the Dead Sea Scrolls have shown the MT to be nearly identical to some texts of the Tanakh dating from 200 B.C. but different from others.<sup>38</sup>

## **C. Over 233 Biblical Dead Sea Scrolls**

1. Plus 15,000 fragments dating back to 150 B.C.--A.D. 70 B.C.<sup>39</sup>
2. The Dead Sea Scrolls are not the original documents that make up the Hebrew Bible (the Old Testament), but they are the oldest copies of those documents that we have today.
3. They included a complete manuscript of Isaiah and fragments from every book of the Hebrew Bible, except Esther.
4. They were found in the limestone cliffs of Qumran:
5. The Dead Sea Scrolls (over were discovered in eleven caves along the northwest shore of the Dead Sea between the years 1947 and 1956.
6. They are written in Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek, mostly on parchment, but with some written on papyrus.
7. The Dead Sea Scrolls are a collection of 972 texts from the Hebrew Bible and extra-biblical documents (O.T. Apocrypha, pseudepigrapha, and mystical writings).
8. First found by a Bedouin teen-age Arab shepherd who went searching for a stray goat near the caves located in the north-west shore of the Dead Sea.

9. He threw a stone in one of the caves and heard the sound of breaking pottery.
10. He found four scrolls and sold them for \$97.20 to the archbishop of the Monastery of St. Mark's in Jerusalem.
11. Bedouin shepherds searched more caves later and altogether, found approximately 15,000 fragments representing some 600 manuscripts (biblical and extra-biblical).
12. The scrolls appear to be the library of a Jewish sect (Essenes).
13. The library was hidden away in caves around the outbreak of the First Jewish Revolt (A.D. 66-70) as the Roman army advanced against the rebel Jews.<sup>40</sup>
14. These scrolls are now located in a climate-controlled basement of the Rockefeller Museum in Jerusalem.

#### **D. Ancient manuscripts of the Old Testament**

1. Vatican Manuscript (Codex Vaticanus)
  - a) Date Written: about A.D. 300-350.
  - b) Current scholarship considers the Codex Vaticanus to be one of the best Greek texts of the Old and New Testaments.
  - c) Now located in the Vatican.
  - d) It is one of the oldest extant manuscripts of the Greek Bible (most of Old and New Testaments).
  - e) Written on vellum using uncial lettering.
  - f) Before the 19th century, no scholar was allowed to study or edit the Codex Vaticanus, and scholars did not ascribe any value to it.<sup>41</sup>
2. Sinaiticus Manuscript (Codex Sinaiticus)
  - a) Date Written: about A.D. 350.
  - b) Located in the British Museum Library in London (vellum).
  - c) The New Testament appears in the original vernacular language (*koine*) and the Old Testament in the version, known as the Septuagint that was adopted by early Greek-speaking Christians.
  - d) In the Codex, the text of both the Septuagint and the New Testament has been heavily annotated by a series of early correctors.
  - e) Greek large letters, uncials written on vellum.
  - f) The Codex Sinaiticus came to the attention of scholars in the 19th century at the Greek Orthodox Monastery of Mount Sinai, with further material discovered in the 20th and 21st centuries.<sup>42</sup>
3. Alexandrian Manuscript (Codex Alexandrinus)
  - a) Provenance: Probably Alexandria, Egypt, A.D. 400.
  - b) Date Written: It was written shortly after the Council of Nicea (AD 325). Vellum. The codex was brought to Constantinople in 1621 by Cyril Lucar (first a patriarch of Alexandria, then later a patriarch of Constantinople).
  - c) Location: London British Library. It became a part of the Royal Library, British Museum and since 1973 of the British Library.<sup>43</sup>

- d) Content: Contains a majority of the Septuagint (Greek translation of OT) and the New Testament.
  - e) Greek capital letters, uncials written on fine quality animal skins from calves or antelope (vellum) and sheep or goats (parchment) were used for over 1,000 years to make copies of the Bible approximately AD 300-1400.<sup>44</sup>
4. Ephraem Manuscript (Codex Ephraemi Rescriptus)
- a) Location: Paris, National Library of France,
  - b) The manuscript was written in the 5th century, in Egypt or Palestine.
  - c) Is an early Greek manuscript of the Bible the last in the group of the four great uncial manuscripts of the Greek Bible.
  - d) Codex Ephraemi Syri Rescriptus takes its name from the fact that the New Testament text which its pages had originally displayed has been partially erased, and a Greek translation of thirty-eight sermons by Ephraem of Syria rewritten upon the parchment.
  - e) Originally the whole Bible seems to have been contained in it.

#### **E. Old Testament Translations (Versions).**

1. Greek Septuagint (Written about 280-180 B.C. Oldest copy A.D. 350)
2. Latin Vulgate (A.D. 405)

## **VIII. WHAT OUR MODERN N.T. TRANSLATIONS ARE BASED ON.**

By the end of the First Century AD, the New Testament had been completed. It was preserved in Greek on papyrus, a thin paper-like material made from crushed and flattened stalks of a reed-like plant. Because they were on papyrus they do not exist today.

The word "Bible" comes from the same Greek root word as "papyrus". Most papyrus was prepared and exported from a Phoenician port, Byblos. The papyrus sheets were bound, or tied together in a configuration much more similar to modern books than to an elongated scroll. These groupings of papyrus were called a "codex" (plural: "codices").

#### **A. N.T. Manuscripts**

1. Ancient fragments of Greek manuscripts.
  - a) Various fragments.<sup>45</sup>
  - b) Because there were so many manuscripts, those working on the canon of Scripture (deciding what to include in our present-day Bibles) analyzed and compared the various manuscripts.
  - c) There were some differences, but most of the discrepancies were minimal.
  - d) Many were grammatical, such as a plural noun in one manuscript, but a singular noun in another.
  - e) The substantial variations make up only 1/1000 of the New Testament. This is about a quarter page of the Greek text.<sup>46</sup>
2. Ancient manuscripts of the Greek New Testament (See above "What our modern

O.T. translations are based on").

- a) Vatican Manuscript (Codex Vaticanus).
- b) Sinaitic Manuscript (Codex Sinaiticus).
- c) Alexandrian Manuscript (Codex Alexandrinus).
- d) Ephraem Manuscript (Codex Ephraemi Rescriptus).

## **B. N. T. Versions**

1. Ancient versions and portions of the New Testament.
  - a) Arabic: Syriac (Peshitta) Version (ca. 4th century)
  - b) Egyptian: Coptic Version (ca. 4<sup>th</sup> or 5<sup>th</sup> century)
  - c) Latin Vulgate (ca. A.D. 405)
2. Early church father quotations from the New Testament (A.D. 100-150).

## **C. Later Manuscript: Textus Receptus.**

1. *Textus Receptus*, (abbreviated TR) is the name used for the first *published* Greek text of the New Testament.
2. Textus Receptus (Latin: "received text") is the name subsequently given to the succession of printed Greek texts of the New Testament which constituted the translation base for the original German Luther Bible, the translation of the New Testament into English by William Tyndale, the King James Version,<sup>47</sup> and for most other Reformation-era New Testament translations throughout Western and Central Europe.
3. For many centuries, it was *the* standard text of the Greek Bible. The name arose from the work of the kinsmen Bonaventure and Abraham Elzevir, who said of their 1633 edition, "*Textum ergo habes, nunc ab omnibus receptum*" -- "So [the reader] has the text which all now receive."<sup>48</sup>

## **D. Other Sources for tracing the history of the Bible**

1. TruthNet.Org "Origin of the Bible" <[http://www.truthnet.org/Bible-Origins/11\\_New-Testament-Manuscripts-and-Textual-Criticism/index.htm](http://www.truthnet.org/Bible-Origins/11_New-Testament-Manuscripts-and-Textual-Criticism/index.htm)>.
2. Teknon, "Origin of the English Bibles" <<http://synergos.net/acop.html>>.
3. Antipas.Org, "The Ancient Manuscripts and Our Modern Bible"  
<[http://www.antipas.org/books/bible\\_today/bible\\_today\\_chart.pdf](http://www.antipas.org/books/bible_today/bible_today_chart.pdf)>.

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# **IX. THE RELIABILITY OF THE OLD TESTAMENT MANUSCRIPTS**

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## **A. Confirmed accuracy from the textual transmission process.<sup>49</sup>**

1. Until the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls the oldest copy of the O.T. were Hebrew manuscripts, the latest being A.D. 1010 which were used by KJV, RSV translators.

2. When the Dead Sea Scrolls were compared to the Hebrew manuscripts they found only a 5% variation between the two.
3. The 5% variations were obvious slips of the pen (e. g. "above" instead of "over").
4. Of the 166 words in Isaiah 53, there were only 17 letters in question. Ten of these are simply a matter of spelling.<sup>50</sup>
5. For over 1,000 years the Masoretes made such accurate copies to result in a 95% accuracy, the 5% variations are considered inconsequential and do not affect the message of revelation in the slightest.
6. Any variations are cited in your Bibles.

## **B. Hard evidence uncovered through archaeology.**

1. Josh McDowell lists many archaeological finds that confirm the accuracy of the Bible.<sup>51</sup> A few of them are described as follows:
  - a) Sodom and Gomorrah. Archaeological evidence confirms the abundance of bitumen and brimstone (bituminous pitch) in the area of these cities, as described in the Bible.
  - b) Jericho. Excavations of Jericho (1930-1936) by famed British archaeologist John Garstang confirm that the walls of Jericho fell outwards so that the attackers would be able to clamber up and over the ruins of the city.
  - c) The Temple of Ashteroth. Upon Saul's death, Samuel tells us that his armor was put in the temple of Ashteroth (a Canaanite fertility goddess) at Bet She'an, while the Chronicles records that his head was put in the temple of Dagon, the Philistine corn god. This was thought to be an error because it seemed unlikely that an enemy peoples would have temples in the same place at the same time. However, excavations have revealed that there are two temples at this site that are separated by a hallway: one for Dagon, and the other for Ashteroth.
  - d) Solomon's wealth. Many skeptics believed the biblical account of Solomon's wealth was greatly exaggerated. Archaeological evidence has since revealed that his wealth was indeed feasible.<sup>52</sup>
2. American scientist, Henry Morris, states "Now, however, it is no longer possible to reject the substantial historicity of the Bible, at least as far back as Abraham, because of the remarkable discoveries of archaeology."
3. Joseph Free, chairman of the department of archaeology at Wheaton College, and later, professor of archaeology and history at Bemidji State College in Minnesota, writes, "In addition to illuminating the Bible, archaeology has confirmed countless passages which have been rejected by critics as unhistorical or contradictory to known facts."<sup>53</sup>
4. Nelson Gleuck, an American rabbi, academic and archaeologist asserts, "It may 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 exact detail historical statements of the Bible."<sup>54</sup>

**C. New Testament confirmation of the truth of the Old Testament.**

1. Josh McDowell delineates at least 32 New Testament references confirming the truth of the Old Testament as God's Word.<sup>55</sup>
2. McDowell further states, "It is my deep conviction, after examining the evidence, that I hold in my hand the Bible (both Old and New Testaments together) and conclude I have the reliable Word of God."<sup>56</sup>

### Where to Get More Information

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- Wight, Fred H. *Our Inspired Bible*. Butler: Higley Press, 1960.

## ENDNOTES

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- <sup>1</sup> Charles F. Stanley, What You Believe, Does It Matter? <[http://intouch.org/resources/sermon-outlines/content/topic/what\\_you\\_believe\\_does\\_it\\_matter\\_sermon\\_outline](http://intouch.org/resources/sermon-outlines/content/topic/what_you_believe_does_it_matter_sermon_outline)>. Accessed December 2010.
- <sup>2</sup> For more about fulfilled Messianic prophecies, see Josh McDowell's, The New Evidence That Demands a Verdict (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1999), 164-202.
- <sup>3</sup> Rene Schlaepfer, Know What You Believe (unpublished, 1996), 8-9, and Faith Has Its Reasons, October 3, 1999.
- <sup>4</sup> McDowell, 371.
- <sup>5</sup> Nelson Gleuck, Rivers in the Desert: A History of the Negev (New York, NY: Farrar, Straus & Cudahy, 1959).
- <sup>6</sup> R. A. Torrey, Ten Reasons Why I Believe the Bible is the Word of God [<http://www.mun.ca/rels/restmov/texts/dasc/TRWIBB.HTM>]
- <sup>7</sup> Robert Nguyen Cramer, BibleText.com <<http://www.bibletexts.com/terms/313ad.htm>>.
- <sup>8</sup> McDowell, 10.
- <sup>9</sup> For more on this go to: [[www.biblesociety.org](http://www.biblesociety.org)]
- <sup>10</sup> McDowell, 8-9.
- <sup>11</sup> Some liberal theologians claim that Jesus accommodated his teachings to the views of the Jews at that time, and that some biblical authors adopted teachings from pagan religions, thus nullifying the inspiration of the Scriptures. See "Accommodation," Walter A. Elwell, Evangelical Dictionary of Theology, Second Edition, pp. 21-22.
- <sup>12</sup> Inerrant: Yet there are discrepancies in the Bible. See Millard J. Erickson's Christian Theology, Second Edition (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1998) 255-259. Erickson further offers a more precise definition of inerrancy, that is, "the doctrine of inerrancy maintains merely that whatever statements the Bible affirms are fully truthful when they are correctly interpreted in terms of their meaning in their cultural setting and the purpose for which they were written." Erickson, 263.
- <sup>13</sup> John MacArthur, Jr. How to Get the Most Out of God's Word: An Everyday Guide to Enrich Your Study of the Bible. (Dallas: Word Publishing, 1997) 79.
- <sup>14</sup> MacArthur, 82-83. See also McDowell, 21-23.
- <sup>15</sup> It must be pointed out that Athanasius, bishop of Alexandria, was the first to list the canonical books in his thirty-ninth Paschal Letter in A.D. 367.
- <sup>16</sup> Norman Geisler, Baker Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1999), 35.
- <sup>17</sup> Rabbi Wayne D. Dosick, Living Judaism: The Complete guide to Jewish Belief, Tradition, and Practice (New York: Harper Collins, 1995) 92.
- <sup>18</sup> Cyril C. Richardson, Ed., Early Church Fathers (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1953).
- <sup>19</sup> The Tanakh is also known as the Masoretic Text or the Miqra. The name "Tanak" is an acronym formed from the initial Hebrew letters of the Masoretic Text's three traditional subdivisions: The Torah ("Teaching", also known as the Five Books of Moses), Nevi'im ("Prophets") and Ketuvim ("Writings")—hence TaNaKh. Christian Bibles include the books of the Hebrew Bible, but arranged in a different order: Jewish Scripture ends with the people of Israel restored to Jerusalem and the temple and the Christian arrangement ends with the book of the prophet Malachi.
- <sup>20</sup> Josh McDowell, The New Evidence That Demands a Verdict (Nashville, Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1999), 27.
- <sup>21</sup> See Prophecy and the Closed Canon, John MacArthur <[http://www.gty.org/Resources/Articles/A231\\_Prophecy-and-the-Closed-Canon-Part-1?q=canon](http://www.gty.org/Resources/Articles/A231_Prophecy-and-the-Closed-Canon-Part-1?q=canon)>. Accessed August 2011.
- <sup>22</sup> Geisler, 28.
- <sup>23</sup> Geisler, 36.
- <sup>24</sup> In the Roman Catholic Bibles the books are interspersed with the rest of the text. In this case they are also called "Deuterocanonical", which means secondary canon. Jerome rejected the Deuterocanonical books when he was translating the Bible into Latin Vulgate ca. A.D. 450. This was because no Hebrew version of these texts could be found, even though they were present in the Greek Old Testament (the Septuagint). However, they eventually were accepted by the Roman Catholic Church. Protestants rejected these books during the Reformation as lacking divine authority. They either excised them completely or placed them in a third section of the Bible. The Roman Catholic Council of Trent, on the other hand, declared in 1546 that the deuterocanonical books were indeed divine. A list of these books can be found at <<http://www.sacred-texts.com/bib/apo/index.htm>>.

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- <sup>25</sup> See Jerome and the Apocrypha <<http://www.justforcatholics.org/a108.htm>>. Accessed August 2011.
- <sup>26</sup> See The Free Dictionary <<http://www.thefreedictionary.com/pseudepigrapha>>.
- <sup>27</sup> See Jerome and the Apocrypha <<http://www.justforcatholics.org/a108.htm>>. Accessed August 2011.
- <sup>28</sup> Early Christian Writings <<http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/gnostics.html>>. Accessed August 6, 2011.
- <sup>29</sup> MacArthur, Jr., 144-152.
- <sup>30</sup> Wight, 4.
- <sup>31</sup> Wight, 5.
- <sup>32</sup> William D. Mounce, Basics of Biblical Greek (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003) 7.
- <sup>33</sup> Rose Publishing, Why Trust the Bible, 7.
- <sup>34</sup> Tracy Macon Sumner, How Did We Get the Bible? (Uhrichville, OH: Barbour Publishing, 2009) 48-54.
- <sup>35</sup> Genizah <<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Genizah>>.
- <sup>36</sup> J. W. Moore, Is the Bible Historically Reliable? <<http://www.gospeloutreach.net/bible2.html>>.
- <sup>37</sup> There is a great difference of opinion as to when the Masoretic Text was written, but it was probably accomplished in the 10th -11th century. Got Questions.Org, What is the Masoretic Text?<<http://www.gotquestions.org/Masoretic-Text.html>>.
- <sup>38</sup> Wikipedia, Masoretic Text <[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Masoretic\\_Text](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Masoretic_Text)>.
- <sup>39</sup> Wikipedia, Dead Sea Scrolls, <[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dead\\_Sea\\_Scrolls](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dead_Sea_Scrolls)>. Accessed June 6, 2011.
- <sup>40</sup> Twenty-Five fascinating Facts about the Dead Sea Scrolls <<http://www.centuryone.com/25dssfacts.html>>. Accessed June 6, 2011.
- <sup>41</sup> Wikipedia, Codex Vaticanus <[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Codex\\_Vaticanus](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Codex_Vaticanus)>. Accessed June 6, 2011.
- <sup>42</sup> Wikipedia, Codex Sinaiticus <[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Codex\\_Sinaiticus](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Codex_Sinaiticus)>. Accessed June 6, 2011.
- <sup>43</sup> Codex Alexandrinus (Wikipedia). [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Codex\\_Alexandrinus](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Codex_Alexandrinus)
- <sup>44</sup> Why Trust the Bible? (Torrence: Rose Publishing, 2008) 7.
- <sup>45</sup> Wight, 15-16; McDowell 34.
- <sup>46</sup> Adapted from Charles Stanley's Handbook for Christian Living. 1996. pp. 187-191. <[http://www.intouch.org/resources/about-the-bible/content/topic/is\\_the\\_bible\\_really\\_trustworthy\\_and\\_reliable\\_bible](http://www.intouch.org/resources/about-the-bible/content/topic/is_the_bible_really_trustworthy_and_reliable_bible)>
- <sup>47</sup> MacRae and Newman disagree and feel that the TR was developed after the KJV. Facts about the Textus Receptus <<http://www.biblicist.org/bible/receptus.shtml>>. Accessed August 12, 2011.
- <sup>48</sup> Textus Receptus <<http://www.skypoint.com/members/waltzmn/TR.html>>. Accessed August 11, 2011.
- <sup>49</sup> McDowell, 69-89.
- <sup>50</sup> McDowell, 78-79.
- <sup>51</sup> McDowell, 91-115.
- <sup>52</sup> Alan Millard, "Does the Bible Exaggerate King Solomon's Wealth?" (Biblical Archaeology Review, May/June, 1989).
- <sup>53</sup> Joseph Free, Archaeology and Bible History (Wheaton: Scripture Press, 1950).
- <sup>54</sup> Nelson Glueck, Rivers in the Desert: History of Negev (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Cadahy, 1959).
- <sup>55</sup> McDowell, 115-116.
- <sup>56</sup> McDowell, 116.