



# THE REASON FOR HOPE

## WHY TRUST THE BIBLE?

### STARTING POINT

"...for ultimate authorities to be ultimate authorities, they have to be the standard for their own authentication. You cannot account for them without using them." (Michael J. Kruger)

If the Bible is God's Word, then it is an ultimate \_\_\_\_\_ and so it must be self-authenticating.

We're going to take 3 steps toward answering the question: why trust the Bible?

### 1. READ THE LABEL: WHAT DOES THE BIBLE CLAIM TO BE?

Psalms 19 | Matthew 22:29-32 | 2 Timothy 3:16-17 | 2 Peter 1:20-21



The Bible is divided into 2 sections: The Old Testament (39 documents written in Hebrew & Aramaic) and the New Testament (27 documents written mainly in Greek) - the oldest documents being written about 1500 BC and the latest around 90 AD.

The Bible may be thought of not as just one singular book, but as a \_\_\_\_\_ of books.

### A. GOD'S SELF-REVELATION (PSALM 19)

God reveals Himself to us in:

I. \_\_\_\_\_ - also called "General Revelation"

**Psalms 19:1** says that "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork..." Creation is God's general revelation of Himself to everyone through the world.

**Romans 1:19-20** also affirms that God's self-revelation in creation is so clear that it leaves everyone without an excuse.

II. \_\_\_\_\_ - also called "Special Revelation"

**Psalms 19:7-11** says that the scriptures are from God, and are perfect, sure, right, clean, true, precious, desirable, able to instruct and warn us. Note the effects of scripture: it revives the soul, makes wise, rejoices the heart, enlightens, endures, is sweeter than honey (enjoyable), and result in great reward to those who obey it.



**TAKE AWAY:** The Bible is God's special self-revelation to us, revealing who He is by telling us in writing what He said, has done and promises to do.

## B. GOD SPEAKING TO US (MATTHEW 22:29-32)

**MATTHEW 22:29-32** - Jesus holds the Jewish leaders accountable to what was written in Exodus 3:6 as if God had personally spoke it directly to them.

**2 TIMOTHY 3:16-17** says that scripture is ultimately the product of \_\_\_\_\_ not man and they are \_\_\_\_\_ to fully equip us for every good work.

**2 PETER 1:20** says that the meaning of scripture is *NOT* a matter of one's own private interpretation. God meant to say something specific to us and intends for us to rightly understand His message.

What scripture is claiming is that when we \_\_\_\_\_ or hear the Bible preached, it is God speaking to us. We better listen up!



**TAKE AWAY:** The Bible is God speaking directly to us. Properly interpreted, its commands are binding on us, and it is sufficient for salvation and to equip us for every good work.



### FURTHER RESOURCES: The Bible and its Authority

- [Scripture Alone: Exploring the Bible's Accuracy, Authority and Authenticity](#) by James R. White
- [Sola Scriptura: The Protestant Position on the Bible](#) edited by Don Kistler

## 2. LOOK INSIDE: DOES THE BIBLE MATCH ITS CLAIMS?

Internal Consistency | Fulfilled Prophecy | Faithful Preservation



## A. INTERNAL CONSISTENCY (GENESIS - REVELATION)

If the Bible is ultimately the product of One Divine Author, then its collective message should be consistent across all of its books.

The Bible tells the unified, coherent story of humanity's creation by God, subsequent \_\_\_\_\_ against God, and God's gracious \_\_\_\_\_ of His people.

The Bible's consistent message is an amazing testimony to its trustworthiness when we consider the sheer breadth of the Bible's authors, topics, genres and times. ***No other book, either in antiquity or today, can even come close to this sort of a claim.*** Every other religious text is either compiled by one author or governing authority, or it has major inconsistencies and contradictions within it.



## CHALLENGE: THE BIBLE IS FULL OF CONTRADICTIONS

### DEFINING TERMS: WHAT A CONTRADICTION IS NOT...

Someone's personal bias against supernaturalism, or distaste of certain things in the Bible because of their own presuppositions and worldview does not count as a contradiction.

#### The Clarity of Scripture:

All things in Scripture are not alike plain in themselves, nor alike clear unto all (2 Pet. 3:16): yet those things which are necessary to be known, believed, and observed for salvation are so clearly propounded, and opened in some place of Scripture or other, that not only the learned, but the unlearned, in a due use of the ordinary means, may attain unto a sufficient understanding of them (Psa. 119:105, 130).

*(The Westminster Confession of Faith, 1.7)*

### 3 TYPES OF FLAWED 'CONTRADICTIONS':

- **Flawed \_\_\_\_\_** : Sometimes, what is cited as a 'contradiction' by skeptics is simply a poor understanding of Christian theology.
- **Flawed \_\_\_\_\_** : Sometimes, alleged 'contradictions' are simply a matter of imperfect or heretical translations (eg. Jehovah's Witnesses - New World Translation).
- **Flawed \_\_\_\_\_** : Some alleged 'contradictions' are a matter of misunderstanding the meaning of the text in its right context.

For all of these alleged 'contradictions,' the actual problem is a misunderstanding of the scriptures. So, our response is to humbly and graciously offer to teach and correct these misunderstandings.



**TAKE AWAY:** God's word is totally consistent. The perceived 'contradictions' in scripture are not actually contradictions when understood properly.



### FURTHER RESOURCES: The Consistent Message of the Bible

- [The Whole Message of the Bible in 16 Words](#) by Chris Bruno
- [Keeping Faith in an Age of Reason: Refuting Alleged Bible Contradictions](#) by Jason Lisle
- [The Bible Project](#) - online animated videos that explain the Bible's message.

## B. FULFILLED PROPHECY (OLD TO NEW TESTAMENT)

If the Bible is the God's word, we should expect it to evidence a supernatural quality about what it predicts.

### I. MESSIANIC PROPHECY (Prophecies about Jesus)

By various estimates, Jesus Christ fulfilled over \_\_\_\_\_ specific prophecies about the Messiah in his birth, life, death and resurrection. This is the whole point of the Bible: to point to Jesus Christ as the long awaited Saviour of the world!

Here is a partial summary of the prophecies in the OT that are fulfilled in Jesus in the NT.

**The Messiah would:**

- **be born of a virgin** (Isa. 7:14 | Matt. 1:22-23 & Luke 1:31-35)
- **have been the object of a murderous plot to kill him as a baby** (Jer. 31:15 | Matt. 2:16-18)
- **be the son given to us who is called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, etc** (Isa. 9:6-7 | Luke 1:32-33 & 79, Acts 10:36)
- **be born in Bethlehem** (Mic. 5:2 | Matt. 2:1-6, John 7:40-43)
- **be a descendant of David** (2 Sam. 7:12-16; Matt. 1:1, Luke 1:32-33 & Acts 15:15-16)
- **be called out of Egypt** (Hos. 11:1 | Matt. 2:13-15)
- **be preceded by a prophet/messenger like Elijah** (Isa. 40:3-5, Mal. 3:1 & 4:5-6 | Matt. 3:1-3, 11:10-15, 17:9-13, Luke 1:16-17, John 1:22-23)
- **do prophesied redemptive acts** (Isa. 61:1-2 | Luke 4:17-21)
- **perform signs of healing** (Isa. 35:5-6 | Matt. 11:4-6)
- **be a prophet like Moses** (Deut. 18:15-19 | John 6:14, 7:40, Acts 3:22 & 7:37)
- **be called God's Son** (Psa. 2:1-12 | Luke 3:22, Acts 4:25-28, 13:33, Heb. 1:5 & 5:5)
- **be the light for the nations** (Isa. 42:1-7 | Matt. 12:15-18, John 8:12)
- **come come riding on a donkey** (Zech. 9:9 | Matt. 21:1-7)
- **bear the title 'Son of Man'** (Dan. 7:13-14 | Matt. 9:6, 12:8, 13:41, Luke 9:22, John 1:51 & 3:13-14)
- **be the rejected cornerstone** (Psa. 118:22-24 | Matt. 21:42, Luke 20:17-18, Acts 4:9-12, Eph. 2:20, 1 Pet. 2:6-8)
- **be betrayed for 30 pieces of silver** (Zech. 11:12-13 | Matt. 26:14-15 & 27:3-10)
- **be pierced one whom they look upon and mourn** (Zech. 12:10 | John 19:31-37, Rev. 1:7)
- **be the suffering servant** (Isa. 52:13-53:12 | Matt. 8:16-17, 20:28, 26:28, 27:59-60, John 12:37-38, Acts 8:32-35, Rom. 10:16, 1 Pet. 2:21-25)
- **be the ultimate Passover Lamb** (Exo. 12:1-51 | John 1:29, 1 Cor. 5:7-8, 1 Pet. 1:19)
- **be forsaken and pierced but vindicated** (Psa. 22:1-31 | Matt. 27:39-46, John 19:24 & Heb. 2:12)
- **be lifted up** (Num. 21:6-9 | John 3:14-18)
- **be resurrected** (Psa. 16:8-11 | Acts 2:22-32 & 13:35-37)
- **bring a new covenant** (Jer. 31:31 | Matt. 26:28, Heb. 8:6-13 & 9:15)

Notice how many of these fulfilled prophecies would be impossible if Jesus was merely a human trying to fit the role (such as where he was born, his genealogy, John coming before him to prepare the way, Herod's persecution, etc). Furthermore, many of these prophecies were written centuries before Christ and are fulfilled precisely as predicted.

## II. THE SUFFERING SERVANT OF ISAIAH 52-53

If someone were even marginally familiar with the story of Jesus and they read these chapters of Isaiah without knowing where it was found, they might think they were reading something from the New Testament. It is so clearly a Messianic prophecy pointing to Jesus Christ that many unbelieving Jews refuse to read it publicly and many critical bible scholars thought it was impossible to have been originally written by Isaiah. They thought it must have been added in later to fit Jesus.

In 1947, that all changed when a group of Bedouin shepherds stumbled upon a collection of scrolls hidden in a cave in Qumran. This was the discovery of the \_\_\_\_\_.  
The Great Scroll of Isaiah found here was dated between 356 - 103 BC!



**TAKE AWAY:** The Bible's prophetic claims are very accurately fulfilled. The many specific Messianic prophecies which are fulfilled in Jesus Christ are compelling evidences of its truth.



## FURTHER RESOURCES: Fulfilled OT Prophecy in the NT

- [The Unfolding Mystery: Discovering Christ in the Old Testament](#) by Edmund Clowney
- [A New Testament Biblical Theology: The Unfolding of the Old Testament in the New](#) by G.K. Beale

## C. FAITHFUL PRESERVATION CANON & TRANSMISSION

If the Bible is God's word, He will preserve it for us so that we can be confident that what we have and read today is really what He meant for us to have.

### I. THE BIBLICAL 'CANON': *How do we know what is supposed to be in the Bible?*

The term 'canon' - from the Greek word κανών (kanōn) - simply means "measuring rod or standard." It refers to the standard by which you assess something, or determine the limits of something. When we use it in terms of the Bible, we mean the limits of the books that belong in the Bible.

#### 3 Qualities we should expect of 'canonical' books:

1. \_\_\_\_\_ **Qualities** : The book bears the marks of divine majesty, purity, integrity, consistency with the rest of scripture, and are powerful to convert and build up.
2. \_\_\_\_\_ **Origins**: The book can be reliably be traced back to the pen of an apostle or a close associate, and faithfully communicates the apostolic message.
3. \_\_\_\_\_ **Reception**: Historically, the book was widely received and recognized as scripture by the corporate, global church body.



## CHALLENGE: WHAT ABOUT THE APOCRYPHA?

### DEFINITION: APOCRYPHAL

From the Greek, ἀπόκρυφος (apokryphos), meaning "obscure." These are books of doubtful authenticity and thus considered non-canonical.

Some examples of apocryphal books are: Maccabees, the Gospel of Peter, the Nag Hammadi codices (including the Gospel of Thomas), the Secret Gospel of Mark, and the Gospel of Judas.

**Why aren't these books in our Bibles?**

None of the apocryphal books bore the 3 \_\_\_\_\_ qualities of genuine canonical books.



**TAKE AWAY:** The Biblical canon of books we have today are self-attested by their divine qualities, apostolic origins and corporate reception. What we have is what God intended.



## II. TEXTUAL TRANSMISSION: How do we know what we have is what was originally written?

The Bible claims that God's word stands forever (Isa. 40:8), and Jesus even claims that heaven and earth would sooner pass away than even one of the smallest marks of his words (Matt. 5:18, 24:35).

### Preservation of the Old Testament (OT)

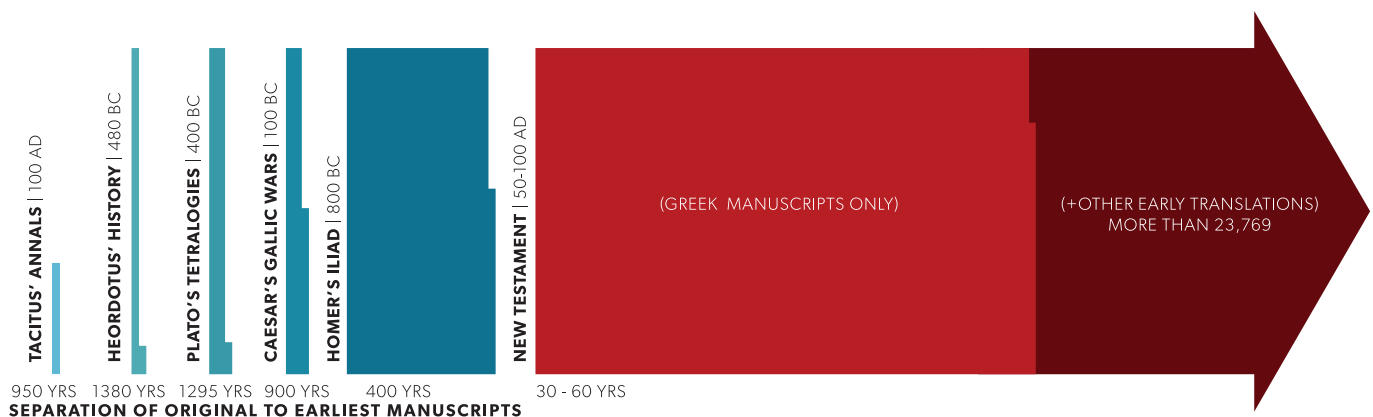
The traditional Hebrew and Aramaic version of the OT which we have preserved today is called the Masoretic Text. Its earliest manuscripts date from around the 9th century. When the Dead Sea Scrolls were discovered, some which date from around 408 BC, the similarity of their text with that of the Masoretic text was remarkable!

For example, the Scroll of Isaiah was found to be \_\_\_\_\_ the same, with the 5% difference being mainly obvious scribal mistakes which made no difference to the meaning of the text.

### Preservation of the New Testament (NT)

The evidence we have for the preservation of the New Testament is simply staggering - especially when compared to any other similar work of antiquity.

There are over \_\_\_\_\_ Greek hand-copied manuscripts containing either parts or all of the NT. The average size of a NT manuscript is over \_\_\_\_\_ pages. Some of the earliest manuscripts are dated possibly to within \_\_\_\_\_ years of the originals



Simply stated, no other work of antiquity has the same level of manuscript evidence to support the faithful transmission of the text as the New Testament documents. If we were to include the number of other early manuscripts in other languages, the number would be in the tens of thousands - not to mention all the quotes of the NT in the writings of the early church.

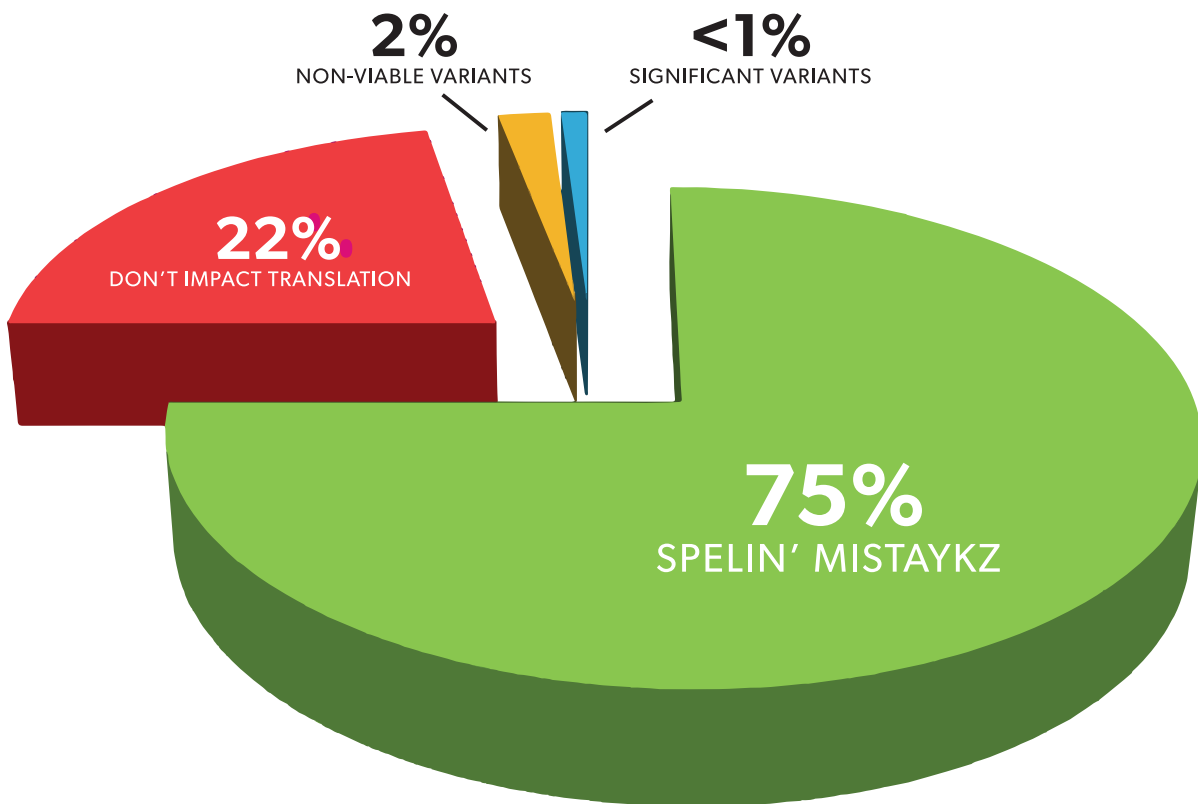


## CHALLENGE #1: WHAT ABOUT THE VARIANTS?

Aren't there more textual variants than there are words in the New Testament? How can we have any confidence about the text if there are that many 'mistakes' in the copies?

We need to understand what counts as a 'variant.' Any misspelling, omission of punctuation or accidentally skipping a word or line, etc - these all count as unique variants.

The reason we have so many variants is simply because we have so many \_\_\_\_\_!



The majority of variants in the manuscripts are inconsequential: 75% of variants are in spelling, and another 22% don't impact translation at all. The total number of variant readings that actually have any significance amount to less than 0.5%!

## CHALLENGE #2: WHAT ABOUT MISSING VERSES?

If you've been an observant reader of your Bibles, you've probably noticed little footnotes at the bottom which say, "other manuscripts read this way..." or perhaps you've noticed missing verse numbers?

Try to find John 5:4 in your Bible. If you have a modern translation like the ESV or NIV, you probably won't see it there. But if you have a KJV, the verse is there. What happened?

Because we have access to more \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ manuscripts than the KJV translators in the 17th century, we have been able to determine verses which were not original.

The truth is that we have an embarrassment of wealth of evidence when it comes to the text of the Bible. None of God's word is missing but has been providentially preserved by God for us.

**So why do people still doubt?**

Biblical textual scholar, F.F. Bruce, said it this way:

"...if the New Testament were a collection of secular writings, their authenticity would generally be regarded as beyond all doubt."

(F.F. Bruce, *The New Testament Documents: Are They Reliable?*, pg 10)

Jesus made a similar verdict on unbelief:

"And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil." (John 3:19)



**TAKE AWAY:** The historical record of manuscripts show how the biblical text has been faithfully transmitted to us in a way that shows God's providential preservation of His Word.



### FURTHER RESOURCES: Faithful Preservation of the Bible

- [Canon Revisited: Establishing the Origins and Authority of the New Testament Books](#) by Michael Kruger
- [The Canon of Scripture](#) by F.F. Bruce
- [The King James Only Controversy: Can You Trust Modern Translations?](#) by James R. White
- [Inerrancy and Worldview: Answering Modern Challenges to the Bible](#) by Vern Poythress

## 3. TASTE AND SEE! EXPERIENCE ITS GOODNESS!

Psalm 34:8 | Hebrews 4:12 | James 1:22-25 | Psalm 119:103 | Isaiah 55:1-11



God's word calls us to "\_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ that the Lord is good!" (Psalm 34:8)

Unlike any other book, you don't just read this book - it reads you (Hebrews 4:12). But if we look into it and never obey it, it's like looking into a mirror and seeing our dirty reflection but doing nothing about it (James 1:22-25). However, God's word not only diagnoses our problem, it also gives us the only solution: salvation by grace *alone* through faith in Jesus Christ (Ephesians 2:8)!



**TAKE AWAY:** So we must taste and see personally (Isaiah 55:1-11) and lead others to taste and see also (2 Corinthians 5:20; Romans 1:16).



### FURTHER RESOURCES: Experiencing the Bible's Truthfulness

- [A Peculiar Glory: How the Christian Scriptures Reveal Their Complete Truthfulness](#) by John Piper
- [Reading the Bible Supernaturally: Seeing and Savoring the Glory of God in Scripture](#) by John Piper

### OTHER RESOURCES: Biblical Scholars with Video Lectures on YouTube

- [Dr. James R. White](#) - Christian apologist, author & New Testament scholar
- [Dr. Michael J. Kruger](#) - Professor of New Testament & Early Christianity (RTS)
- [Dr. Daniel B. Wallace](#) - Professor of New Testament Studies (DTS) and Director of the Center for the Study of New Testament Manuscripts