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**STUDY GUIDE**  
*BIBLICAL EVIDENCE*

*life*  
*groups*

## WHY THE BIBLE?

### **Q. Why do we believe the bible is the word of God?**

*The facts backing the Christian claim (of the bible being an accurate historical record) are not a special kind of religious fact. They are the cognitive, informational facts upon which all historical, legal and ordinary decisions are based. – Pinnock (the same way writings such as Plato, Socrates & Homer's are.)*

*Apologetics (defence of the bible/evidences) are used to clear away the obstacles to faith that many people erect, and to show that faith in Christ is reasonable – McDowell*

Our faith is not based on the facts but rather supported by them.

Everybody who examines the Bible has a preconceived idea as to whether they believe it to be the word of God or not. While no one has ever (or can ever) successfully disprove the Bible, many people who have tried to have come to the conclusion that the Bible is indeed the word of God.

*"It may be stated categorically that no archaeological discovery has ever controverted a biblical reference." Nelson Glueck (Jewish archaeologist 1969)*

*"...it may be legitimate to say that archaeology has confirmed the New Testament record." F.F. Bruce (archaeologist, F.F. Bruce. New Testament Documents: Are They Reliable? Downers Grove, IL. InterVarsity Press. 1943 and 1981)*

One of the key evidences of the New testament is that a large proportion of its writings about Jesus were written by people who were eyewitnesses (John, Peter, James, Matthew & Jude). Often historical texts are considered accurate even if they are written by persons unknown or who lived generations after the event. Other historical books that mention Jesus include: the writings of Josephus (c.37 - 100) in his reference called "Testimonium Flavianum", Tacitus (AD 56 - AD 117), the letters of Pliny the Younger to Emperor Trajan (111-113 CE), Lucian of Samosata (approx 125 - 180), Celsus (2nd century), the Babylonian Talmud (completed around the 6th century). This is unusual as most ancient historical writings have no external support.



## STUFF TO TALK ABOUT

### — HEAD —

<b>YOUNG</b>	Why should you read the Bible? <b>Joshua 1:8</b>
<b>GROWING</b>	Up until about 500 years ago, only priests had Bibles - what difference would this have made to how people believe and hear from God? <b>John 14:26</b>
<b>MATURE</b>	What proof do you have the Bible is God's Word?

### — HEART —

<b>YOUNG</b>	Why can you trust the Bible? <b>2 Timothy 3:16</b>
<b>GROWING</b>	When we say God speaks to us through his word - what do we mean?
<b>MATURE</b>	When we say the bible is the inspired (infallible?) word of God, what do we mean? <b>2 Timothy 3:16</b>

### — HANDS —

<b>YOUNG</b>	Where would it be good to start reading in the Bible and why? Luke?
<b>GROWING</b>	What would you say if someone asked you "why do you believe in the Bible?"
<b>MATURE</b>	How would you explain the need to read the OT to your disciple?



## STUFF TO DO

In groups of 2 or 3, discuss what you think are the most important evidences that the Bible is the word of God.

Pray for an opportunity to share what you believe with an unsaved person this week.

## PRAYER POINTS & COMING UP

**FIESTA** - 18th - 20th March with Ps Phil Pringle

## STUFF TO THINK ABOUT

John 10:35

Acts 4:24-25

1 Corinthians 2:9-13

1 Thessalonians 2:13

2 Timothy 3:16

2 Peter 1:20-21

### ***TIMELINE OF BIBLE TRANSLATION HISTORY.***

- 1,400 BC: The first written Word of God: The Ten Commandments delivered to Moses.
- 500 BC: Completion of All Original Hebrew Manuscripts which make up The 39 Books of the Old Testament.
- 1st Century AD: Completion of All Original Greek Manuscripts which make up The 27 Books of the New Testament.
- 315 AD: Athenasius, the Bishop of Alexandria, identifies the 27 books of the New Testament which are today recognized as the canon of scripture.
- 500 AD: Some scriptures have been Translated into Over 500 Languages.
- 600 AD: LATIN was the Only Language Allowed for Scripture.
- 1384 AD: Wycliffe is the First Person to Produce a (Hand-Written) manuscript Copy of the Complete Bible; All 80 Books.
- 1455 AD: Gutenberg Invents the Printing Press; Books May Now be mass-Produced Instead of Individually Hand-Written. The First Book Ever Printed is Gutenberg's Bible in Latin.
- 1526 AD: William Tyndale's New Testament; The First New Testament printed in the English Language.
- 1535 AD: Myles Coverdale's Bible; The First Complete Bible printed in the English Language.
- 1611 AD: The King James Bible Printed.



- 1973 AD: The “New International Version” (NIV) is Published as a “Modern and Accurate Phrase for Phrase English Translation” of the Bible.
- 1982 AD: The “New King James Version” (NKJV) is Published as a “Modern English Version Maintaining the Original Style of the King James.”

*Note: up until a couple of hundred years ago, almost no-one had their own personal copy of the Bible they could read.*

Since we are living in an age of easy electronic transmission, it is hard for us to realise that when the books of the Bible were originally written there was no easy or inexpensive way to make copies. Each copy had to be made slowly and laboriously by hand. It was inevitable that many ancient books would be lost. This largely accounts for the fact that all original manuscripts of the Bible have perished, but God in His sovereign grace has protected accurate copies of the originals as well as the writings of the Early Church Fathers. Within the writings of the Early Church Fathers there are enough scripture passages used that in themselves there is enough scripture to recreate the Bible with 99.8% accuracy.

### **THE CLAIMS OF THE WRITERS.**

In view of the unique character of the Bible, as well as its incomparable influence for 3,500 years, the testimony of its own writers is of paramount significance. They claimed, of course, that they were writing the words of God. If they really were divinely inspired, then the unique nature and power of the Bible is easily understood. If not, however, – if they were either lying or deluded - then we are confronted with the greatest mystery and paradox in all history. One way or the other, the Bible is utterly inexplicable in terms of criteria applicable to other writings.

In the Old Testament there are approximately 2,600 claims of inspiration.

In the New Testament the apostles not only claimed that they were writing the word of God (I Corinthians 14:37, Galatians 1:11-12, I Corinthians 2:13; I Thessalonians 2:13; Ephesians 3:4,5; Romans 16:25,26; etc) but also recognised each others writings as holy scripture (2 Peter 3: 15-16).

Most importantly of all, the Lord Jesus Christ Himself believed in the accuracy of scripture to the point of not only stating the OT stories (Noah, Jonah etc) as fact (but sometimes correcting the Pharisees and Sadducees using the context of just one word (Matthew 22:31-32, Matthew 22:45, John 10:35).

*These readings are from: Morris, Henry. 1974. Many Infallible Proofs. San Diego: Creation-Life Publishers. Ch. 12 (pp. 154-166).*

### **THE RELIABILITY OF THE BIBLE.**

Is the Bible reliable? We say “The Bible says...” all the time. Can we trust it?

Lets look at the facts: The bible is unique, it was:

- Written over 1500 years (40 generations)-between 100AD to 1500BC.
- Over 40 Different Authors for every walk of life – military, political, shepherds, waiter, fishermen, kings & medical.
- Written in three languages (Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek) and on 3 continents



(Asia, Africa, Europe).

- Written in different locations – wilderness, dungeons, travelling, exile, palaces & continents.
- Addresses Hundreds of Controversial Subjects: Divorce, lying, sexuality, food, politics, parenting, taxes, foolishness, knowledge, greed.

**However it presents a single unfolding harmonious story - God's redemption of human beings through Jesus Christ.**

The Bible is unique in:

- Circulation – sold billions, most translations 2200+
- Survival – persecutions (Voltaire) Emperors and Criticism
- Teachings – prophecy, history and character
- Influence on Literature – Shakespeare
- Influence on Civilisation – Westminster System, Judea Christian ethics of Western World.
- Most books written about the Bible

**PROPHETIC EVIDENCE**

The OT records 300 predictions about Jesus Christ the Messiah including 48 specific details about the life, death and resurrection of Jesus.

Some of these are:

1.	Micah 5:2	Born in Bethlehem	Matt 2:1 Luke 2:4-5, 7
2.	Malachi 3:1	Preceded by a messenger	Luke 7:24, 27
3.	Zec 9:9	Enter Jerusalem on donkey	Mark 11:7, 9, 11, Luke 19:35-37
4.	Psalm 41:9,	Betrayed by a close friend	Matt 10:4 Luke 22:47-48
5.	Zec 12:10 Ps 22:16	Pierced through hands and feet	Luke 23:33 John 20:25-27
6.	Isaiah 53:5	Wounded and bruised	Matthew 27:26
7.	Zec 11:12	Betrayed for thirty pieces of silver	Matt 26:14-15
8.	Isaiah 50:6	Spat on	Matt 26:67, 27:30



9.	Isaiah 53:7	Silent to accusations	Matt 27:12 Mark 15:4-5
10.	Isaiah 53:12	Crucified with thieves	Matt 27:38 Mark 15:27-28
11.	Psalms 22:17-18	Soldiers gambled for His clothing	Matt 27:35-36 John 19:23, 24
12.	Zec 12:10	His side pierced	John 19:34
13.	Psalms 34:20	No bones broken	John 19:32, 33, 36
14.	Isaiah 53:9	Buried with the rich	Matt 27:57-60
15.	Amos 8:9	Darkness over the land	Matt 27:45

**The chances of the prophecies about Jesus being fulfilled in one person are 1 in 1017 or 1 in 100 000 000 000 000 000**

Approximately 2500 prophecies appear in the pages of the Bible, about 2000 of which already have been fulfilled to the letter — no errors. (The remaining 500 or so reach into the future and may be seen unfolding as days go by.) Since the probability for any one of these prophecies having been fulfilled by chance averages less than one in ten (figured very conservatively) and since the prophecies are for the most part independent of one another, the odds for all these prophecies having been fulfilled by chance without error is less than one in 102000 (that is 1 with 2000 zeros written after it)!

**SCIENTIFIC FACTS (A QUICK LIST)**

- If the new Testament was destroyed, it could be collected from the writings of the church fathers except for 11 minor verses.
- 24,000 manuscript copies of portions of the bible available compared to the Iliad (also considered a sacred book) by Homer (2nd most) at 643.
- The earliest large manuscript currently held is approx 250 yrs after the final book of the NT was written, compared to Iliad (2nd most) at 500 years.
- In the Iliad manuscripts there are 764 disputed lines of text, as compared to 40 lines (of the approximately 20,000 lines that make up the entire New Testament) in all the New Testament manuscripts, 0.5% of the entire text and do not in any way affect the teaching and doctrine of the New Testament.
- More evidence for the accuracy of the bible than of Shakespeare writings.
- 1 copy of Isaiah (125bc) found with the dead sea scrolls when compared with the next one available (Massoretic text - ad 916) 1000 years later of the 166



words has 17 letters in question, ten of which are variations in spelling.

- The bible has more manuscript evidence to support it than any ten pieces of historical literature combined.
- Before Columbus sailed around the world, Scripture records the spherical nature of earth. (Is. 40:21-22) When Science as a baby, thought the world to be held up by, three elephants on the back of a tortoise., the Bible factually established its free floating in space. (Job. 26:7) The moon is shown to be a reflector, unlike the radiating sun. (Job. 25:5; 31:6).
- Archeology has been unable to find anything to disprove the bible. Over the past few years more of the bible has been proved accurate by it.
- Voltaire said, .In one hundred years, this book will be forgotten. One hundred years exactly after his boast, his house was being used as the headquarters for the Geneva Bible Society .Heaven and earth may pass away, but My Word will never pass away. (Matt. 24:35).
- For years critics had dismissed the Book of Daniel, partly because there was no evidence that a king named Belshazzar ruled in Babylon during that time period or that a great city like Babylonia existed. However, later archaeological research confirmed that the reigning monarch, Nabonidus, appointed Belshazzar as his co-regent while he was away from Babylon. Forty-five thousand digs at over twenty-five thousand different locations later, each dig has supported evidence of the Bible's historical record: Balshazzar is mentioned by name.
- The scribes used a checking system to check the accuracy of their writing that is more complex and accurate than Microsoft's Spelling and Grammar Check.

## ***THE HISTORICAL ACCURACY***

### **How do we know what we have is the real Bible?**

Historians work to answer 3 questions about any ancient document:

- Is it a reliable copy of the original autographs? (Is it accurate?)
- Is it true? (Are the contents trustworthy, or are they exaggerated and fabricated for whatever reason the author had – whether intentional deception or unintentional lies).
- The external evidence test (Do external references corroborate what is written or do they contradict it?).

The answer to all these questions is YES, more so than any other historic manuscript.

### **New Testament**

There are tens of thousands of manuscripts from the New Testament, in part or in whole, dating from the second century A.D. to the late fifteenth century, when the printing press was invented. These manuscripts have been found in Egypt, Palestine, Syria, Turkey, Greece, and Italy, making collusion unlikely. The oldest manuscript, the John Rylands manuscript, has been dated to 125 A.D. and was found in Egypt, some distance from where the New Testament was originally



composed in Asia Minor. Many early Christian papyri, discovered in 1935, have been dated to 150 A.D., and include the four gospels. The Papyrus Bodmer II, discovered in 1956, has been dated to 200 A.D., and contains 14 chapters and portions of the last seven chapters of the gospel of John. The Chester Beatty biblical papyri, discovered in 1931, has been dated to 200-250 A.D. and contains the Gospels, Acts, Paul's Epistles, and Revelation. The number of manuscripts is extensive compared to other ancient historical writings, such as Caesar's "Gallic Wars" (10 Greek manuscripts, the earliest 950 years after the original), the "Annals" of Tacitus (2 manuscripts, the earliest 950 years after the original), Livy (20 manuscripts, the earliest 350 years after the original), and Plato (7 manuscripts).

### Manuscript Evidence for Ancient Writings

AUTHOR	WRITTEN	EARLIEST COPY	TIME SPAN	# MSS.
Caesar	100-44 B.C.	900 A.D.	1,000 years	10
Plato	427-347 B.C.	900 A.D.	1,200 years	7
Thucydides	460-400 B.C.	900 A.D.	1,300 years	8
Tacitus	100 A.D.	1100 A.D.	1,000 years	20
Suetonius	75-160 A.D.	950 A.D.	800 years	8
Homer (Iliad)	900 B.C.	400 B.C.	500 years	643
New Testament	40-100 A.D.	125 A.D.	25-50 years	24,000

### CONCLUSION

With all of the massive manuscript evidence you would think there would be massive discrepancies – just the opposite is true. However, theological liberals as well as cults and false religions such as Islam that claim the Bible has been tampered with are completely proven false. As the New Testament manuscripts agree in 99.5% of the text (compared to only 95% for the Iliad), most of the discrepancies are in spelling and word order. A few words have been changed or added. There are two passages that are disputed but no discrepancy is of any doctrinal significance (i.e., none would alter basic Christian doctrine). Most Bibles include the options as footnotes when there are discrepancies. How could there be such accuracy over a period of 1,400 years of copying?

- Two reasons:
1. The scribes that did the copying had meticulous methods for checking their copies for errors.
  2. The Holy Spirit made sure we would have an accurate copy of God's word so we would not be deceived.



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