

How We Got the Bible, and is it Reliable?

Sources:

Systematic Theology, Volume One, by Dr. Norman Geisler

A Ready Defense, by Josh McDowell

Halley's Bible Handbook

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Why Read the Bible

- ❑ Why should we take the time to read the Bible?
 - We read to learn, or to find comfort or joy in its pages
 - We hope to use what we learn to improve our lives and the lives of others

Did You Know?

- ❑ A typical Bible is about 1,000 pages. If you read 5 pages a day (20 minutes), you can read the Bible in 8 months.
- ❑ The Bible can be read in about 70 hours
- ❑ Over 4,000 figures of speech are used in the Bible to emphasize and clarify. And that's not pulling your leg.

BIBLE STATISTICS

❑ Number of books:	66
❑ Chapters:	1,189
❑ Verses:	31,101
❑ Words:	783,137
❑ Letters:	3,566,480
❑ No. of Promises:	1,260
❑ No. of Commands:	6,468
❑ No. of Predictions:	over 8,000
❑ Total Prophecies	6,408
❑ Fulfilled Prophecies:	3,268
❑ Unfulfilled Prophecies:	3,140

Did You Know?

- ❑ Out of more than 230 Old Testament quotes found in the New Testament almost 25% of the quotes are from Psalms.
- ❑ Psalms (54 quotes) is second only to Isaiah (55 quotes) for being quoted the most in the New Testament.
- ❑ Early church fathers from the 2nd-4th century prolifically quoted New Testament Scripture – all verses except 11

Presidential Bible Quotes

- ❑ *“It is impossible to rightly govern the world without God and the Bible.”*
~ George Washington
- ❑ *“The Bible is the first and almost the only book deserving of universal attention.”* ~ John Quincy Adams
- ❑ *“That book, sir, is the rock on which our republic rests.”*
~ Andrew Jackson
- ❑ *“I believe the Bible is the best Gift God has ever given to man.”* ~ Abraham Lincoln
- ❑ *“The Bible is the sheet-anchor of our liberties.”* ~ U.S. Grant
- ❑ *“A thorough understanding of the Bible is better than a college education.”* ~ Theodore Roosevelt
- ❑ *“Of the many influences that have shaped the United States into a distinctive nation and people, none may be said to be more fundamental and enduring than the Bible.”*
~ Ronald Reagan

The Power of God's Word

- ❑ No other book can testify to the claims of changing lives.
 - Drunkards and thieves become productive citizens
 - Broken families become healed
 - Society becomes a safe place to live and work

- ❑ Power comes not from the words themselves, but from the Holy Spirit who fulfill the promises of those words, which He penned:
 - Obey and you will be blessed/healed/restored
 - Draw near to God and He will draw near to you

Is the Bible Inspired?

Elements of Bible Inspiration

- ❑ **Verbal Inspiration** – Every word in the original autographs are genuinely from God
- ❑ **Plenary** – The Bible is whole, complete, and true
- ❑ **Inerrant** – There are no errors / contradictions in the original autographs
- ❑ **Authoritative** – God's Word is absolute

The study of Hermeneutics is a science because it is guided by rules within a system, and it is an art because of the application of those rules

What Skeptics Say

Skeptics say:

- ❑ Our Bible has contradictions in it.
 - Example #1. “Ask whatsoever you will, and it will be done for you,” but Paul could not heal himself, or Epaphroditus, or Timothy, or Titus
 - Example #2. “No harm shall befall you,” but Paul received 39 lashes, a stoning, and a shipwreck
- ❑ Our Bible has errors in it.
 - Mark 16:9-20 are not in the oldest manuscripts
- ❑ Our Bible is historically and archeologically in error
 - No physical evidence for the Exodus
 - How can the earth and the universe be only 6,000 years old?

Only Sound Doctrine saves people from Hell,
and sound doctrine must be based on sound evidence

Bible Inerrancy is Based on Non-Existent Originals

- ❑ We may not possess the original autographs, but we do possess 100% of the original message within the numerous copies we have
- ❑ We can reconstruct the original text with over 99% accuracy, nevertheless, 100% of the truth comes through
- ❑ For example, “Y#U HAVE WON 10 MILLION DOLLARS”
 - You would have no problem understanding 100% of the message, even though the text is nearly 4% in error (1 letter out of 26).

If we had the original autographs (as the Muslims claim with their Koran) then skeptics can claim that the originals were possibly fabricated.

Having thousands of reliable variants actually give more credence to the source documents being true and unfabricated.

Why does God choose to reveal Himself through a book?

- ❑ God is a god who hides himself (Isaiah 45:15)
 - But WHY?
- ❑ “...Unto you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God: but unto them that are without, all these things are done in parables: That seeing they may see, and not perceive; and hearing they may hear, and not understand; lest at any time they should be converted, and their sins should be forgiven them.” Mark 4:11-12
 - But WHY?
- ❑ God is not out to force anyone into Heaven. He does not save those who do not want to be saved. THEREFORE, He only provides sufficient information to make a sound decision, but not always compelling information. YET, everyone is still held accountable for all eternity.
- ❑ A book, such as the Bible, is considered by skeptics and unbelievers to be subjective and insufficient proof for a living God

“If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be persuaded even if someone rises from the dead.” – Luke 16:31

Why Do We Need the Bible?

- ❑ The Bible is not man's account of his effort to find God, but rather an account of God's effort to reveal Himself to man
- ❑ The Bible is our blueprint to successfully live in this sinful world while preparing to transfer to our eternal glory

Do we still have Apostles and Prophets today?

- ❑ If so, then we do not need the Bible
- ❑ If Apostles and Prophets were a temporal resource used to establish the foundation of the church (Ephesians 2:20), then we need some kind of established, authoritative, reliable, relevant, and documented testimony of God's plan for our lives

Consider this: If we still have Apostles and Prophets today, then the Bible would still be growing as we would collect their emails, text messages, and FB postings

What Makes the Bible Unique

- ❑ It is from God
- ❑ It is inspired
- ❑ It is relevant
- ❑ It is reliable
- ❑ It is accurate in its portrayal of history and fields of science
- ❑ It changes lives
- ❑ Written over 1,500 years by more than 40 authors on 3 continents
 - Asia, Africa, Europe
- ❑ Written in 3 original languages
 - Hebrew, Greek, Aramaic
- ❑ It has survived time & persecution
- ❑ Its 6,000+ prophecies have been fulfilled, are being fulfilled, or will be fulfilled

The Bible's sole purpose is to change Hell-bound sinners into Heaven-bound saints and change immature believers into the image of Christ

Who Decided What to Accept into the Bible?

- ❑ The word “canon” comes from the root word for “reed” which was used as a measuring device or standard
- ❑ The Canon was eventually applied to Scripture’s officially-recognized list of books
- ❑ The church did not and can not create the canon of books, but can only recognize the books that were inspired by God from their inception

The Old Testament Canon (39 books)

The Law & The Prophets

- ❑ The Law of Moses (Torah)
 1. Genesis
 2. Exodus
 3. Leviticus
 4. Numbers
 5. Deuteronomy
- ❑ The Former Prophets
 1. Joshua
 2. Judges (*)
 3. Samuel
 4. Kings
- ❑ The Latter Prophets
 1. Isaiah
 2. Jeremiah
 3. Ezekiel
 4. The Twelve [Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah (*), Jonah, Micah, Nahum (*), Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai (*), Zechariah, Malachi]

The Writings

- ❑ Poetical Books
 1. Psalms
 2. Proverbs
 3. Job
- ❑ The Five Rolls (read yearly at Feasts)
 1. Song of Songs
 2. Ruth (*)
 3. Lamentations
 4. Esther (*)
 5. Ecclesiastes (*)
- ❑ Historical Books
 1. Daniel
 2. Ezra, Nehemiah
 3. Chronicles

Note (*) – Seven OT books not quoted in the NT: Judges, Ruth, Esther, Ecclesiastes, Obadiah, Nahum, Haggai.

Jesus said, “*that all things which are written about Me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms (writings) must be fulfilled.*” Luke 24:44

Test of Old Testament Canonicity

❑ Propheticity determines Canonicity

- God determined which books would be in the Bible by giving their message to a recognized Prophet or an accredited spokesperson for God
- God determined canonicity, but the people had to discover which books were prophetic
 - ❑ Immediate contemporaries acknowledged God's word from supernatural manifestations

❑ The OT books were definitively established (or recognized) as 'canon' for Jews by Jews by the second century AD.

❑ Testimonials

- Jewish tradition holds that Ezra re-assembled scattered copies of the Law and Writings and restored them as a completed group to their place in the rebuilt Temple after Israel returned to the Promised Land following their deportation under Assyrian rule
- Josephus, a Jewish historian of the 1st century, considered the OT canon as fixed from the days of Artaxerxes, time of Ezra

"Then what advantage has the Jew?

... First of all, they were entrusted with the oracles of God." Romans 3:1-2

Is the Old Testament Reliable?

□ Manuscript reliability is based on 4 factors:

1. The abundance of the manuscripts

- ❖ More than 10,000 ancient OT manuscripts have been recovered
- ❖ More than 600 from the Dead Sea Scrolls
- ❖ In comparison, Plato's works (7 copies), Thucydides (8), Herodotus (8), Demosthenes' & Homer's (100's)

2. The dating of the manuscripts

- ❖ Most OT manuscripts are dated from A.D. 800-1000
- ❖ Dead Sea Scrolls (~600 copies) go back as far as the 3rd century B.C.

3. The accuracy of the manuscripts

- ❖ The Dead Sea scrolls confirm the accuracy of Jewish transcription
- ❖ There were no changes in meaning after 1,000 years of copying and relatively few changes in

4. The historicity of the OT

- ❖ Archaeology has confirmed the substantial historicity of the OT tradition

The New Testament Canon (27 Books)

❑ The Gospels (45%)

- Matthew
- Mark
- Luke
- John

❑ Historical (14%)

- Acts

❑ Pauline Epistles (25%)

- Romans
- I, II Corinthians
- Galatians
- Ephesians
- Philippians
- Colossians
- I, II Thessalonians
- I, II Timothy
- Titus
- Philemon

❑ Other Writings (10%)

- Hebrews
- James
- I, II Peter
- I, II, III John
- Jude

❑ Prophetic (6%)

- Revelations

New Testament Authenticity

- ❑ 5,300 Greek manuscripts
- ❑ 10,000 Latin Vulgate manuscripts
- ❑ 9,300 other earlier versions
- ❑ 24,000 manuscript copies of portions of the NT

- ❑ No other documents of antiquity even come close
 - 643 copies of the Iliad by Homer, originally written 900 B.C.
 - The first complete preserved text of Homer dates from the 13th century

NT Canonical Validation

1. Is it authoritative – did it come from the hand of God?
2. Is it prophetic – was it written by a man of God?
3. Is it authentic? Early church fathers had a policy “If in doubt, throw it out”
4. Is it dynamic and can it transform lives?
5. Was it received, collected, read, and used by the early church?

Peter acknowledged Paul's work as Scripture that was parallel to Old Testament Scripture (2 Peter 3:16)

Apocrypha (“concealed”) Writings

- ❑ Jerome (4th century) was the first to call unproven and questionable writings “apocrypha”
- ❑ They lack prophetic ability
- ❑ They abound in historical and geographical inaccuracies
- ❑ They teach false doctrines and practices
- ❑ Early church fathers strongly repudiated them
- ❑ Protestant reformers rejected them
- ❑ Even Roman Catholic scholars rejected them through the Reformation period
- ❑ The Catholics reversed their rejection of them at the Council of Trent in 1546 in reaction against the Protestant Reformation

Old Testament Apocrypha Books

❑ *Major Apocrypha Books*

1 Esdras

2 Esdras

Tobit

Judith

*Additions to Esther**

Wisdom of Solomon

Ecclesiasticus

Baruch

Epistle of Jeremiah

*Song of the Three Children***

*Story of Susanna***

*Bel and the Dragon***

Prayer of Manasseh

1 Maccabees

2 Maccabees

❑ *Other Apocrypha Books*

3 Maccabees

4 Maccabees

Psalms no. 151

Odes

Psalms of Solomon

Books of Enoch

Assumption of Moses

Ascension of Isaiah

Book of Jubilees

Testament of the Twelve Jubilees

Sibylline Oracles

New Testament Apocrypha Books

Major NT Apocrypha Books

Epistle of Barnabas
Epistle to the Corinthians
The Gospel to the Hebrews
Epistle of Polycarp to the
Philippians
The Didache (teaching of the
Twelve)
Then Seven Epistles of Ignatius
The Ancient Homily (the 2nd
Epistle of Clement)
The Shepherd of Hermas
The Apocalypse of Peter
The Epistle of the Laodiceans

Other NT Apocrypha Books

The Gospel of Thomas
The Gospel of Peter
The Protevangelium of James
The Gospel of the Hebrews
The Gospel of the Egyptians
The Infancy Gospels
The Pseudo-Gospel of Matthew

Apocrypha Quotations in the NT

“But Michael the Archangel said...” Jude 9

- ❑ According to several early church fathers, this verse is based on a work called “The Assumption of Moses”
- ❑ Other quotations or allusions to non-Biblical works in the NT include Paul’s quotation of secular poets Aratus in Acts 17:28, Menander in 1Cor 15:33, & Epimenides in Titus 1:12; and Paul stated in 2Tim 3:8 that Jannes and Jambres were the unnamed culprits who withstood Moses in one OT incident – whose names were known only by tradition; the writer of Hebrews 11:35 quoted from II Maccabees (an apocryphal book); and Jude also quoted from the apocryphal Book of Enoch in v14
- ❑ Such usage does not raise the extra-biblical sources to canonical status, but the Biblical authors under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, found the quotations suitable for confirming, clarifying, or illustrating a point

More Apocrypha Quotes...

- ❑ **Book of Enoch.** Jude 14-16 quoted from the Book of Enoch, a recognized source of information much like the Jewish Talmud (Rabbinical sayings), the Jewish Targum (translation of OT Hebrew text), and the historically reliable apocryphal books I & II Maccabees
- ❑ **Note:** Truth is truth, even if it is contained in the Koran, the Book of Mormon, sayings of Confucius, or the Wall Street Journal
- ❑ Jude's intent to quote from the Book of Enoch was to convey the inevitable destruction of the wicked

Apocryphal Problems

- ❑ “Illegitimate *children will not take root ...or bear fruit.* (Sirach 23:22-25 NRSV)
- ❑ BUT the Bible says illegitimacy is only bad when a child lives like an illegitimate (undisciplined) child & not like an adopted child with a loving father (God) Heb 12:7-8
- ❑ Recall that Jesus was illegitimate since Joseph was not his father – so illegitimacy need not be spiritually fatal
- ❑ In another apocryphal book, as a boy, Jesus brings life to a dried fish; breathes life into birds fashioned from clay; curses a boy who falls dead and his parents become blind; and he resurrects a friend

Early Church Councils

- ❑ The Councils of Hippo (393) and Carthage (410) listed the 27 books of the NT as the complete canon
- ❑ There has been no significant debate on the canonicity of Scripture since around A.D. 400
- ❑ The Roman Catholic Council of Trent in 1546 accepted 11 out of 14 Apocrypha books as canonical in retaliation against the Protestant Reformation who strongly rejected all Apocrypha books
- ❑ Jerome (AD 340-420): He rejected the Apocryphal books as canonical, yet he believed in the perpetuity of Mary's virginity
- ❑ Augustine (AD 354-430): He accepted 11 Apocryphal books as canonical, but rejected the perpetuity of Mary's virginity

Question on Esther's Canonicity

- All the books of the Old Testament (including many apocryphal books) were found in the Dead Sea Scrolls, except for the Book of Esther
- Esther is not quoted in the NT. But neither is Judges, Ruth, Ecclesiastes, Nahum, Obadiah, or Haggai.
- **Apocryphal Insertions:** Esther in the Greek Septuagint (LXX) has six extra paragraphs inserted at various places. In the Vulgate these are all removed to the end of the book. English versions omit them entirely or remove them to an Apocrypha section.
- BUT, since the Jews consider Esther to be canonical, so should we...

A Good Apocryphal Story

- ❑ The apocryphal Gospel of Nicodemus and other apocryphal works narrate that Nicodemus gave evidence in favor of Christ at the trial before Pilate; that he was deprived of office and banished from Jerusalem by the hostile Jews; and that he was baptized by Peter and John.

Ezra's Contribution to the Bible

□ EZRA

- Chief Priest & “skilled” scribe, descended from Zadok
- Possibly wrote I, II Chronicles, Ezra & Nehemiah (originally all 1 book)
- Tradition also has Ezra writing **Psalm 119**
- Noted for collecting & compiling the OT books (Law, Historical, Prophets, and Poetry) into a single collection
- Noted for instituting synagogue worship for any township with at least 10 adult male Jews along with the formal reading of Scripture

Principles of Biblical Interpretation

- ❑ **Hermeneutics:** The science and art of using linguistic principles and methods to properly interpret the Word of God.
- ❑ Deductive vs Inductive reasoning
(Surface knowledge vs more in-depth assessment)
- ❑ **Inspiration:** The supernatural divine influence (not dictation) God used with the personality, experience, and writing style of each Biblical author to convey His truth without error
- ❑ **Interpretation:** The application of sound linguistic principles to determine an understanding of Scripture which corresponds as closely as possible to the intended original meaning
- ❑ **Illumination:** The act of the Holy Spirit to convict the reader of the truth of Scripture and lead the reader to the understanding of the general truth of God's Word
- ❑ **Revelation:** The supernatural communication of truth that man through his own intellect, reason, and investigation cannot discover for himself.
- ❑ **Eisegesis/Inference:** Non-critical interpretation of text based on preconceived biases. (Injecting our beliefs into a passage)
- ❑ **Exegesis:** Critical analysis of text using sound linguistic principles.

After we have established the Bible's authenticity, next we must determine if we are interpreting it properly and accurately.

Schools of Biblical Interpretation

❑ The Allegorical Approach

- Hidden in each passage is a symbolic spiritual meaning

❑ The Devotional Approach

- The Bible is useful for devotion and prayer but need not be studied. This leads to a surface knowledge with little depth.

❑ The Liberal Approach

- Final result is relativism which cannot prove anything with certainty

❑ The Literal Approach

- The Literal Interpretation Principle
- The Contextual Principle
- Scripture Interprets Scripture Principle
- Progressive Revelation Principle
- The Accommodation Principle
- One Interpretation per Passage Principle

➤ Scripture Harmony Principle (non-contradictory)

➤ Audience Principle – (e.g., believers, non-believers, crowds, etc.)

➤ Difficult passages interpreted in light of clear passages

➤ The Genre Principle

➤ The Grammatical/Linguistic Principle

➤ Historical Background Principle – (e.g., pre-flood to Roman era)

➤ The Cultural Background Principle

➤ The Geographical Principle

➤ Principle of Added Clarification – if a parallel passage provides more details, the proper interpretation is based on that clarification.

...and this is just the beginning