

7 Reasons to Have Confidence in the Bible

Doug Brown

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this small but not insignificant booklet to the men and women, young and old that I have had the privilege of exploring The Book with over forty years!

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I want to acknowledge and thank the Pastors in my life as a college student and a new believer in Jesus Christ. It was from them I learned to love, read, memorize, meditate, study, obey and share the life changing Word of God.

Has God Spoken?

7 Reasons Why You Can Have Confidence the Bible is the Word of God

"All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, reproof, correction, for training in righteousness that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work."

2 Timothy 3:16-17

Inspired = literally GOD BREATHED

Adequate = (Artios — complete, sufficient, completely qualified)

Equipped = (Exartizo — ek (from) artios (to be completely furnished; example scuba diver with his equipment)

A. Definition of Inspiration

God EMPOWERING and controlling the authors so that they wrote down, in their own words and style, what God wanted to communicate to men.

B. ATTACKS on Inspiration

1. Since God had men writing the Bible, it must be full of errors.

Answer: Inspiration means though man wrote it, God INSPIRED IT

2 Peter 1:21

1 Chronicles 28:19

2. With our advanced knowledge today, we know things that the writers were not aware of.

Answer: Inspiration means that God is ALL KNOWING and man wrote from God's pool of knowledge not man's.

3. Since the Bible is thousands of years old, we cannot expect it have answers to our complex lives today.

Answer: Inspiration means that God's word has ANSWERS for every person for every generation.

God's "Finger Prints"¹

1. Pinkie Finger — Prophecy

Messiah	Bible Reference	Fulfillment
1. Abraham, Isaac, Jacob	Genesis 12;	Matthew 1:1
2. Tribe of Judah	Genesis 49:10	Matthew 1:2
3. Family of David	I Samuel 7	Matthew 1:6
4. City of Bethlehem	Micah 5:2	Matthew 2:1-11
5. Virgin bears a child	Isaiah 7:14	Matthew 1:18-24
6. Messiah is killed before the Jerusalem is destroyed again - 70 AD	Daniel 9:24-25	Like 19:41
7. Hands and feet pierced	Isaiah 53	Matthew 27:35
8. Suffers with sin laid on Him for us all	Isaiah 53	1 Peter 2:24-25
9. Sold for 30 pieces of silver	Zechariah 11:13	Matthew 26:14-16
10. Resurrected	Psalms 16	Matthew 28

* Lion and the Lamb

Prophecy

"Of the Bible's 31,124 verses, 8,352 contain predictive material, or 27% of the whole Bible." ²

Countries:

Israel was captive for 70 years by the Babylonians and Israel returned in 536 BC.

Edom, (Jeremiah 49:15-20; Ezekiel 25:12-14). The Edomites were obliterated after Jerusalem was destroyed in 70 AD.

¹ adapted from Greg Koukl , *Stand To Reason* (www.str.org)

² J. Barton Payne, *Encyclopedia of Biblical Prophecy* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1973), 3

World Powers:

Assyria, Babylon, Median/Persian, Greece, Roman

Daniel 2 & 7

Cities:

Bethlehem - Micah 5:2:

Jerusalem was destroyed in the disciple's lifetime as predicted by Jesus;

Ninevah - predicted to be entirely destroyed, Nahum 1-3, completely destroyed and never rebuilt was discovered by archeologists in 1845;

Tyre, (Ezekiel 26:3-4)

People: Cyrus (Isaiah 44:24-28, 45)

Events: Thirty pieces of silver, (Zechariah 11:13)

Timing of Messiah's coming, Daniel 9:24-27 with Luke 19:41-44

Coincidence or Prophetic?

Dr. Peter Stoner, professor of mathematics and science³

"Suppose we take 10^{17} silver dollars and lay them on the face of Texas. They will cover all of the state two feet deep. Now mark one of these silver dollars and stir the whole mass thoroughly, all over the state. Blindfold a man and tell him he can travel as far as he wishes, but he must pick up one silver dollar and say that this is the right one. What chance would he have of getting the right one? Just the same chance that the prophets would have had of writing these eight prophecies and having them all come true in any one man, from their day to the present time, providing they wrote them in their own wisdom."

³ Stoner and Newman, *Science Speaks* (Chicago: Moody Press, Third Revised Edition, 1969), 107

2. Ring Finger — Unity and Reliability of Manuscript Evidence

“Pile them, if you will, on the left side of your study table; but place your own Holy Bible on the right side — all by itself, all alone — and with a wide gap between them for . . . there is a gulf between it and the so-called sacred books of the East which severs the one from the other utterly, hopelessly and forever . . . a veritable gulf which cannot be bridged over by any science or religious thought.”⁴

A number of books claim special importance but there are only seven documents that exist in the whole world which claim divine inspiration. Yet, not one of them gives evidence of divine inspiration such as predictive prophecy.⁵

“The Bible has one heart beat”, —Dr. Walter Elwell. The Bible is not a collection of “fortune cookies” wisdom statements but a grand story from beginning to end.

The Bible — written

1,500-year span

over 40 generations by over 40 authors from every walk of life: kings, peasants, philosophers, fishermen, poets, statesmen ... in a variety of places: prison, palace, wilderness, while traveling, during times of war and peace, during moods of joy and despair on 3 continents: Asia, Africa, and Europe in 3 languages: Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek

⁴ M. Montiero-Williams, Oxford Professor who spent 42 years studying the Eastern books as quoted in *Jesus on Trial* (Regenry Publishing, 2014), David Limbaugh, 149

⁵ Kenny Barfield, *Why the Bible is Number 1* (Baker Book House, 1997) 186

“And yet, when analyzed, the Bible speaks with amazing unity and conformity on hundreds of controversial subjects about which there are hundreds of opposing opinions.” — Josh McDowell

The Bible. There is no other book like it.

The Bible is God’s story. It is story — The Story. It is not a collection of disconnected principles and wise sayings. It has a main theme, main character and major plot with a climax and resolution. Its theme is the reign and rule of God. Its main character is the Messiah (Jesus). Its plot is the introduction of evil and the seduction of God’s created masterpiece — mankind made in the image of God. Its climax is the Cross of Jesus Christ and its resolution is the found in the statement. “Behold, I make all things new” Rev 21:5.

The Bible is God’s revelation of Himself to mankind. We know that God exists from the Creation (see Ps 19:1-6, Rom 1:20). This is referred to as General Revelation. But we get to know what God is like from two places: The Living Word — Jesus (see John 1:1) and the written Word — the Bible. The is referred to as Special Revelation.

The Bible is inspired by God, see 1Timothy 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1: 20-21. The word inspired literally means, “God breathed.” God used various men as authors, using their personalities and writing styles to communicate what He wanted to reveal to us. We have confidence that the Bible is indeed the Word of God through various evidences: Historical accuracy, Fulfilled prophecy, Manuscript evidence, Unique its formation and origin from all other books. An example of this is that the Bible is a collection of 66 books,

written by 40 authors over a period of 1,500 years in three languages without contradiction.

Jesus trusted the Scripture as the very Word of God. He quoted from the book of Deuteronomy saying, it is written, “man shall not live on bread alone but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.”

The Bible is a book of covenant. Covenant means an agreement. God is the initiator of this covenant. He desires to restore us into relationship with Him for which we were created.

The Bible has two major divisions: The Old Covenant (Testament) and the New Covenant (Testament). The whole Bible is based on a covenant relationship that God makes with mankind. There are 39 books in the Old Testament known. There are 27 books in the New Testament.

The Bible is like a two act play with an intermission in between. If you left the play at intermission, you would leave the story with an incomplete plot and you would have a lot of unanswered questions. If you enter the play after the intermission, you would not understand the storyline or context. To understand the Bible well, you need to be clear on the plot and purpose of the whole story.

The Bible — Continuity & Discontinuity

Neither Jesus Christ nor Christianity springs out of a vacuum. Jesus who is the Christ is the fulfillment of the Messianic prophecies of the Old Testament (O.T.). Jesus completes the Old Testament and ushers in the predicted New Testament, Jeremiah 31:31-34.

There is a change from the Old Covenant to the New Covenant, Hebrew 8:13. With the change there are some O.T. truths that continue in the New Covenant (example:

Love God, Love One Another, Deuteronomy 6:4-5, Leviticus 19:18 and there are elements that are now obsolete, (sacrifices, clean and unclean laws, observing festival days...Colossians 2:16-17, Ephesians 2:14-16 and various civil laws given to Israel

These instructions are no longer in use since they have had their fulfillment in the hero of the story, the Messiah. Some of the civil and social laws are no longer in use because they were given to the nation of Israel, not to other nations. Let me illustrate: It would be like moving from one country to another country. Your new country would have some laws that are similar to the laws of your original country. But there also are laws that you would no longer be under because you no longer live in that country. This is similar to living now under the instructions of the New Covenant and no longer under the Old Covenant.

The Old Testament sets the stage for God's story and the New Testament completes the story. The Old Testament is looking forward to the main character of the story - the Messiah (Jesus) and the New Testament explains Him. The Old prepares and the New fulfills. The Old is unfulfilled without the New. The New is the Old fulfilled.

The Story of God is a Great Epic made up of 4 movements:

1. The Creation and the dignity of mankind
2. The Fall and the entrance of sin, evil and suffering into the world
3. The Rescue and redemption of mankind through the Cross of Jesus Christ
4. The Restoration and the renewal of all things in creation

The central theme of the Bible is the “Lamb” which is one of the names for the Messiah. Messiah is the promised One from God to rescue and restore not only mankind but all of Creation. You can follow the “Lamb” from the beginning of the Story to the very end.

The Lamb:

1. God shows us that the Lamb is necessary to enter into relationship with Him — Genesis 4:1-5
2. God will provide the Lamb — Genesis 22:1-14
3. God teaches us that the Lamb must be slain (blood) — Exodus 12:1-13
4. God reveals that the Lamb is necessary to remove sin — Leviticus 16:1-10
5. God declares that the Lamb is not a lamb but a person — Isaiah 53:5-7
6. God shows us that Jesus is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world — John 1:29
7. God teaches that we are redeemed and forgiven through the blood of the Lamb (Jesus) when we put our trust in Him — 1 Peter 1:18-21
8. God makes known to us that the Lamb is the only who can fulfill and complete the redemptive plan of God Revelation 5:1-14
9. God teaches us that the Lamb co-reigns with God on the Eternal Throne, for His is God — Revelation 22: 1-3

3. Big Finger— Insight into the reality of our world and lives.

Christianity is not in conflict with science. In fact, Christianity was instrumental in the birth of modern science. The debate is not between science and Theism. There is a nexus

between Theism and science. The conflict that exists is between Theism and Naturalism, not between Christianity and Science.

Digesting Reality

What is reality? Is there only the physical world and no spiritual reality? Or is everything really only spiritual and the physical is an illusion?

Monism states that everything is an integral part of an impersonal “One” (pantheism). Everything is spiritual. There is no material or physical world. The physical world is “Maya”, an illusion

Atheism states that everything is material or physical and there is no spiritual reality. Justice and love are really illusions.

Theism states there is both a spiritual reality and a physical reality

Which world view best fits reality? The Bible speaks of both the physical and natural world and at the same time describes a supernatural (spiritual) world. The Bible communicates Total Truth not partial truth.

example: bear stuffed in a box: put an oversized stuffed animal in a small box. Part of the animal fits in the box but a portion of the animal does not fit. The box represents your world view and the animal pictures reality. If the animal does not fit in the box, this means your world view is too small and does not adequately describe reality.

World View	Impact
Creation: Cosmos had a beginning / designed	Dignity of mankind
Fall: Cosmos groaning - evil entered the world	Depravity of mankind
Redemption of mankind - cosmos redeemed to be set free	Deliverance of mankind and the creation
Restoration: New Cosmos (renovated)	Destiny of mankind and the world

4. Pointer Finger — Points to External Evidences

Historical evidence

THE HITTITES

The Hittites though mentioned nearly fifty times in the Bible were thought to be made up by the Israelites until archeologists around 1900 discovered the capital city, Hattusa, of the Hittites.

CYRUS CYLINDER

“Archeologists found a nine-inch clay cylinder from ancient Babylon, dating to 539 BC, telling of King Cyrus of Persia’s conquest of Babylon and his critical decree to let Babylonian captives return to their lands and restore their temples.”⁶

JERICHO, Joshua 6

For years Jericho's existence was doubted until 1907. Archeologists Discovered the Biblical Jericho. They discovered that the walls had not collapsed inwardly like they would during an invasion but the walls fell

⁶ David Limbaugh, *Jesus on Trial* (Regenery Publishing, 2014) 255

outwardly. The city had a double wall. Houses were built on the wall. An eighteen-foot section was found to remain standing. They also found abandoned spoils.

KETEF HINNOM AMULETS

“In 1979 a team of Israeli archeologists discovered nine caves on the hillside just west of Jerusalem in the Valley of Hinnom... Inside one of the caves archeologists discovered two tiny silver scrolls or amulets, each about the size of a cigarette butt, upon which were written lines in old Hebrew script... In tiny, almost microscopic letters, they saw the mysterious tetragrammation YHWH, the sacred, ineffable name of God in the Hebrew Bible — one of the few times the full name had been found in Israel or anywhere in the world... Both scrolls, dated to the seventh century BC, had inscribed on them the Priestly Blessing from Numbers 6:24-26: ... the archeologists had happened upon the oldest extant piece of Hebrew Bible in existence — one dating four centuries earlier than the Dead Sea Scrolls. But equally important, the discovery called into question recent skeptical theories that postulate that the Torah was written very late — during or even after the Babylonian Exile of 560 BC — by scribes who learned their monotheism from Zoroastrian Priests in Babylon.” ⁷

THE FLOOD

“Legends have been reported from nations such as China, Babylon, Mexico, Egypt, Sudan, Syria, Persia, India, Norway, Wales, Ireland, Indonesia, Romania, etc.—composing a list that could go on for many pages (see Perloff, 1999, p. 167). Although the vast number of

⁷ Robert J. Hutchinson, *The Politically Incorrect Bible* (Regenery Publishing, 2007) 19-20

such legends is surprising, the similarity between much of their content is equally amazing. James Perloff noted: In 95 percent of the more than two hundred flood legends, the flood was worldwide; in 88 percent, a certain family was favored; in 70 percent, survival was by means of a boat; in 67 percent, animals were also saved; in 66 percent, the flood was due to the wickedness of man; in 66 percent, the survivors had been forewarned; in 57 percent, they ended up on a mountain; in 35 percent, birds were sent out from the boat; and in 9 percent, exactly eight people were spared (p. 168).⁸

Manuscript evidence

Can I really trust that we have the Bible as was originally written?

Question: The Declaration of Independence is fading away. When it completely fades will we be able to reconstruct the document with complete accuracy?

Textual Criticism

1. QUALITATIVE evidence:⁹

The earlier the document the more reliable

2. QUANTITATIVE evidence:¹⁰

More documents the better

3. The Old Testament SCRIBE

a. Scribe was a SACRED CALLING

1. Invested his life. This was highly select group of people

⁸ James Perloff, *Tornado in a Junkyard* (Refuge Books) 168

⁹ see Josh McDowell, *New Evidence that Demands A Verdict* (Thomas Nelson)

¹⁰ *ibid.*

b. REGULATIONS

1. Had to be a Jew
2. Used skins of clean animals
3. Fastened together with strings taken from clean animals
4. Every skin must contain a certain number of columns, equal throughout the entire writing. The length of each column must not extend less than 48 or more than 60 lines. The breadth must consist of thirty letters.
5. Ink =black
6. Not to deviate from one word, letter, yode — the smallest Hebrew letter.
7. Every consonant must be a space of a hair or thread
8. Every word must have a space of a small consonant
9. Every section must have a space of nine consonants
10. Every book must have a space of three lines
11. Clothes - Jewish and wash whole body before writing
12. Must not write the name of God with a newly dipped pen.
13. Any errors or discrepancies then the books were burned or buried.

The Masoretes and the O.T.

The Masoretes were a group of scribes that lived in the 10th century. They standardized the O.T. so everybody could use and read. They added vowels so that it could be read. For a long time the earliest O.T. manuscripts that we had were the ones written in the 10th century AD.

DEAD SEA Scrolls: (1947)

A boy taking care of goats found the scrolls in the Qumran caves which contain portions of every O.T. book except Esther and a full copy of Isaiah. The scrolls have been dated around 150 BC. In comparing the Masoretic text with the Dead Sea texts, they were found to be identical with some minor variations in word spelling.

Among many other ancient texts in the Dead Sea Scrolls is portions of every book of the O.T. except for Esther. A complete copy of the Book of Isaiah is found in this collection. “Gleason Archer says that though the two copies of Isaiah discovered in Qumran Cave 1 near the Dead Sea in 1947 pre-dated by a thousand years any copies we had, they were identical in more than 95 percent of the text and the 5 percent of variants mainly consisted of spelling errors and obvious slips of the pen.”¹¹

Septuagint (247 B.C.)¹²

The term Septuagint, meaning “seventy,” actually refers to the seventy-two translators—six from each tribe of Israel—involved in translating the Pentateuch from Hebrew to Greek

¹¹ David Limbaugh, *Jesus on Trial* (Regenery Publishing, 2014) 236

¹² What is the Septuagint, Ryan Reeves, The Gospel Coalition, August 12, 2018

in the third-century BCE (seventy-two is rounded down to seventy, hence the Roman numeral LXX),

The New Testament

1. The New Testament was written within the first century. The Book of Acts was written before 70 AD. Luke was written before Acts and the Gospel of Mark was written before Luke.
2. Over 5,000 Greek manuscripts + 9,000 manuscripts from other languages which is far more copies than of any other ancient work.

Example: Number of Manuscripts

New Testament	versus	Ancient Authors	
5,800 + Greek		Caesar	10
9,000 other		Plato	7
languages		Sophocles	100
14,000 +			175

3. The copies have the shortest time interval between the original writing and the copy of any ancient work.
4. The writing of the early church quoted the scripture so much that we can reproduce most of the New Testament just from their writings

Conclusion

“The evidence for our New Testament writings is ever so much greater than the evidence for many writings of classical authors, the authenticity of which no one dreams of questioning.”

F.F. Bruce – N.T. Documents

"From the standpoint of literary evidence, the only logical conclusion is that the case for the reliability of the New Testament is infinitely stronger than that of any other record of antiquity."

Howard Vos, Can I trust My Bible

"No other ancient book has anything like such early and plentiful testimony to its text, and no unbiased scholar would deny that the text that has come down to us is substantially sound." Sir Frederic Kenyon, The Bible and Modern Scholarship

"The interval then between the date of original composition and the earliest extant evidence becomes so small as to be in fact negligible, and the last foundation for any doubt that the Scriptures have come down to us substantially as they were written has not been removed. Both the authenticity and the general integrity of the books of the New Testament may be regarded as finally established." Ibid.

Origin evidence

"Atheists used to ridicule Christians for saying the God made something out of nothing, but now they say that nothing created something out of nothing." Dr. Norman Geisler

3 options: The universe — space, time and matter

A. The universe came from nothing

B. The universe is eternal

C. The universe had a beginning

“In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.” Genesis 1:1 is no longer laughable. And yet, today the question has become,” who created God?”. How absurd. By definition, God is not a created being but eternal. He is not constrained by the laws of physics but He transcends them for He created them.

How did the Bible authors know this?

Advanced knowledge evidence

- a. The Earth hangs upon nothing Job 26:7
In Greek mythology, the earth and the heavens are supported on the shoulders of Atlas. Isaac Newton discovered that the earth is not supported in 1687 AD.

How did the Bible authors know this?

- b. Stars are Innumerable Jeremiah 33:22; Hebrews 11:12

Ptolemy counted 1056 stars and claimed that the number would not exceed 3,000. Galileo using a telescope said that there were so many that they could not be counted.

How did the Bible authors know this?

- c. The Earth is wearing out Isaiah 51:6, Psalm 102:25-27

With the 1st and 2nd Laws of Thermodynamics, we now know that the universe is “winding” down like a clock. Whereas, humanity used to think the universe was eternal.

How did the Bible authors know this?

d. LIFE is in the blood Leviticus 17
Mankind used to bleed people that were sick to get rid of their diseases. Only recently has it been discovered that blood combats diseases and brings oxygen, and nutrients to the cells. Now instead of bleeding people we give them blood transfusions.

How did the Bible authors know this?

e. Quarantine Lev 13-14
Europe brought the plaques under control by looking to the Bible and practicing its teachings on quarantine.

How did the Bible authors know this?

f. Sanitation Num 19
In 1840's maternity wards had a very high mortality rate. The doctors and the medical students would examine corpses of dead women in the morning and then without washing they would examine women in the maternity ward.

How did the Bible authors know this?

g. Noah's Ark
"In 1609 at Hoorn in Holland, in Holland, the Netherlandish Mennonite, P.Jansen, produced a vessel after the pattern of the ark, only smaller, whereby he proved it was adapted for floating, and would carry a cargo greater by one-third than any other form of like cubical content... It revolutionized shipbuilding. By 1900 every large ship on the high seas was definitely

inclined toward the proportions of the ark (as verified by “Lloyd’s Register of Shipping”, The World Almanac).”
Later, ships were built for speed, a matter of no concern to Noah.”¹³

How did Noah know how to build the Ark?

5. Thumb - The Person of Jesus Christ and His view of Scripture

They Key to Bible as the Word of God and understanding the message of the Bible is Christ

“Jesus Christ is the key to both the inspiration and the interpretation of the Bible. Further, it is Christ who confirmed the collection of books of the Bible as both complete and authoritative”¹⁴

Luke 24:44-45

Matthew 4:4

Jesus’ affirms historical various events and people
Creation . . . had a beginning
Adam / Eve, Noah, Abraham, Moses, David
Flood, Sodom and Gomorrah

Jesus did not accommodate to the false beliefs of His day. Jesus was not an accommodator (Example: Read the Sermon on the Mount)

Jesus affirms the canonization of the Old Testament books, Luke 24:44-45

Jesus promised the New Testament, John 14:26, 16:13, Ephesians 2:20

¹³ Parallel Bible-PR-Am/NKJV, Hendrickson Publishers

¹⁴ Norman L. Geisler, *A Popular Survey of the Old Testament* (Baker Book House, 1977), 11

6. Palm - Experience of Transformed lives

"The great difference wrought among savage people when the Bible is accepted is brought out in an anecdote of the South Sea Islands. Seeing a converted cannibal reading a Bible, a trader said to him, "That book is out of date in my country." "If it had been out of date here, " was the reply, " you would have been eaten long ago."

7. Fist — Survival of the Bible

"A thousand times the death knell of the Bible has been sounded, the funeral procession formed, the inscription cut on the tombstone and committal read. But somehow the corpse never stays put."¹⁵

"The Roman Emperor Diocletian outlawed the Bible and decreed that any Christian caught with one would be executed. Maximian issued an edict that all Christian churches were to be destroyed and all copies of the Bible were to be burned... This martyrdom continued into the modern era, with particularly severe punishments meted out for Bible possession throughout much of the Islamic world. The same goes for the Communist nations..."¹⁶

In AD 303 Roman Emperor Diocletian issued an edict to destroy both the Christians and their sacred book. Throughout the empire, Scriptures were burned. Yet twenty-five years later, Constantine, the emperor following

¹⁵ Bernard Ramm, *Protestant Christian Evidences* (Moody Press, 2nd Printing, 1954) 232-233

¹⁶ David Limbaugh, *Jesus On Trial* (Regenery Publishing, 2014), 148

Diocletian, commissioned Eusebius to prepare 50 copies of the Scripture at the government's expense.

Voltaire, the French skeptic, who died in 1778, predicted that in 100 years from his time Christianity would no longer exist and pass into history. But 50 years after his death, the Geneva Bible Society moved into his house and used his printing press to produce thousands of Bibles. Voltaire passed into history, not the Bible!

Bonus: “Handshake”

Addendum

What About “Variations” in the Bible

If the Bible is the inspired and inerrant Word of God then why are there discrepancies and variations in the Bible versions we have today?

The first thing to say is, yes – there are numerous variations in the Bible versions we have. In fact Bart Erhman, Professor of Religious Studies at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill states, “there are more variations among our manuscripts than there are words in the New Testament”. Bart’s mentor in Textual Criticism, Bruce Metzger, preeminent scholar on the veracity of the Bible as the Word of God, agreed there were many variations and probably even more than that Bart stipulated.

Here a few examples of variations or discrepancies.

John 6:58 — the word “manna” added

John 6:59 — replaces Jesus with the word He

John 7:1 — the word Judeans (Jewish people) is used instead of the word Jews

John 7:3,5,10 — some manuscripts say, “brothers and sisters” instead of just brothers

John 7:15 — learning is changed to “knows his letters” which means learning

John 7:17 — the word God is changed to His

John 7:38 — let him come to me is changed to “let him who believes in me drink” because of verse 7:39

John 8:1-11 — This section is questionable because it is not found in any of the manuscripts up to the 5th Century. The story does give us a different view of Jesus or new information about Jesus. It does confirm whether it is original or not the character of Jesus we learn in other portions of the Gospels.

Mark 16:9-20 — many of the later manuscripts contain this section, the two oldest and respected manuscripts do not. The older manuscripts are much closer to the originals and carry a lot of weight. Many believe that these verses were added by a scribe to complete the abrupt ending of the Gospel of Mark. However, even if this section is not an original writing, the evidence of the resurrection message is found in the other Gospels. We do not need the Mark passage to give evidence to the resurrection and ascension

Luke 22:20 — the phrase in my blood are missing in some manuscripts but not in the other Gospels.

Luke 22:43-44 — these verses are missing in some manuscripts. But they do not have any impact on who Jesus is, why He was in the garden and what He was to about to experience — crucifixion.

One question to ask is, “Why are there variations?”

One reason of course is they are unintentional errors. There are many cases of misspelled words and copy errors over time that entered the text by those who copied the texts.

Another reason, the variances were intended by the copyist to try and add information for the reader and also to try to clarify or explain to the reader what they may not be aware.

For example, in 1 John 5:7, the scribe added the phrase *“the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one”* to add information of naming the three in the “Trinity”. This added information does not change the meaning in any way but the copyist assumed it would assist in the reader’s understanding.

Or in John 5:2–4, the copyist adds information to explain the unknown to the reader about why the crowds thought the water stirred once in a while. He added, *“For an angel went down at a certain season into the pool, and troubled the water: whosoever then first after the troubling of the water stepped in was made whole of whatsoever disease he had.”* The copyist added this to explain verse seven.

In none of these variations does the person of Jesus Christ or any doctrine for that matter is impacted or changed by the variances in Scripture. None!

However, this is not the end of the story.

The rest of the story starts with defining terms such as inspiration and inerrancy and a term called textual criticism.

Inspiration is the doctrine that the authors Bible were led or influenced by God with the result that their writings were the very word of God.

Inerrancy is the doctrine that the Bible in the original manuscripts is without error. Only the originals were inspired and inerrant.

The reality though is, none of the original manuscripts exist. None.

Textual criticism is the process of attempting to ascertain the original wording of a text.

Simply stated, textual criticism is a method used to determine what the original manuscripts of the Bible said. The original manuscripts of the Bible are either lost, hidden, or no longer in existence. What we do have is tens of thousands of copies of the original manuscripts dating from the 1st to the 15th centuries A.D. (for the New Testament) and dating from the 4th century B.C. to the 15th century A.D. (for the Old Testament). In these manuscripts, there are many minor and a few somewhat major differences. Textual criticism is the study of these manuscripts in an attempt to determine what the original reading actually was.
gotquestions.org

So, the question is, *“if there are so many variations and there are no original manuscripts, then how can we have confidence that we the Scripture as we originally penned?”*

Can we reconstruct the originals with what we have? The answer is a certain yes! Bruce Metzger, Professor of New Testament and Literature, Princeton Theological Seminary (now deceased) and the preeminent scholar on textual criticism stated, “I’ve asked questions all my life, I’ve dug into the text, I’ve studied this thoroughly, and today I know with confidence that my trust in Jesus has been well placed. Very well placed.”

The issue at hand is not the number of variations but the number of manuscripts we have. And can we reconstruct the manuscript in a reliable manner in which we can know with certainty and

confidence what the originals said? And the answer to this is a big YES!

As stated earlier in this book there are thousands of manuscripts for sections of the New Testament that the textual critics can reconstruct what was written in the original manuscripts with almost one-hundred percent accuracy! And we the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls which includes Old Testament books demonstrate the accuracy of the Old Testament we have.

Let me use a couple of examples. The Declaration of Independence is fading so that one day we will not be able to read it. Will it be possible to reconstruct the Declaration as it was originally written. Why?

Secondly, if you write a text with errors in it and retype it with different errors again. Repeat this a number of times. Is it possible to put these messages together and get to intended message of the author?

This is what God has provided throughout the ages — many thousands of manuscripts which the scholars are able to reconstruct the Biblical authors original writing.

Helpful Resources

Alcorn Randy, If God is Good (Multnomah Books)

Blomberg Craig L., Can We Still Believe the Bible (Brazos Press)

Collins C. John, Genesis 1 —4: A Linguistic, Literary, and Theological Commentary (P&R Publishing Company)

Copan Paul, Is God a Moral Monster (Baker Books)

Geisler Norman & Howe Thomas, The Big Book of Bible Difficulties (Baker Books)

Hutchinson Robert J., The Politically Incorrect Guide to the Bible (Regenery Publishing)

Keller Timothy, The Reason For God (Dutton)

Koukl Greg, Stand to Reason (www.str.org)

Limbaugh David, Jesus on Trial (Regenery Publishing)

McDowell Josh, The New Evidence that Demands A Verdict (Thomas Nelson)

Morrow Jonathan, Questioning the Bible: 11 Major Challenges to the Bible's Authority (Moody Publishers)

Stoner Peter, Science Speaks (Moody Press)

Wallace J. Warner, Cold Case Christianity (David C. Cook)

