

# How Can We Trust the Bible?

## Compiled by Brent Knox

To be considered to have come from God, a book must meet certain requirements.

**First**, it must be historically accurate according to normal historicity tests.

- It is based on the recollection of eye-witnesses that is written down.
- It is based on a short time span between the actual event(s) and the earliest known existing historical manuscript.
- It corresponds with historical personages and events. A book that confuses names, dates and events cannot be considered to be historically accurate.
- It corresponds with archeological findings.

**Secondly**, a book must have a supernatural element to it. Any book can claim to be inspired by God, but can it demonstrate it? The primary way a book can demonstrate a supernatural character, is through fulfilled prophecy.

### The Bible Is Historically Accurate

- 1. The events of Jesus' life is the recollection of eye-witnesses not legends passed down through oral tradition.**

*"Many have undertaken to draw up an account of the things that have been fulfilled among us, just as they were handed down to us by those who from the first were eyewitnesses and servants of the word. Therefore, since I myself have carefully investigated everything from the beginning, it seemed good also to me to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, so that you may know the certainty of the things you have been taught." (Luke 1:1–4, NIV84)*

- 2. The resurrection of Jesus is the recollection of eye-witnesses.**

*"For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Peter, and then to the Twelve. After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles, and last of all he appeared to me also, as to one abnormally born." (1 Corinthians 15:3–8, NIV84)*

3. **The Bible is reliable as an historical document demonstrated by 1) the short time span between the original manuscript and the earliest existing manuscript, and 2) the number of ancient manuscripts that exist.**

Compare the Bible to other historical documents:

<u>Author</u>	<u>When Written</u>	<u>Earliest Copy</u>	<u>Time Span</u>	<u>No. of Copies</u>
Caesar	100-44 BC.	AD. 900	1,000 yr.	10
Livy	59 BC.-AD.17	AD. 900	1,200 yr.	20
Plato	427-347 BC.	AD. 1100	1,000 yr.	7
Tacitus	AD. 100	AD. 1000	900 yr.	20 (-)
Pliny	AD. 61-113	AD. 850	750 yr.	7
Thucydides	460-400 BC.	AD. 900	1,300 yr.	8
Suetonius	AD. 75-160	AD. 950	800 yr.	8
Herodotus	480-425 BC.	AD. 950	1,300 yr.	8
Homer ( <i>Iliad</i> )	900 BC.	400 BC.	500 yr.	643
<b>New Testament</b>	<b>AD. 40-100</b>	<b>AD. 125</b>	<b>25 yr.</b>	<b>24,000+</b>

*"The interval between the dates of original composition (of the NT..) 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 now been removed. Both the authenticity and the general integrity of the books of the NT.. may be regarded as finally established."* Sir Frederic Kenyon, former director and principle librarian of the British Museum, one of the world's foremost experts on ancient manuscripts.

*"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...And if the NT.. were a collection of secular writings, their authenticity would generally be regarded as beyond all doubt.....There is no body of ancient literature in the world which enjoys such a wealth of good textual attestation as the NT.."* F.F. Bruce, University of Manchester, expert on ancient history

4. **The Bible is reliable source of history that is confirmed by archeology and other historical documents.**

Nelson Glueck, the renowned Jewish archaeologists, wrote that *"It may be stated categorically that no archaeological discovery has ever controverted a biblical reference."* He continued his assertion of, *"the almost incredibly accurate historical memory of the Bible, and particularly so when it is fortified by archaeological fact."*

William Albright, known for his reputation as one of the great archaeologists states, *"There can be no doubt that archaeology has confirmed the substantial historicity of Old Testament tradition."*

Millar Burrows, Yale archaeologist, observes, *"On the whole such evidence as archaeology has afforded thus far, especially by providing*

*additional and older manuscripts of the books of the Bible, strengthens our confidence in the accuracy with which the text has been transmitted through the centuries."*

For example, Jericho was excavated 1930-1936. Garstang found something so startling that a statement of what they found was prepared and signed by himself and two other members of the team. In reference to these findings Garstang says, *"As to the main fact, then, there remains no doubt: the walls fell outwards so completely that the attackers would be able to clamber up and over their ruins into the city."* Why so unusual? Because the walls of cities do not fall outwards, they fall inwards. And yet in Joshua 6:20 we hear *"...the wall fell flat, so that the people went into*

the city every man straight ahead, and they took the city." The walls were made to fall outward.

Why is archeological support so important? Because the Bible couldn't be trusted as an accurate document. It is interesting to compare the Bible to the Book of Mormon in this regard.

The Book of Mormon details the history of the Jewish "Nephites" from 600 BC. through AD. 421. with detailed accounts of cities, persons, animals, fabrics, and metals, wars, kings, palaces, etc. You would think that with such a description of such a culture existing in America that there would be an abundance of archaeological evidence. In fact, the Smithsonian Institution has received so many inquiries concerning this that they actually return a standard form-letter denying it. They say there is not one piece of evidence that there ever existed a Jewish tribe in the Americas. In other

words, no Book of Mormon cities have ever been located, no Book of Mormon person, place, nation, or name has been found, no Book of Mormon artifacts, no Book of Mormon scriptures, no Book of Mormon inscriptions, no Book of Mormon gold plates--nothing which demonstrates the Book of Mormon is anything other than myth or invention has ever been found.

By contrast, the archaeological evidence for the Bible is so convincing that even a former skeptic such as the great archaeologists Sir William Ramsey became a Christian. But the archaeological evidence against the Mormon claims is so devastating that prominent Mormon archaeologist Thomas Stewart Ferguson quit the Mormon Church and repudiated its prophet.

### **The Bible has a supernatural nature that is confirmed by fulfilled prophecy.**

*"Present your case," says the Lord. Set forth your arguments," says Jacob's king. "Bring in your idols to tell us what is going to happen. Tell us what the former things were, so that we may consider them and know their final outcome. Or declare to us the things to come, tell us what the future holds, so we know that you are gods. "*  
Isaiah 41:21-23

According to the Bible, a prophet who speaks for God must be 100% accurate. The Bible record the acid test for a prophet: Duet. 18:21-22.

The Bible steps forward and is full of amazing predictions of the future that have taken place already and some that have yet to take place. There are many dramatic prophecies that are just too specific to be considered just good guesses. And the Bible has been accurate 100% in its ability to forecast the future.

Scholars estimate that there are 2500 prophecies in the Bible. Roughly 2000 of those have been fulfilled with remarkable precision. The remaining 500 will soon be fulfilled when Jesus Christ comes back. The odds that 2000 prophecies could have been fulfilled by chance is less than one in 10 to the 2000<sup>th</sup> power.

Again, the Bible is in striking contrast to the Book of Mormon. The irreconcilable dilemma for the

individual Mormon is contradictory revelation. Joseph Smith claimed to be a true biblical prophet. In "Divine and Covenants" God promises that all the prophecies and promises within the book's pages shall be fulfilled. Yet in that same book, the word of the Lord predicts that both a city and a temple are to be built "in the Western boundaries of the state of Missouri and dedicated by the hand of Joseph Smith." What happened? Joseph Smith died in Navoo, Illinois at the hands of an angry mob, and decades later, a temple was built in Utah. Another prophecy concerned the Civil War. Mr. Smith prophesied that all the nations would be involved, that it would involve the Lord's wrath, with earthquakes, lightning, and bring about the end of all the nations. Obviously that didn't happen.

Polygamy was one of their divine revelations. But another divine revelation came in the 1890's contradicting the first divine revelation. They wanted to become a state in Utah but the Union wouldn't let them in if they practiced polygamy, so a divine revelation came to end polygamy.

There was a divine revelation concerning black people. In essence the revelation communicated that blacks were less than people. That is why there are very few blacks today in the Mormon Church. It wasn't until an outrage spark another divine revelation in 1975 that this ruling was changed that blacks can now be on equal status with whites.

## Additional Resources

### Books:

1. *A Ready Defense*  
by Josh McDowell, published by Here's Life Publishers
2. *Set Forth Your Case*  
by Clark H. Pinnock, published by Moody Press
3. *I Believe in the Historical Jesus*  
by I. Howard Marshall, published by William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company
4. *The Case for Christ*  
by Lee Strobel, published by Zondervan Publishing House

### Websites:

- [web001.rbc.org/pdf/ten-reasons/in-the-bible.pdf](http://web001.rbc.org/pdf/ten-reasons/in-the-bible.pdf)  
This pdf file site contains the copy of a very good booklet called, "Ten Reasons to Believe the Bible."
- [www.christiananswers.net/q-eden/edn-t003.html](http://www.christiananswers.net/q-eden/edn-t003.html)
- [www.christiananswers.net/bible/about.html](http://www.christiananswers.net/bible/about.html)  
This site is a great source on how to answer some tough questions.
  - Is the Bible truth or tabloid?
  - How do we know the Bible is true?
  - Is the Bible full of mistakes?
  - When we say that the Bible is the Word of God, does that imply that it is completely accurate, or does it contain insignificant inaccuracies in details of history and science?
  - How can the Bible be infallible if it is written by fallible humans?

### [www.probe.org/category/reasons-to-believe/reliability-of-the-bible/](http://www.probe.org/category/reasons-to-believe/reliability-of-the-bible/)

"There are many books today that claim to be the Word of God. The Koran, the Islam holy book, claims to be the Word of God. The Book of Mormon claims to be the Word of God. The Hindus believe the Bhagavad Vita is the source of eternal truth. Karl Marx, with his atheistic worldview, claimed his writing, *The Communist Manifesto*, was the ultimate truth. We Christians believe the Bible to be the Word of God and the eternal source of truth we live by. How do we know the Bible is the Word of God? Can we actually prove that the Bible is truly the Word of God? The answer is yes....."

### [www.christianinformation.org/article.asp?artID=12](http://www.christianinformation.org/article.asp?artID=12)

- Is the Text of the Bible Reliable?

### [www.answers.org/apologetics/contradictions.html](http://www.answers.org/apologetics/contradictions.html)