

IS THE BIBLE REALLY THE WORD OF GOD?

Let's start by looking to see what the Bible says about itself

2 Timothy 3:16-17 — "All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work."

The word "**inspired**" here in the Greek literally means "divinely breathed" by God. What does God-breathed mean? God spoke through men to say exactly what He wanted to say. At the same time, He allowed us to see the personality of the writer without deviating from the message that He wanted put forth. So, every word in our Greek and Hebrew Bible is really from God. Of course, that is quite a claim, and it is reasonable for someone to question why they should believe this. Just because someone says that a book is the Word of God, or even if the Bible claims to be in its own text, should we believe that this is true?

If the Bible is really from God it should:

- 1) Be beyond the ability of man's writing creativity;
- 2) Be able to withstand the test of time and attacks of critics;
- 3) Be able to verify its historical claims with evidence from archaeology;
- 4) Be able to show evidence of past fulfillment of its prophecies
- 5) Be scientifically sound;
- 6) Be able to prove claims of ancient text and verify its transmission of the text to be accurate;
- 7) Be life-changing in its message.

As I will show, the Bible can pass all of these tests, validating its claim of being the Word of God.

1) Be beyond the ability of man's writing creativity.

It should be remembered that the Bible is not just one book. The Bible actually contains sixty-six books, from at least forty different authors. The Bible covers a time-span of few thousand years.

The authors lived in different centuries. It was written on three different continents — Africa, Asia, and Europe. The authors of these books were from different backgrounds and lifestyles, and included a doctor, kings, a fisherman, and an ex-Pharisee. The Bible was also written in three different languages — Aramaic, Hebrew, and Greek.

In theory, it would seem impossible to get this many people — from different walks of life, different countries, diverse cultures, time frames, and languages — to agree without conflict on controversial subjects such as God, sin, and salvation. And yet it happened — with so much harmony that each book is not really complete without the other. These books together have one central theme (Jesus): the coming of the Messiah, His arrival and work, and looking for His return.

This would seem impossible unless one mind is controlling the effort. This one mind cannot be a mortal man, since the time frame is such a long period and the authors lived in different centuries. Man, simply does not live that long. What other set of books can make such a claim as this?

2) Be able to withstand the test of time and attacks of critics.

People have attacked the Bible throughout history. Yet it has not been proven untrue in any of its teachings or history. Time Magazine made an interesting statement that I would like to quote.

From **Time Magazine, December 30, 1974**: "After more than two centuries of facing the heaviest scientific guns that could be brought to bear, the bible has survived and [is] perhaps better for the siege even on the critics' own terms. Historical fact, the scriptures seem more acceptable now than they did when the rationalists began the attack."

Throughout history people have tried to destroy the bible. They burned the copies of the bible as well as the people in possession of them. Christians were killed just for professing their faith.

People have tried to destroy the bible by trying to prove it wrong and with mockery and criticism. No matter the approach or the force applied the bible still exist and the people trying to destroy it pass on. What other book in history has survived such attacks?

3) Be able to verify its historical claims with evidence from archaeology.

There are numerous books that are full of archaeological discoveries confirming the historical accuracy of the Bible. I cite here just one archaeological discovery confirming the Bible's accuracy — all the way back to some of the content in the book of Genesis. The city of Ebla was discovered in an archaeological dig around Jerusalem. Between 1968 and 1972, archaeologists found 16,642 clay tablets. The tablets have been dated back to about 2,300 BC. There are several cities mentioned on these tablets that are also mentioned in the Bible, such as Adma, Zeboim, Zoar, Damascus, Jerusalem, Carchemish, Dor, Hazor, Megiddo, Lachish, Gaza, Sinai, Joppa, Harran, Ashdod, and, the ones I find the most interesting: Sodom and Gomorrah. These two cities have never been located — because as we read in Genesis, God destroyed them. Yet we know that they really existed because they are mentioned in the tablets discovered in Ebla. Evidently, Ebla had a trading enterprise with Sodom and Gomorrah. The tablets also confirm the existence of the Assyrians, the Hittites, and the Canaanites. More detail can be found in a book by Dr. Clifford Wilson titled *The Ebla Tablets*. There was also an article concerning Ebla in *Time Magazine* on Oct. 18, 1976.

There have been a number of times that people have said the bible was wrong because it related something in history that people did not know to be true. Therefore, they concluded it must be a fairy tale. Critics attack the bible for things they have not yet proven. When finally silenced by archeology or science they simply pick some other piece of trivia to try to attack it and pretend they were not wrong on their countless other attacks.

4) Be able to show evidence of past fulfillment of its prophecies (the prophetic messages should not be proven false).

The Bible contains hundreds of prophecies, some of which are yet to be fulfilled regarding the future — and many of which have already have been proven to be true. In addition, the Bible has never been proven wrong in any of its prophetic messages. Here is one example of a prophetic message which came true.

Isaiah 44:28-45:1:"It is I who says of Cyrus, 'He is My shepherd! And he will perform all My desire.' And he declares of Jerusalem, 'She will be built,' and of the temple, 'Your foundation will be laid.' Thus says the LORD to Cyrus His anointed, whom I have taken by the right hand, to subdue nations before him, and to loose the loins of kings; to open doors before him so that gates will not be shut."

Note that Cyrus is mentioned by name, although at this point he has not even been born. What's also interesting about this prophetic message is that at the time Isaiah wrote this, the city was not yet destroyed and the temple was still standing. Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, came along and destroyed the city about a hundred years later. Almost 160 years after Isaiah's writing the temple was completed, because a Persian king named Cyrus gave the decree to rebuild the city and the temple.

The American Peoples Encyclopedia, Vol.11, (page 395) dates the time of Isaiah's death at about **668 BC**. The same volume on page 611 states that Nebuchadnezzar destroyed the city and the temple in **586 BC**. In Vol. 6 (pages 688-689) of The American Peoples Encyclopedia, we find that Cyrus liberated the Jews and allowed them to return to rebuild Jerusalem and even restored sacred vessels taken from the temple. This took place around **539 BC**; the new temple was completed in **515 BC** (Vol.11, page 611).

Ironically most prophecy is dismissed with no evidence other than the opinion it can't be true. A passage foretold the future and that is not possible therefore somebody must have made this up after the event took place. I showed this in another study on Daniel. The Book of Daniel tells a lot of world history in advance. Babylon being conquered by the Medes and the Persians. That empire is then conquered by the Greeks and so on. Yet most reference books will tell you that Daniel was written in the 2nd Century BC after the fact. There evidence of this? They have none.

How do I know they are wrong and it was not written in the 2nd Century BC?

The Septuagint, which is a Greek Translation of the older Hebrew manuscripts, was translated 275-100 BC. (a) The Book of Daniel could not have been translated from one language to another until it was written. (b) Even if you play with the dates to make it a recent work before the Septuagint this is not enough time for the Jews to accept a recent fraud as an ancient authoritative work.

Josephus was an early historian who is said to have credibility, and his works are invaluable sources for the history of the Jews. Josephus places the person Daniel in the reign of Nebuchadnezzar (605 - 561 BC). In this reference Josephus gives an account of Daniel and his friends having their names changed by the king. This reference from Josephus correlates with what we find in the Book of Daniel.

Josephus also refers to the Book of Daniel as being complete and already accepted during the time period of Alexander the Great who was born in 356 BC.

Daniel is mentioned in the Book of Ezekiel, which is dated the 6th century BC.

5) Be scientifically sound.

Most informed Christians will readily admit the Bible is not a science textbook. While the Bible cannot be proven to be the Word of God based solely on science — neither does science refute the Bible. They are in harmony in areas where they do meet. But, the Bible was written to reveal God to mankind, not science. I would like to mention one area where science and the Bible do meet together. Consider Job 26:7: "He stretches out the north over empty space, and hangs the earth on nothing." Keep in mind that Job lived almost 2,000 years before Christ. This idea that the earth was suspended on nothing was not even considered by scientists for thousands of years after Job. Now, with our satellites and trips into space, we know this to be true. But this was not known in Job's day. The Egyptians declared the earth rested on pillars. The Greeks said it was carried on the back of Atlas. People believed many things, but they did not come close to what we know to be true today, and what Job declared a few thousand years ago.

6) Be able to prove claims of ancient text and verify its transmission of the text to be accurate;

It is natural to question how we know that what we have in our Bible today is the same as what was originally written. Many people make the mistake of assuming that errors have crept in during the transmission of the text. For example, the Mormons' "8th Article of Faith" states: "We believe the Bible to be the word of God in so far as it is translated correctly; we also believe the Book of Mormon to be the word of God". Mormons teach that the Catholic Church has perverted much of the Bible, ignoring an abundance of manuscript evidence, some of which pre-dates the Catholic Church.

We need to remember that the Bible was originally written in Greek and Hebrew — not English. Many have wondered why there are so many versions of the Bible: because when translating a book from one language to another, scholars will differ slightly on word choice and sentence structure. Also, the English language itself has evolved since the King James Version of the Bible was produced.

We simply do not talk in King James' style any longer. When comparing the many different versions, however, we find the message and doctrines are the same in all of the legitimate translations.

Since our English Bibles are translated from original languages of Greek and Hebrew, let's narrow focus to that. How do we know that the Greek and Hebrew did not change as it was passed down through time, before we translated it into English? This is where manuscript evidence becomes important. There is far more manuscript evidence to support the writings of the Bible than any other ancient history that is known in the world today. There are more than 5,300 known Greek manuscripts for the New Testament. This is more than enough to compare to our Greek text today. There is also further confirmation from the 10,000 manuscripts of the Latin Vulgate. If this was not enough, there are 9,300 earlier manuscripts.

Even without all of this evidence, the vast majority of the New Testament could be reconstructed from the writings of the early church fathers. These are the men who studied directly under the Apostles, and the people who studied under them. They did a lot of writing quoting the Apostles. It is true that textual variances can be found in these manuscripts. The vast majority of these discrepancies concern minor things, such as spelling. **None** of the discrepancies change anything in the teachings or message of the Bible.

We do not have a large number of manuscripts for the Old Testament like we do the New Testament. There are two reasons for this. First, the further back you go, the more things are destroyed by a natural aging. Second, the people themselves destroyed any copy of the Old Testament that was not perfect. To them, the copying of the text was extremely sacred. There was a ritual that had to be followed in every detail. If the columns were not of equal size throughout the manuscript, the entire copy was destroyed. One of the greatest proofs of the reliability of the Old Testament is the Dead Sea Scrolls, which were discovered in 1947.

These scrolls contained a portion of every book in the Old Testament with the exception of Esther. The entire book of Isaiah was found here also. When examined, these scrolls confirmed that the Hebrew text we have today has not changed from that of antiquity. It is also important to realize that these scrolls date back to before the time when Jesus Christ was here. Jesus seemed to view the text they had as accurate. Consider the following passages spoken by Jesus.

Matthew 5:18: "For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass away from the Law, until all is accomplished."

Luke 24:25 "And He said to them, 'O foolish men and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken!'"

In both cases Jesus was referring to the written Old Testament. His statements certainly showed that He believed their text to be reliable. The Dead Sea Scrolls date back before Jesus' time, which has proven our Hebrew text today is the same. Certainly, since we have the same Hebrew text that they had in Jesus' day, we also should consider it reliable.

7) Be life-changing in its message.

There are those who claim the name of Christianity and then do awful things, even in the name of God. Still, one cannot deny that millions of people have changed their lives after accepting the Gospel message of the Bible. We cannot discount the many that are genuine just because there are also some counterfeits.

These life changes in people have made some positive impacts on our world today. Following are some examples.

Education- Many of the oldest universities, like Harvard, Oxford, and Cambridge, were started by Christians and initially focused on studying theology. I know it seems strange considering how far these intuitions have sunk and now fight against Christianity and the Bible.

Still the fact remains that the much of the Education system started because of Christians wanting to read and study the bible.

The Protestant Reformation encouraged people to read the Bible, which led to higher literacy rates as churches urged their members to engage with the scriptures independently.

Healthcare- Founding of Hospitals- The idea of hospitals originated with Christian monastic communities that provided care for the sick and the poor.

Human Rights Movements- Early human rights advocates like William Wilberforce and Martin Luther King Jr. were driven by their Christian beliefs. Impact: Their tireless work led to significant changes in laws and societal norms, pushing for equality, justice, and the abolition of slavery in various regions.

Much of our own constitution was derived from the influence of the Bible and Christian morality which has influenced our law making and establishing human rights.

Still to this day Churches are known for social welfare helping those in need and being among the responders when there are disasters of various sorts not just here in the USA but around the world.

How can just reading a religious book make people want to do all of that? What other book in history has changed so many lives for the better?

Ironically in spite of all of this it is still hated and despised by many. There are still those who would like to see the Bible and Christianity disappear off of the face of the earth. Why is this so? Because there is a spiritual war going on.

Ephesians 6:12 For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places.