

# CAN I REALLY TRUST THE BIBLE?

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Can I find good reason to accept its ancient perspectives? It's an old book in a world where age is no longer considered a virtue. If I'm going to trust it, I have to have good reason to do so. At stake are issues as timely as my approach to sexuality, marriage, work, and worship.

If such thoughts go through your mind from time to time, then we would like to offer some help. This booklet has been written by our staff to show the ongoing reliability of the Bible. We hope that it will give you a new appreciation for this book, which countless generations have found to be more than worthy of their trust.

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# OBJECTIONS TO THE BIBLE'S RELIABILITY

**M**ore than 55,000 different books are published in the United States each year. They cover every subject imaginable, from artichokes to zucchini, from anthropology to zoology, from Afghanistan to Zimbabwe. But people who trust the Bible say it is different from any other book ever published. They say it is the only book authored by God and thus the only book that shows us how to know Him, how to live, and how to receive eternal life.

Many people don't agree. They think the Bible is flawed and unreliable, and obviously not written by God. Here's what some of them are saying:

***“The Bible is not scientifically reliable.”***

A person who thinks this way feels that the Bible is full of scientific errors and therefore cannot be trusted in spiritual matters either.

Because of their naturalistic assumptions, many scientists take issue with the miracles in the Bible. They question the scientific validity of the accounts of the sun standing still, the Israelites being fed with quail, or Jonah surviving in the belly of a huge fish for 3 days.

***“The Bible is historically inaccurate.”***

People who believe the Bible insist that it comes from God and is error-free. That's why those who do not agree often point out what they feel to be historical inaccuracies. Whenever they find something in archaeology or ancient records that seems to contradict a biblical statement, they jump to the conclusion that

the Bible is wrong. Unless every biblical name is authenticated through research and every fact verified by historical study, they assume that the Bible is in error.

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***Many people think the Bible is flawed and unreliable.***

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***“The Bible is outdated.”***

Not too many books are still being printed today that were finished 2,000 years ago. But that very mark of the Bible’s greatness is interpreted by some as a point of weakness and disinterest. Modern-day thinkers who have developed new philosophies and theories about life claim that no book written so many centuries ago could have anything relevant to say to our modern world—especially on such specifics

as sexuality, marriage, ethics, and business.

***“The Bible is the work of man.”*** The people who say this think that the Bible is the product of man’s fertile imaginations and ancient mythological traditions. They place it in the same category as the Greek stories of the gods on Olympus or the writings of Confucius or Muhammad. To them, the Bible is just another religious book.

So, many people reject the claim that the Bible is God’s Word. And they object to the idea that it is a book we can trust with our life and destiny. But to reject the Bible, as we will see in the pages to follow, is to close one’s eyes to an overwhelming amount of evidence in its favor. And more important, it is to ignore the reality of mankind’s own spiritual need—and the rescue offered in its message.

# THIS BOOK IS DIFFERENT

**T**he Bible is not different just because it claims to have come from God. The Koran was supposed to have been revealed to Muhammad by the archangel Gabriel. Similarly, Joseph Smith, the founder of Mormonism, claimed to have been given a special revelation from God engraved on golden plates. Other religions also maintain that their sacred writings were revealed by God.

The Bible is totally different, however, in its view of God, its view of man, its view of salvation, and its view of truth.

## **I. Its View Of God.**

The Bible presents God as Sovereign Lord of all (1 Chr. 29:11); as a God of mercy, love, and goodness (Ps. 145:9); and as one God (Dt. 6:4). But Mormon doctrine,

for example, teaches that there are many gods, that God Himself was once man, and that man has the potential of becoming God.

By contrast, the Bible claims that the one true God became a man in the incomparable Person of Jesus Christ. A British expert on comparative religions, J. N. D. Anderson, wrote:

Other religions may indeed include the belief that God, or one of the gods, manifested himself once, or many times, in human form. . . . But Christianity alone has dared to claim that “the one, omnipresent, omniscient ground of all existence” has uniquely intervened in His creation, not by assuming the mere form or appearance of a man, but by actually becoming incarnate (*Christianity And Religion*, p.51).

## **2. Its View Of Man.**

While the holy books of many other religions either exalt man or debase him, the Bible gives a more balanced and realistic picture. First, it does not make man out to be more than he is, as did the ancient Greek Heraclitus who said, "The gods are immortal men, and men are mortal gods." Second, it does not make man less than he is, as psychologist B. F. Skinner did by saying man is nothing more than a complex organism controlled by his environment.

By contrast, the Bible alone does justice to both the high and the low sides of human nature. It tells of man's creation in the image of God, is realistic about his sin, upholds his personal responsibility, and gives him hope for the future.

**3. Its View Of Salvation.** The salvation of man as presented in the Bible differs vastly from the

cruel and inhumane views of the world's religions. Hindus, for example, often involve themselves in agonizing acts to merit God's favor. Buddhists follow an eightfold discipline of self-denial. Muslims engage in a strict regimen of fasting and prayer to earn God's approval.

The Bible, however, offers man salvation in the God-man, Jesus Christ. It is not a salvation by works, but by grace through faith.

#### **4. Its View Of Truth.**

While other religious books are filled with unconfirmed claims and philosophies, the Bible supports its claims with historical and geographical facts. This is why the first-century Christians gave so much emphasis to the good news of the resurrected Christ. Their message was to be accepted not merely on the authority of their words but on verifiable evidence.

# YOU CAN TRUST THE BIBLE!

If the Bible can give us good evidence that it has come to us from God, then we can see why it makes so much sense to trust its authority. This is the pattern we follow in other areas of life. When we are sick, we don't ask a painter for a diagnosis and a prescription. Instead, we look for someone qualified to give us reliable medical treatment.

And what about the deeper, most basic decisions of life? Where do we go when we want to know what's right and what's wrong? Who do we ask about the origin and meaning of life? Where do we turn when we are overwhelmed with a sense of sin and our terrible weakness? How can we find rescue, information about the future, and

hope beyond the grave?

Once again, if we can show that we have good reason to believe that the Bible has come to us from God, then we also have a book we can trust—a book like no other book this world has ever known.

In the following pages, we will organize this evidence for the reliability of the Bible into four basic categories: its personal claims, its protected text, its proven accuracy, and its profound impact. More specifically, these categories can be broken down into the following 10 lines of evidence: (1) the Bible's claims for itself, (2) Christ's claims for it, (3) the writers' claims for it, (4) its textual unity, (5) its textual preservation, (6) its historical accuracy, (7) its scientific accuracy, (8) its prophetic accuracy, (9) its social impact, and (10) its personal impact.

As we look at these 10 lines of evidence, which support our conviction that the Bible is the Word of God, our sincere hope is that you too will be convinced that the Bible is a book you can trust.

## ITS PERSONAL CLAIMS

<b>MAN'S TRUST</b>
10.
9.
8.
7.
6.
5.
4.
<b>3. Writers' Claims</b>
<b>2. Christ's Claims</b>
<b>1. Bible's Self Claims</b>
<b>GOD'S WORD</b>

The evidence for the reliability of the Bible begins with the unusual claims surrounding it. As you spend time reading the Bible, you will soon find overwhelming evidence that

the writers of this book were convinced that it was uniquely God-given. We will look at three claims in this section: (1) the Bible's claims for itself, (2) Christ's claims for it, and (3) the writers' claims for it.

**I. The Bible's Claims For Itself.** The Bible claims, first of all, to be the Word of God to man (2 Tim. 3:16; 2 Pet. 1:20-21). That may not seem to be a very strong reason for us to trust it. But it is a good place to start. If the Bible didn't make that claim for itself, we would have to take it upon ourselves to do so. In this regard, the Bible claims that even though it was written by human authors, it was inspired by God. And if it truly is what it claims to be—a God-inspired book—then it is absolutely trustworthy.

When we say the Bible is inspired, what do we mean? For one thing, we

do not mean the kind of inspiration that comes to an author trying to write a book or a mechanic trying to find out what's wrong with a car. As they struggle with a problem, they may suddenly see a solution and say they were hit with a bolt of inspiration.

This is not what we mean when we say that the Bible writers were inspired. Rather, we mean that their writing was initiated and controlled by God Himself. In a supernatural way, the Holy Spirit led Moses, Isaiah, Matthew, Paul, and the other Bible authors to write the message of God to man.

The Bible's unusual claim to be the inspired Word of God is made clear in several key passages. Let's look at three of them. The first is in Paul's second letter to Timothy:

*All Scripture is given  
by inspiration of God,*

*and is profitable for  
doctrine, for reproof, for  
correction, for instruction  
in righteousness  
(2 Tim. 3:16).*

The word translated "inspiration" means "God-breathed." This tells us that the Bible originated in the mind of God. The Holy Spirit influenced the individual Bible writers to put down the message God wanted mankind to have.

A second important passage that expresses the Bible's claim to be the Word of God is in one of the apostle Peter's letters:

*Knowing this first,  
that no prophecy of  
Scripture is of any private  
interpretation [origin], for  
prophecy never came by  
the will of man, but holy  
men of God spoke as they  
were moved by the Holy  
Spirit (2 Pet. 1:20-21).*

These verses make a tremendous claim! They say that the Bible prophets did

not originate what they wrote. Rather, they recorded what was given to them by God. They were moved (literally “borne along”) by the Holy Spirit. Now, that doesn’t mean that their individual personality or style of writing was overpowered. It means that they were kept from having any error creep into what they wrote. They were moved by the Holy Spirit to record only what God wanted man to know.

The Bible’s claim, then, is that it was written by God. It is not man’s book, it is God’s book. Paul informed us that the spiritual truth he gave was “not in words which man’s wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches” (1 Cor. 2:13).

Yes, the Bible claims to be the inspired Word of God—powerful, living, and indestructible (1 Jn. 1:1-3; Heb. 4:12; 1 Pet. 1:23-25).

In both the Old and New Testaments, it is the message of God to people of all ages—a book you can trust!

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***That Christ relied  
on the Scriptures  
may be our  
greatest reason  
to do so.***

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**2. Christ’s Claims For The Bible.** While Jesus Christ was on earth, He affirmed the Bible’s claims for itself. In what He said about it and in the way He used it, the Son of God showed the Bible to be the Word of God. Consider the following:

***a. He used titles for the Bible that showed its authenticity:***

- “The Word of God” (Mk. 7:13; Jn. 10:35).
- “Scripture” (Lk. 4:21; Jn. 5:39; 10:35).

- “The commandment of God” (Mk. 7:8).

***b. He accepted the persons and events mentioned in the Old Testament as historical:***

- Adam and Eve (Mt. 19:4-5).
- Noah and the flood (Mt. 24:37-39).
- Lot, Lot’s wife, and Sodom (Lk. 17:28-32).
- Jonah (Mt. 12:38-41).

***c. He saw His own words as Scripture and therefore to be believed (Jn. 12:48-49).***

***d. He held people responsible for what was written in the Scriptures (Mt. 12:3).***

***e. He used Scripture as conclusive evidence in answering His critics:***

- John 10:35, quoting Psalm 82:6.
- Matthew 22:32, quoting Exodus 3:6,15.
- Matthew 22:42-44, quoting Psalm 110:1.

***f. He used the authority of Scripture to refute the temptations of Satan in the wilderness (Mt. 4:4,7,10).***

In the way Jesus Christ quoted and used the Scriptures, He made it clear that He accepted its claims for itself to be true. While He was on earth, the living Word affirmed the written Word.

### **3. The Writers’ Claims For The Bible.**

The individual writers affirmed the Bible’s claims for itself by accepting the other parts of the Bible as the Word of God. They also affirmed it by the way they saw themselves as part of God’s plan for making Himself known to man.

First, let’s look at how the Bible authors viewed the Scriptures:

- When Daniel read Jeremiah’s prophecy that the Babylonian captivity would last 70 years, he

accepted it as true and began to pray and plan accordingly (Dan. 9:2).

- Peter accepted the supernatural origin of the writings of the Old Testament prophets (2 Pet. 1:21).
- Peter also accepted the supernatural origin of the writings of Paul, even though he found them hard to understand (2 Pet. 3:15-16).
- John said that the writings of the apostles, along with his own writings, were inspired by God and authoritative (1 Jn. 4:6).

Second, the Bible writers saw themselves as communicating the Word of God. Look at the following passages:

- The prophet Isaiah began his book by proclaiming, “For the Lord has spoken” (1:2).
- Jeremiah opened his prophecy by saying, “Then the word of the

Lord came to me” (1:4).

- God commissioned Ezekiel to go to his people and tell them, “Thus says the Lord God” (3:11).
- Paul claimed that the words he spoke were directly from God (Gal. 1:11-12; 1 Th. 2:13).

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***If the evidence is what it seems to be, then the Bible is not just a book—it is the book.***

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Let’s sum up what we have said. The Bible claims to be the book of God. Christ affirmed this claim. And the Bible writers themselves affirmed it by accepting as Scripture the writings of their fellow biblical authors and by seeing themselves as writing the words of God.

## ITS PROTECTED TEXT

MAN'S TRUST
10.
9.
8.
7.
6.
5. Textual Preservation
4. Textual Unity
3. Writers' Claims
2. Christ's Claims
1. Bible's Self Claims
GOD'S WORD

The supernatural protection of the text of the Bible is another reason for trusting it. This protection occurred in two forms: (a) its unity amid great diversity, and (b) the miraculous preservation of the text itself. Let's look at the two ways God has protected the text of His Word.

**4. Its Unity In Diversity.** The writings of man are marked by disunity and contradiction. Books written by more than one

author often contain glaring discrepancies in philosophy, facts, style, or ideas. Even those written by one author may contain contradictions in fact or logic. Those who have given their lives to a study of the Scriptures, however, are continually amazed at its unity and consistency of doctrine.

Josh McDowell, a well-known apologist for Christianity, was approached by a salesman for the *Great Books Of The Western World* series. This set includes the writings of the leading thinkers throughout the history of Western man. McDowell challenged the representative to take 10 of the authors from the same walk of life, the same time period, the same country, and the same language and ask them about one basic subject. "Would they agree?" Josh asked. The man said, "Are you kidding? You would have a conglomeration!"

The amazing unity of the Bible, therefore, merits our trust. From Genesis to Revelation, the Bible tells a single story: the rescue of mankind from sin through the death of Jesus Christ. The Old Testament presents Him as the hope of mankind; the New Testament shows Him to be the fulfillment of that hope.

Now, if the Bible had been written by one person at one time, one could understand how it would be unified in general thoughts and specific details. But consider these diversities in its origin:

- It was written by 40 different authors.
- It was written over a period of 1,600 years.
- It was written in three languages: Hebrew, Greek, and Aramaic.
- Its writers came from many walks of life: prophet (Jeremiah), priest (Zechariah),

shepherd (Amos), king (David), servant (Nehemiah), doctor (Luke), tax collector (Matthew), and Pharisee (Paul).

- It was written on three continents: Asia, Africa, and Europe.
- A gap of more than 400 years separated the writing of the Old Testament from the New Testament—equivalent to the timespan from the days of Sir Francis Drake to today.

In spite of this wide diversity, the Bible is one book. As branches, roots, trunk, and leaves are part of one tree, so the parts of the Bible make up a single unit. It agrees in doctrine, details of prophecy, what it says about Jesus Christ, and its offer of rescue to mankind. It is a unified book made up of many books. It is a book you can trust!

**5. Its Textual Preservation.** The Bible is also a book to be trusted because its text has been miraculously preserved. None of the original manuscripts written by the biblical authors are still in existence. All of them were either lost or destroyed centuries ago. This has

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***“The grass withers,  
the flower fades,  
but the Word  
of our God  
stands forever.”***  
**Isaiah 40:8**

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caused some critics of the Bible to question the purity of the texts we now have. But we can be confident that the Bibles we hold in our hands were translated from texts that for all practical purposes are the same as the originals.

### ***The Old Testament.***

The Old Testament books were written primarily in Hebrew. They were recorded either on papyrus (a grassy reed whose inner bark was dried and glued together to form a paperlike substance) or parchment (the scraped and dried skins of animals). When a copy wore out, a new copy was made and the old one destroyed.

But that was not an easy task. They did not have copy machines like we do today, so it had to be done by hand. Stringent rules were followed by the scribes to keep errors from creeping in. The methods used by the Masoretes had been followed for centuries, from AD 500-900. These dedicated Hebrew scholars had an elaborate counting system for assuring accuracy. First, they would count all the letters on a page. Then, when they finished copying the page,

they would count the letters on the copy to see if the numbers agreed. This would keep them from copying a word twice, omitting a word, skipping a line, or copying the same line twice. If the counts did not agree, they would destroy the copy they had just worked over so laboriously and start again.

Because of this system, the Hebrew texts since AD 900 are virtually free from error. But what about the years before 900? Most of the Old Testament was written centuries earlier, and the last book, Malachi, was finished nearly 400 years before Christ was born. Couldn't a lot of errors have crept in during that time?

That question could not have been answered with certainty before the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls. One hot, dusty day in 1947, an Arab boy threw a stone into one of the hundreds of caves that

pocket the cliffs surrounding the Dead Sea. To his surprise, he heard something shatter. When he crawled in to investigate, he found a broken pottery jar and some old manuscripts, including one of the book of Isaiah. This was the first of the collection of what came to be known as the Dead Sea Scrolls.

Word of the discovery spread, and soon archaeologists were excavating caves throughout the area. They found fragments of every Old Testament book and some complete manuscripts.

But how did these compare with the Masoretic text? The careful work of textual comparison began, and soon it was found that there was no difference between the text of the Dead Sea Scrolls and those of the Masoretes. Even though these scrolls were copied almost 1,000 years

earlier, they were almost identical to the Masoretic text! On the basis of this astounding evidence, we can be assured that the Old Testament text has been accurately preserved and that we can read it as the reliable Word of God.

The New Testament. What has been said of the Old Testament can also be said of the New. It also has been kept from error over the centuries. Although its books were copied thousands of times and distributed widely among the early churches, it too has been protected from error.

New Testament scholars and textual experts have studied with painstaking care the thousands of manuscripts that have been discovered. They assure us that the texts from which our Bibles were translated are virtually identical to those written by Matthew, Paul, and the other New

Testament writers. There are some minor variations, but none of them change the meaning of the passage in which they are found. Most of these differences are variations in spelling, like the British “labour” and the American “labor.” A huge number of manuscripts or fragments of the New Testament have been discovered and compared. It is by far the most well-attested document of its era. Consider these comparisons:

- *Caesar's Gallic Wars*  
10 Manuscripts  
Earliest Date: AD 900
- *Livy's History Of Rome*  
20 Manuscripts  
Earliest Date: AD 400
- *Thucydides' History*  
8 Manuscripts  
Earliest Date: AD 900
- *Herodotus' History*  
8 Manuscripts  
Earliest Date: AD 900
- *The New Testament*  
14,000 Manuscripts  
Earliest Date: AD 125

Two important finds have been made in recent years that have added significant evidence for the authenticity of the New Testament text. The first, the Rylands Library Papyri, contains a fragment from John 18 that has been dated at AD 125. The second, the Chester Beatty collection of papyri, contains almost all of the New Testament and dates between AD 200 and AD 275.

The meticulous work being done in textual studies of both Testaments by brilliant scholars, most of them non-Christians, has given us every reason to be confident that we know what the original manuscripts said—even though we do not have any of them. True, there are variants, but they are very minor in importance and affect no essential teaching. The protection of the text, both in unity and in

preservation, is another reason we can trust the Bible.

## ITS PROVEN ACCURACY

<b>MAN'S TRUST</b>
10.
9.
<b>8. Prophetic Accuracy</b>
<b>7. Scientific Accuracy</b>
<b>6. Historical Accuracy</b>
5. Textual Preservation
4. Textual Unity
3. Writers' Claims
2. Christ's Claims
1. Bible's Self Claims
<b>GOD'S WORD</b>

When the Bible mentions historical facts, alludes to science, or predicts the future, its accuracy gives evidence that it is a book you can trust. What would you expect from a cookbook? You certainly would not want a collection of original recipes written by a chef whose greatest culinary achievement was

pouring milk on a bowl of breakfast cereal. You would expect the author to have proven cooking skills and be able to give accurate measurements and exact cooking times. You would also expect the ingredients to be tasty and nutritious.

What, then, should we expect from a book that claims to be the written record of the word and works of God and His relationship with mankind? We have every right to expect this book to meet the highest standards of accuracy.

Did the Bible writers know what they were talking about? Can the history, science, and prophecy of the Bible be trusted?

In a book where the history of man and the revelation of God are so intertwined, if we have doubts concerning what it says about man and his world, we will also have a

right to doubt what it says about God. If part of the Bible were to be proven wrong, then the rest of it would be suspect. However, the Bible has proven itself to be reliable in history, science, and fulfilled prophecy. Its record is accurate and trustworthy.

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*If part of the Bible  
were to be proven  
wrong, then the  
rest of it would  
be suspect.*

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**6. Its Accuracy In History.** The Bible claims to present an accurate record of the real history of man. The Old and New Testaments are filled with references to specific people, places, and events. The biblical world is not a world of make-believe. The events of the Bible took

place in our world with people like you and me.

The serious challenges to the historical accuracy of the Bible are being answered by the work of archaeologists. They are uncovering more and more evidence to verify the historical record of the Bible.

For example, the Old Testament mentioned a people known as the Hittites nearly 50 times. But for centuries, those who studied the ancient world questioned the Bible because they had discovered no evidence of such a people. In 1906, however, the Hittite capital was uncovered about 90 miles east of Ankara, the capital of Turkey.

As time goes on, the questions of the critics are being answered by reliable scholarship and the findings of the archaeologist's spade. Nelson Glueck, a Jewish archaeologist, said, "It may be stated categorically that

no archaeological discovery has ever controverted a biblical reference" (*Rivers In The Desert: History Of Neteg*, p.31).

The discoveries not long ago of tablets in the ancient city of Ebla in northern Syria has brought to light a wealth of historical material that supports the biblical record. An article in *Time* magazine reported, "Their discovery does more than provide documentary evidence of a little known kingdom that existed between 2400 and 2250 BC; it also provides the best evidence to date that some of the people described in the Old Testament actually existed" (October 18, 1976, p.63).

The New Testament record is also supported by research and discovery. The gospel of Luke and the book of Acts (both written by Luke) have gained the respect of scholars who have investigated their

numerous references to people and places in the Jewish and Roman worlds. Concerning Luke, F. F. Bruce has written, “A man whose accuracy can be demonstrated in matters where we are able to test it is likely to be accurate even when means of testing him are not available” (*The New Testament Documents: Are They Reliable?* p.90).

So the believability of the New Testament in matters of our physical world lends credibility to what it says about the spiritual world. John Warwick Montgomery has written, “What, then, does a historian know about Jesus Christ? He knows, first and foremost, that the New Testament documents can be relied upon to give an accurate portrait of Him. And he knows that this portrait cannot be rationalized away by wishful thinking, philosophical presuppositionalism, or

literary maneuvering” (*History And Christianity*, p.40).

**7. Its Accuracy In Science.** Do the Bible and science conflict? Do we have to make a choice whether we are going to live by either religious faith or scientific data? From the way some people talk you might think there is a legitimate choice. But there is not. The apparent conflicts result from unjustified conclusions made on both sides—either by those who go beyond the limits of proper Bible interpretation or by those who go beyond the limits of science to equate theory with fact.

Debate arose in Galileo’s time because some religious leaders foolishly spoke out on a matter of science and said that the earth was the center of the solar system. And conflict still exists today on matters of science. One group uses scientific data to

conclude dogmatically that all of life is the result of an evolutionary process that began with the most elemental forms of life. Others interpret the data differently to say that the complexity of life as we see it today could only have been the result of divine creation. Those who deny miracles are at odds with those who say that the miracles recorded in the Bible actually happened. This is because people who deny God reject the view of those who believe in a supernatural God who at times intervened in the affairs of men.

The heart of the apparent conflict between science and the Bible is not the actual data; it is in the underlying beliefs of the two sides and their conclusions. The information is the same for both.

The Bible is not a science textbook. It often uses

figures of speech to describe facets of life that science would explain in different terms. For example, it speaks of the sun setting and of the four corners of the earth. Scientists, of course, would not accept these statements as accurate. But they were never meant to be taken literally. When the Bible does speak directly about matters of science, however, it speaks correctly.

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***The God who  
created the  
universe and set  
in motion the laws  
that govern our  
world is the same  
God who inspired  
the Bible.***

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In the final analysis, the Bible and science are in perfect agreement. The God

who created the universe and set in motion the laws that govern our world is the same God who inspired the Bible. He is the God of truth and does not contradict Himself. Therefore, when the Bible is interpreted correctly and science arrives at proven conclusions, they will be in perfect agreement.

**8. Its Accuracy In Prophecy.** What would you think of a doctor who had told you that you would never have any heart problems, and then you suffered a heart attack as you walked out of his office? What would be your opinion of a politician who promised economic prosperity, but whose policies actually led to a serious depression? You would have a legitimate reason to doubt what they said about the future. You might wonder whom you could believe.

The Bible is not like that. The Word of God has

proven that it can be trusted. It has never been wrong in its diagnosis of man's ills. It has never made false promises. It has never given man reason to think it is a collection of fables and lies.

One clear confirmation of its reliability is the accuracy of its prophecy. The Bible itself offers the standards by which to test those who claim to speak authoritatively about the future. It says in Deuteronomy 18:20-22 that the test of a prophet's authority is the accuracy of his predictions. The Bible contains hundreds of prophecies, so we can measure it by its own test.

Some of the most dramatic examples of fulfilled Bible prophecy are those concerning Jesus Christ. Isaiah 52:13 through 53:12 and Psalm 22, for instance, record specific details about death by crucifixion hundreds of years before this

terrible form of execution was ever practiced.

Note these specific prophecies about Jesus Christ that were literally fulfilled:

(Ezek. 26). It happened exactly as predicted. First, Nebuchadnezzar destroyed the city, then Alexander had his men use the ruins to build a causeway out to

<b>PROPHECY</b>		<b>FULFILLMENT</b>
Isa. 7:14	Born of a virgin	Lk. 1:26-35
Mic. 5:2	Born in Bethlehem	Mt. 2:1
Isa. 7:14	Called Immanuel	Mt. 1:23
Isa. 9:1-2	Ministry in Galilee	Mt. 4:12-16
Zech. 9:9	Triumphal entry	Mt. 21:1-11
Ps. 41:9	Betrayed by a friend	Mt. 26:20-25
Ps. 35:11	Falsely accused	Mt. 26:59-68
Isa. 53:7	Silent before accusers	Mt. 27:12-14
Ps. 22:16	Hands and feet pierced	Jn. 20:25
Isa. 53:12	Crucified with robbers	Mt. 27:38
Ps. 22:18	Lots cast for clothes	Jn. 19:23-24
Ps. 34:20	Bones not broken	Jn. 19:33
Ps. 22:15	Thirsted on the cross	Jn. 19:28
Isa. 53:9	Buried in tomb of rich	Mt. 27:57-60

Another example of fulfilled prophecy was the destruction of the city of Tyre. Hundreds of years before, Ezekiel had predicted that the city would be destroyed and the ruins scraped off and dumped into the sea, never to be rebuilt

an offshore island where the people had fled. That causeway may still be seen today as a silent witness to the accuracy of Bible prophecy.

Daniel accurately predicted the succession of four great world powers:

Babylonia, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome (Dan. 2,7).

The predictions of the judgment of God against Nineveh (Nah. 1–3), Ammon and Moab (Jer. 48–49), Babylon (Isa. 13–14; Jer. 51), and Edom (Isa. 34; Jer. 49; Ezek. 25,35) were all fulfilled as prophesied.

Whenever the Bible speaks prophetically, therefore, it is accurate. Hundreds of prophecies have been literally fulfilled. On this basis, we can also believe what the Bible has to say about things to come. It has already proven itself!

## **ITS PROFOUND IMPACT**

The Bible has also proven itself trustworthy in its impact on societies and on individuals. Its power to change lives is seen wherever it has been taken by messengers of the gospel. The Bible is called the “word

of life” (Phil. 2:16). Its message is the gospel, which it calls “the power of God to salvation” (Rom. 1:16). And it refers to itself as the “living and powerful” Word of God (Heb. 4:12). It’s one thing to claim to be living and powerful; it’s quite another to live up to it.

### **MAN’S TRUST**

**10. Personal Impact**

**9. Social Impact**

8. Prophetic Accuracy

7. Scientific Accuracy

6. Historical Accuracy

5. Textual Preservation

4. Textual Unity

3. Writers’ Claims

2. Christ’s Claims

1. Bible’s Self Claims

### **GOD’S WORD**

**9. Its Impact On Society.** Wherever the Bible has been taken and its message accepted, it has profoundly affected the culture into which it was brought. When an honest investigation is made, it

becomes evident that the Bible has been instrumental in bringing about higher morality, social change, improved living conditions, and a better life. In lands where slavery was practiced, the power of the Word of God brought conviction of the wrong and emancipation for those in bondage. In places where women were treated little better than animals, the preaching of the gospel brought them new respect and freedom from tyranny and debasement. In areas where cruelty and severe oppression were common, the coming of the Bible brought kindness, toleration, and humane treatment. The plight of children and the handicapped, who were sometimes shamefully mistreated, improved greatly when the Bible came and its truth was accepted.

When the Bible is received, the aspirations

and the spirits of men are lifted. Try to imagine what would have happened to mankind without the high view of the Bible. Take away its teaching about human dignity and individual worth, and see what is left. Eliminate the moral impact of the great preachers and Christian reformers, and consider the plight the world would be in. Remove from our art galleries the paintings inspired by Jesus Christ. Take down from our library shelves the books that find their inspiration and theme in the Scriptures. Empty the world of the lofty oratorios and uplifting music of the church. Eliminate from the cities and villages of the earth the magnificent cathedrals and little white-frame church buildings that have been centers of hope and peace for troubled lives down through the ages. Take it all away, and what is left? A Milton without a poem; a

Michelangelo without a theme; a Dante without a vision; a Handel without inspiration; a Whitefield without a sermon.

Or take from mankind the high moral code of the Bible. What happens to our laws, our police, and our judges? What happens to the weak, the defenseless, the downtrodden, the lonely, and the despairing? One shudders to think of the tribulation that would fall upon our world. One trembles at the heartlessness, the cruelty, the deprivation of an unrestrained mankind.

Yes, the Bible has made a profound impact on society. That is undeniable.

**10. Its Impact On Individuals.** Not only has the Bible had an impact on society, it has also changed individuals. Despairing, helpless, wicked men and women on the brink of madness have found rescue

in hearing and believing the message of the Bible. It has provided new hope to the despondent. It has brought quiet peace to the restless. It has led lowly people to greatness. It has raised morality to its highest levels. It has worked amazing deliverance and change for millions.

Think of Augustine, brilliant scholar of the fourth and fifth centuries. Although his godly mother prayed for him, he used his intellect and energies to live in wicked indulgence. But he could not find peace. So he began a long period of searching and intense self-examination. Tortured and driven, he continued his quest until he read these words in the Bible: "Let us walk properly, as in the day, not in revelry and drunkenness, not in licentiousness and lewdness, not in strife and envy. But put on the Lord

Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts” (Rom. 13:13-14). Augustine later wrote about his response to this passage: “No further would I read; nor needed I. For instantly at the end of this sentence, by a light as it were of serenity infused into my heart, all the darkness of doubt vanished away.” This former drunkard eventually became the bishop of Hippo in northern Africa, founded the first monastery in that region, and influenced much of Christian thought by his brilliant writing.

Charles Haddon Spurgeon vainly searched for peace until he heard this verse quoted by a country preacher: “Look to Me, and be saved, all you ends of the earth! For I am God, and there is no other” (Isa. 45:22). He became a popular and influential London pastor of the mid to late 1800s.

Martin Luther found deliverance for his sin and the spark that ignited the Protestant Reformation when he read these words: “The just shall live by his faith” (Hab. 2:4).

Chuck Colson, convicted Watergate conspirator, came to the truth through the faithful witness and clear teaching of the Bible by some of his friends. He now directs Prison Fellowship, a ministry for prisoners. His book *Born Again* has influenced many who were trapped by the consequences of their own behavior.

These stories could be repeated hundreds of thousands of times by people of all ages and from all walks of life who have had the deepest needs of their lives met by the power of the Bible. And it can do the same for you if you will open your heart to its message and believe.

# HOW WE GOT OUR BIBLE

**W**hat determined which books belong in the Bible? How did we end up with 39 books in the Old Testament and 27 books in the New Testament? These questions are answered in a discussion of the “canon of Scripture.” The word *canon* means “a measuring device” or “a standard.”

Out of the many religious writings that have been circulated, only 66 books were accepted as inspired by God. While some were recognized immediately as authentic, it took some time for others to be endorsed as Scripture. Throughout the process, however, the canon of Scripture was being determined by God, not by man.

## **The Old Testament.**

The writings of Moses and the book of Joshua were

immediately accepted as Scripture (Ex. 24:3; Josh. 24:26). The remaining books were tested by the following principles:

1. Authorship by a recognized prophet of God or leader in Israel.
2. Internal evidence of its inspiration and authority. The reader was able to recognize it as unique in communicating the revelation of God.
3. Writings containing obvious doctrinal and factual errors were eliminated. Books accepted by the community that received them were given priority consideration.
4. Further validation was given to certain Old Testament books when they were quoted from by Christ or the New Testament writers and referred to as Scripture.

The 12 books of the Apocrypha were not accepted as part of the

biblical canon for these reasons:

- They appeared in no Hebrew canon.
- None were quoted in the New Testament.
- They were not included in any early lists.
- Their content was too mythological.

### **The New Testament.**

The acceptance of the New Testament books was based on the test of apostleship. They were received if they were written by an apostle, such as Peter or John, or by someone close to an apostle, such as Luke or Mark, who had apostolic authorization. We know that some false accounts of Christ's life were being distributed (Lk. 1:1-4), as well as some false epistles (2 Th. 2:2). Therefore, positive identification of the New Testament books was necessary.

The church fathers supported the inspiration of the New Testament canon

and carefully identified and eliminated questionable works. The Councils of Hippo (AD 393) and Carthage (AD 397) accepted the 27 books that now appear in the New Testament.

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*“The church  
no more gave us  
the New Testament  
canon than Sir  
Isaac Newton gave  
us the force of  
gravity. God gave us  
gravity by His work  
of creation, and  
similarly He gave us  
the New Testament  
canon by inspiring  
the original books  
that make it up.”*

J. I. Packer

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## “WE TRIED TO PROVE IT WRONG”

Joan Olsen’s parents were Christians, but she and her physician husband were agnostic. This led to many long discussions about the Bible between these couples. Finally, the young doctor and his wife agreed to study Christianity. Here is Dr. Viggo Olsen’s account:

I implied that our study would be honest and objective, a sincere search for truth. But our agnostic bias made us begin the search in a diabolically clever way. We would prove that the Bible is not the Word of God . . . .

“First,” I said [to Joan], “we will review all the agnostic arguments we heard during university and medical college years. Second, we will pick out and list the

scientific mistakes in the Bible. These mistakes will prove it to be the word of men, not the Word of some infallible Creator.”

The Olsens began their quest. The first question they confronted was, “Is there a God who created the universe?” An intense study led them to conclude that God does exist. But that still left them agnostic, for they weren’t convinced that God could be known. They could not see the mark of the supernatural in the Bible.

“Is it even reasonable to consider that God might reveal Himself to our race?” I asked one day at dinner. “Well,” Joan replied, “I just read something on that question. It made the point that we human beings are here, the only rational creatures in God’s creation. It is unlikely that God created us whimsically, for no

reason at all. And having made us, it is logical that God should reveal to us His reason for creating us. Also, if God loves us, He would want to tell us—love is like that.”

When the Olsens looked carefully, they found that the Bible does claim to be “God’s book for revealing Himself.” Here is what they discovered:

The Bible . . . represents God, motivated by an eternal love, reaching down to tell us about Himself and His plan for us. . . . We also noted the remarkable unity and consistency evident in the Christian Scriptures. . . .

Contrary to our previous understanding, we found the Bible to be historically accurate. To the science of archaeology the Bible owes its vindication in the matter of historical accuracy.

Then there is the remarkable scientific accuracy of the Bible. Here was the exact target of the attack Joan and I had launched to disprove Christianity and Christ. . . . We encountered great difficulty, however, in finding scientific mistakes in the Bible. Again and again we were forced to cancel out seeming mistakes because of more up-to-date evidence or information.

After months of serious questioning, Dr. and Mrs. Olsen concluded that the Bible is indeed God’s message to mankind. Based on this belief, they both accepted Jesus Christ as their Savior. Later, they journeyed to East Pakistan (now Bangladesh), where they have served as missionaries since 1962.

*From Doktor: Diplomat In Bangladesh.*  
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# THINKING IT OVER

**W**e have presented 10 reasons, 10 lines of evidence, for answering yes to the question, “Can I really trust the Bible?” On the basis of what we have pointed out, we believe the Bible is the one book you can trust. Take a moment to fill in the following graphic as a way of reviewing the evidence we have presented.

<b>MAN'S TRUST</b>
10.
9.
8.
7.
6.
5.
4.
3.
2.
1.
<b>GOD'S WORD</b>

This topic leads to a consideration of two very

important questions. First, if you are a Christian, do you trust the Bible enough to put it into practice? Are you as willing to obey its commands as you are to claim its promises?

Second, if you are not a believer, what are you going to do about the Bible? You cannot be neutral about its claims. You must either accept what it says about God, Jesus Christ, and salvation, or you must reject it. We therefore urge you to believe what it says about your need to trust in Jesus Christ as your Savior. Acknowledging your sin and believing that He died to pay its penalty, ask Him to save you. The Bible says, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved” (Acts 16:31). Then you will know by firsthand experience the benefit of believing the Bible—the book you can trust!

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