

2 Timothy 3:16

The Uniqueness of the Bible

The Bible is the Anvil that broke all the Hammers that came against it.

(2 Timothy 3:16 NKJV) All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, (2 Timothy 3:17 NKJV) that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.

The Bible is more than simply one of the "greats"; it is unique...

- a. Meaning "one and only"
- b. Meaning "different from all others; having no like or equal" (Webster's)

Our purpose in this lesson is to review in what way the Bible is unique, how it is truly "different from all others; having no like or equal".

Ten Points to consider on how Unique this book we call the Bible is:

- 1. Unique in Its Author**
- 2. Unique in Its Continuity and Harmony**
- 3. Unique in Assembly**
- 4. Unique in Its Reliability**
- 5. Unique in its Prophecy**
- 6. Unique in its Internal Code**
- 7. Unique in Its Archeological Proof**
- 8. Unique in Reference to Health and Science**
- 9. Unique in Circulation**
- 10. Unique in the Price that was/is Paid to Print and Read It.**

1.) Unique in Its Author

The Author is from the Creator who is outside our time domain:

(2 Timothy 3:16 NKJV) All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, (2 Timothy 3:17 NKJV) that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.

There must be a Bible.

God Himself has declared that those who obey Him will have eternal life in heaven, and those who choose not to obey will have eternal life in hell. Thus God has established a standard by which He wants man to live. But, how can man know what God's standards are unless He reveals them?

Therefore, God must provide the "standard." His "standard" is the Bible; it must exist simply because God holds man accountable.

2.) Unique in Its Continuity and Harmony

A. HERE IS A BOOK THAT WAS WRITTEN...

1. Over a long period of time
 - a. About 1600 years
 - b. A span of 40 generations
2. By approximately 40 authors from every walk of life

- a. Moses, political leader trained in the universities of Egypt
 - b. Peter, fisherman
 - c. Amos, herdsman
 - d. Joshua, military general
 - e. Nehemiah, cup bearer to the king of Persia
 - f. Daniel, prime minister in the courts of Babylon
 - g. Luke, physician
 - h. Solomon, philosopher king
 - i. Matthew, tax collector
 - j. Paul, rabbi and tentmaker
3. In different places
 - a. Moses in the wilderness
 - b. Jeremiah in a dungeon
 - c. Daniel on a hillside, and in a palace
 - d. Paul inside prison walls
 - e. Luke while traveling
 - f. John in exile on the isle of Patmos
 - g. Others in the rigors of a military campaign
 4. At different times
 - a. David in times of war
 - b. Solomon in times of peace
 5. During different moods
 - a. Some writing from the heights of joy
 - b. Others from the depths of sorrow and despair
 6. On three continents:
Asia,
Africa,
Europe
 7. In three languages:
Hebrew,
Aramaic,
Greek
 8. With subject matter involving hundreds of controversial topics, such as:
 - a. The origin of man and the universe
 - b. The nature of God
 - c. The nature of man, sin, and man's redemption

Maintains Its Continuity and Harmony

As Broad as all these are, the Bible maintains its continuity and harmony. With all the above, the Bible never contradicts itself, each author is in agreement on all main points.

Imagine what you would have if you took just ten authors...

- 1) From one walk of life, one generation, one place, one time, one mood, one continent, one language
- 2) Speaking on just one controversial subject. You would have a conglomeration of conflicting ideas, not harmony

The Bible maintains its harmony as it takes man from the Fall to Restoration.

For Example, "The Paradise Lost of the book of Genesis becomes the Paradise Regained of Revelation." And, "Whereas the gate to the Tree of Life is closed in Genesis, it is opened forevermore in Revelation."

The Bible tells it like it is, and retains its continuity and harmony

1. The Bible deals frankly with the sins of its characters, even its heroes:
 - a. Adam and Eve - putting off responsibility on to others
 - b. Noah - drunkenness

- c. Abraham - cowardice, lying to save his skin
- d. Moses - disobedience to God
- e. David - lying, adultery, murder
- f. Peter - denying the Lord, causing division through hypocrisy
- g. Churches - divided, arrogant, materialistic

2. The Bible has the habit of telling it like it was, and is unique in its portrayal of its key personalities

3.) Unique in Assembly

"By the end of 1993, the whole Bible had been translated into 337 languages; 2,062 languages have translations of at least one book of the Bible." - (Guinness Book of World Records (1998))

Why should we have some understanding of how the Bible came to us?

Young children often think that milk comes in cartons from the grocery store. As they grow up they learn that milk comes from cows on the farm. Likewise many Christians have become so used to having Bibles that they have bought at a book store that they have almost no knowledge of where the present English translations of the Bible came from.

Understanding how the Bible came to us gives us a confident foundation for our faith in the reliability the Bible. Evidence presented in a criminal case must be shown to have been protected by a proper chain of custody from being tampered with. We will be able to answer to critics when they claim that the New Testament contains 200,000 errors.

Definition of Canon

The Canon – Who decided what went in and didn't? The word canon comes from the root word "reed". The reed was used as a measuring rod and eventually meant "standard."

The word canon applied to Scriptures means, "an officially accepted list of books."

How was the Old Testament Canon Determined?

The Old Testament as we know it existed before Jesus. All the books of the OT were recognized before Jesus walked the earth. The Jewish people were very detailed about passing their writings down.

Jesus acknowledged the Old Testament as we know it in Luke 24:

(Luke 24:44 KJV) And he said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me.

How was the New Testament Canon Determined?

The Early church had three criteria for determining what books were to be included or excluded from the Canon of the New Testament.

- First, the books must have apostolic authority-- that is, they must have been written either by the apostles themselves, who were eyewitnesses to what they wrote about, or by associates of the apostles.
- Second, there was the criterion of conformity to what was called the "rule of faith." In other words, was the document congruent with the basic Christian tradition that the church recognized as normative.
- Third, there was the criterion of whether a document had enjoyed continuous acceptance and usage by the church at large (ie. Quoted from by early church writers and fathers)

Example of a book that was excluded: The gospel of Thomas is not include because of the following:

- The gospel of Thomas fails the test of Apostolic authority. None of the early church fathers from Clement to Irenaeus ever quoted from the gospel of Thomas. This indicates that they either did not know of it or that they rejected it as spurious. In either case, the early church fathers fail to support the gospel of Thomas' claim to have been written by the apostle. It was believed to be written around 140 A.D. There is no evidence to support its purported claim to be written by the Apostle Thomas himself.
- The gospel of Thomas fails to conform to the rule of faith. It purports to contain 114 "secret sayings" of Jesus. Some of these are very similar to the sayings of Jesus recorded in the Four Gospels. For example the gospel of Thomas quotes Jesus as saying, "A city built on a high hill cannot be hidden." This reads the same as Matthew's Gospel except that high is added. But Thomas claims that Jesus said, "Split wood; I am there. Lift up a stone, and you will find me there." That concept is pantheistic. Thomas ends with the following saying that denies women salvation unless they are somehow changed into being a man. "Let Mary go away from us, because women are not worthy of life." Jesus is quoted as saying, "Lo, I shall lead her in order to make her male, so that she too may become a living spirit, resembling you males. For every woman who makes herself male will enter into the kingdom of heaven."
- The gospel of Thomas fails the test of continuous usage and acceptance. The lack of manuscript evidence plus the failure of the early church fathers to quote from it or recognize it shows that it was not used or accepted in the early Church. Only two manuscripts are known of this "gospel." Until 1945 only a single fifth-century copy translation in Coptic had been found. Then in 1945 a Greek manuscript of the Gospel of Thomas was found at Nag Hammadi in Egypt. This compares very poorly to the thousands of manuscripts that authenticate the Four Gospels.

The Festal letter of Athanasius (c. A.D. 367) is well known as the first list to contain all and only the present twenty-seven book New Testament Canon. Thirty years later the Synod of Carthage, under the influence of the great Augustine, reached a similar conclusion. Youngblood gives the common Protestant evaluation of these pronouncements:

Thus led (as we believe) by divine Providence, scholars during the latter half of the fourth century settled for all time the limits of the New Testament canon. The 27 books of Matthew through Revelation constitute that New Testament, which possesses divine authority equal to that of the Old.

History of the Bible - Timeline of the Writings

Important terms to know:

Autographs: The original texts were written either by the author's own hand or by a scribe under their personal supervision.

Manuscripts: Until Gutenberg first printed the Latin Bible in 1456, all Bibles were hand copied onto papyrus, parchment, and paper.

Translations: When the Bible is translated into a different language it is usually translated from the original Hebrew and Greek. However some translations in the past were derived from an earlier translation. For example the first English translation by John Wycliffe in 1380 was prepared from the Latin Vulgate.

The following is a time line for the writings of the various books of the Old and New Testaments and important translations made from them.

Old Testament Timeline/Translations

Autographs - Old Testament

- 1450-1400 B.C. The traditional date for Moses' writing of Genesis-Deuteronomy written in Hebrew.
- 586 B.C. Jerusalem was destroyed by the Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar. The Jews were taken into captivity to Babylon. They remained in Babylon under the Medo-Persian Empire and there began to speak Aramaic.

- 555-545 B.C. The Book of Daniel Chapters. 2:4 to 7:28 were written in Aramaic.
- 425 B.C. Malachi, the last book of the Old Testament, was written in Hebrew.
- 400 B.C. Ezra Chapters. 4:8 to 6:18; and 7:12-26 were written in Aramaic.

Manuscripts - Old Testament

The following is a list of the oldest Hebrew manuscripts of the Old Testament **that are still in existence**.

- The Dead Sea Scrolls: date from 200 B.C. - 70 A.D. and contain the entire book of Isaiah and portions of every other Old Testament book but Esther.
- Geniza Fragments: portions the Old Testament in Hebrew and Aramaic, discovered in 1947 in an old synagogue in Cairo, Egypt, which date from about 400 A.D.
- Ben Asher Manuscripts: five or six generations of this family made copies of the Old Testament using the Masoretic Hebrew text, from 700-950 A.D. The following are examples of the Hebrew Masoretic text-type.
- Aleppo Codex: contains the complete Old Testament and is dated around 950 A.D. Unfortunately over one quarter of this Codex was destroyed in anti-Jewish riots in 1947.
- Codex Leningradensis: The complete Old Testament in Hebrew copied by the last member of the Ben Asher family in A.D. 1008.

Translations - Old Testament

The Old Testament was translated very early into Aramaic and Greek.

- 400 B.C. The Old Testament began to be translated into Aramaic. This translation is called the Aramaic Targums. This translation helped the Jewish people, who began to speak Aramaic from the time of their captivity in Babylon, to understand the Old Testament in the language that they commonly spoke. In the first century Palestine of Jesus' day, Aramaic was still the commonly spoken language.
- 250 B.C. The Old Testament was translated into Greek. This translation is known as the Septuagint. It is sometimes designated "LXX" (which is Roman numeral for "70") because it was believed that 70 to 72 translators worked to translate the Hebrew Old Testament in Greek. The Septuagint was often used by New Testament writers when they quoted from the Old Testament. The LXX was translation of the Old Testament that was used by the early Church.

The following is a list of the oldest Greek LXX translations of the Old Testament **that are still in existence**.

- Chester Beatty Papyri: Contains nine Old Testament Books in the Greek Septuagint and dates between 100-400 A.D.
- Codex Vaticanus and Codex Sinaiticus each contain almost the entire Old Testament of the Greek Septuagint and they both date around 350 A.D.

The New Testament Timeline/Translation

Autographs - New Testament

- 45- 95 A.D. The New Testament was written in Greek. The Pauline Epistles, the Gospel of Mark, the Gospel of Luke, and the book of Acts are all dated from 45-63 A.D.
- The Gospel of John and the Revelation may have been written as late as 95 A.D.

Manuscripts - New Testament

There are over 5,600 early Greek Manuscripts of the New Testament **that are still in existence**. The oldest manuscripts were written on papyrus and the later manuscripts were written on leather called parchment.

- 125 A.D. The New Testament manuscript which dates most closely to the original autograph was copied around 125 A.D, within 35 years of the original. It is designated "p 52" and contains a small portion of John 18. (The "p" stands for papyrus.)
- 200 A.D. Bodmer p 66 a papyrus manuscript which contains a large part of the Gospel of John.
- 200 A.D. Chester Beatty Biblical papyrus p 46 contains the Pauline Epistles and Hebrews.
- 225 A.D. Bodmer Papyrus p 75 contains the Gospels of Luke and John.

- 250-300 A.D. Chester Beatty Biblical papyrus p 45 contains portions of the four Gospels and Acts.
- 350 A.D. Codex Sinaiticus contains the entire New Testament and almost the entire Old Testament in Greek. It was discovered by a German scholar Tischendorf in 1856 at an Orthodox monastery at Mt. Sinai.
- 350 A.D. Codex Vaticanus: {B} is an almost complete New Testament. It was cataloged as being in the Vatican Library since 1475.

There are more than 5,600 known Greek manuscripts of the New Testament, over 10,000 in Latin and over 9,300 other early versions totaling 24,000+ manuscript copies of portions of the New Testament in existence today, ranking it first in manuscript evidence.

Translations - New Testament

Early translations of the New Testament can give important insight into the underlying Greek manuscripts from which they were translated.

- 180 A.D. Early translations of the New Testament from Greek into Latin, Syriac, and Coptic versions began about 180 A.D.
- 195 A.D. The name of the first translation of the Old and New Testaments into Latin was termed Old Latin, both Testaments having been translated from the Greek. Parts of the Old Latin were found in quotes by the church father Tertullian, who lived around 160-220 A.D. in north Africa and wrote treatises on theology.
- 300 A.D. The Old Syriac was a translation of the New Testament from the Greek into Syriac.
- 300 A.D. The Coptic Versions: Coptic was spoken in four dialects in Egypt. The Bible was translated into each of these four dialects.
- 380 A.D. The Latin Vulgate was translated by St. Jerome. He translated into Latin the Old Testament from the Hebrew and the New Testament from Greek. The Latin Vulgate became the Bible of the Western Church until the Protestant Reformation in the 1500's. It continues to be the authoritative translation of the Roman Catholic Church to this day. The Protestant Reformation saw an increase in translations of the Bible into the common languages of the people.
- Other early translations of the Bible were in Armenian, Georgian, and Ethiopic, Slavic, and Gothic.
- 1380 A.D. The first English translation of the Bible was by John Wycliffe. He translated the Bible into English from the Latin Vulgate. This was a translation from a translation and not a translation from the original Hebrew and Greek. Wycliffe was forced to translate from the Latin Vulgate because he did not know Hebrew or Greek.

The Advent of Printing

Printing greatly aided the transmission of the biblical texts.

- 1456 A.D. Gutenberg produced the first printed Bible in Latin. Printing revolutionized the way books were made. From now on books could be published in great numbers and at a lower cost.
- 1514 A.D. The Greek New Testament was printed for the first time by Erasmus. He based his Greek New Testament from only five Greek manuscripts, the oldest of which dated only as far back as the twelfth century. With minor revisions, Erasmus' Greek New Testament came to be known as the **Textus Receptus** or the "received texts."
- 1522 A. D. Polyglot Bible was published. The Old Testament was in Hebrew, Aramaic, Greek, and Latin and the New Testament in Latin and Greek. Erasmus used the Polyglot to revise later editions of his New Testament. Tyndale made use of the Polyglot in his translation of the Old Testament into English which he did not complete because he was martyred in 1534.
- 1611 A.D. The King James Version into English from the original Hebrew and Greek. The King James translators of the New Testament used the **Textus Receptus** as the basis for their translations.
- 1968 A.D. The United Bible Societies 4th Edition of the Greek New Testament. This Greek New Testament made use of the oldest Greek manuscripts which date from 175 A.D. This was the Greek New Testament text from which the NASV and the NIV were translated.

- 1971 A.D. The New American Standard Version (NASV) was published. It makes use of the wealth of much older Hebrew and Greek manuscripts now available that weren't available at the time of the translation of the KJV. Its wording and sentence structure closely follow the Greek in more of a word for word style.
- 1983 A.D. The New International Version (NIV) was published. It also made use of the oldest manuscript evidence. It is more of a "thought-for-thought" translation and reads more easily than the NASV.
 - As an example of the contrast between word-for-word and thought-for-thought translations, notice below the translation of the Greek word "hagios-holy"
 - NASV Hebrews 9:25. "...the high priest enters the holy place year by year with blood not his own."
 - NIV Hebrews 9:25. "...the high priest enters the Most Holy Place every year with blood that is not his own."
 - The NIV supplies "understood" information about the Day of Atonement, namely that the high priest's duties took place in the compartment of the temple known specifically as the Most Holy Place. Note that the NASV simply says "holy place" reflecting the more literal translation of "hagios."

4.) Unique in Its Reliability

There must be a Bible.

God Himself has declared that those who obey Him will have eternal life in heaven, and those who choose not to obey will have eternal life in hell. Thus God has established a standard by which He wants man to live. But, how can man know what God's standards are unless He reveals them?

Therefore, God must provide the "standard." His "standard" is the Bible; it must exist simply because God holds man accountable.

The Bible must be without error.

Since God is responsible for providing man with the "standard," by which to live, He must also assure that it is without error for all of mankind. Will a Holy God whose justice is pure expect man to live by His standards if His original "standard," and subsequent transmissions of that "standard" are corrupt? No, that would be illogical.

Therefore, the expected "standard," and all subsequent copies of that "standard" must also be perfect in order for it to be effective.

The Bible must be easy to understand.

Can you imagine being given a directive to carry out, but having that order verbalized or written in a language that you cannot understand? How could you be expected to obey? Furthermore, it really wouldn't make any difference if the directive was an absolutely pure truth; if you can not understand it, then it becomes a meaningless order. Likewise, a Bible that is open to various interpretations is no "standard" at all; nor would God expect man to obey such a confusing "standard." Again, that would be illogical.

Therefore, the Bible must be readily understood in order for God to hold man accountable. This is not to say that man must have an intricate knowledge of all details in the Bible, but in areas essential to daily life and the fundamental truths of the Christian faith, the Bible must be readily understood by all who seek its truths in their hearts.

Therefore, God has provided mankind with His standard of personal accountability to Him: the Bible; it is without error; and, it is comprehensible.

Such a defense can be effective for the person who prides himself on his perceived objectivity and ability to apply logic to problem solving. With such a person you will at the very least get him thinking about the Bible as well as God. But a more excellent way to reason against unbelief in the Bible as God's Word is to know and be able to articulate the incredible facts that attest to the reliability of the Bible as a historical document. That is the subject of this presentation.

The Bible Must Follow Original Writings

The heart of this matter for both Christians and others is an assurance of the historical reliability of the Bible. Quite simply, "Does the text of the Bible have any credibility as historic literature?"; or, "How closely does the modern Bible follow the original writings?" All documents of antiquity, even those modern forgeries that claim authenticity, are subjected to a process termed historiography; i.e., subjecting the document in question to specific tests to determine its reliability.

The Tests of Historiography

The Military historian, C. Sanders lists the three basic tests of historiography:

1. The Bibliographical Test;
2. The Internal Evidence Test;
3. The External Evidence Test.

These tests determine the historicity and credibility of any ancient manuscript.

The Bibliographical Test

The bibliographical test is an examination of the reliability of the copies of documents (that were transmitted from the original written document(s), known as autographs). This test answers the question, "Because we don't have the autographs, how reliable are the manuscript copies that we have?"

There are two principle factors that apply to the bibliographical test:

- 1) the **quantity** of manuscript copies;
- 2) the **time interval** between the autographs and the existing manuscript copies.

<u>Writing</u>	<u>Original Writing</u>	<u>Existing Earliest Copy</u>	<u>Span</u>	<u>#Copies</u>
NT	40-100AD	125AD	25yrs	24,000
Homer (Iliad)	900BC	400BC	500	643
Caesar	100-44BC	900AD	1000	10
Plato	427-347BC	900AD	1200	7
Aristotle	384-322BC	1100AD	1400	49

The Bibliographical Evidence of the New Testament and Homer's "Iliad" Compared

Homer's Iliad is secular literature from ancient Greece that has the largest number of manuscript copies (designated MSS) in existence (excluding the New Testament). Both the Iliad and the New Testament MSS were written in the same language (Greek). Both were considered "Sacred" writings of their culture. Both have had been subject to debate regarding the authenticity of the authors. Indeed, for many years the Iliad had been considered to be authentic Greek literature of antiquity, but unreliable in its portrayal of Greek civilization and historical events until modern archaeology began to substantiate many of the claims of Homer, just like the New Testament. Let us subject both of these documents to the bibliographical test. The author assumes the reader has familiarity with the general content of the New Testament books and letters, but may not be familiar with Homer's Iliad.

The Iliad is major epic of Greek antiquity written in a poetic literary style that is set in the final year of the Trojan War (c. 1200 B.C.), which forms the background for its central plot -- the story of the wrath of the Greek hero Achilles. Homer is the name traditionally assigned to the author of both the Iliad and Odyssey, the two major epics of Greek antiquity. Nothing is known of Homer as an individual, and in fact the

question of whether a single person can be said to be responsible for the creation of these two epics is highly controversial. Linguistic and historical evidence, however, concedes a supposition that the poems were composed in the Greek settlements on the west coast of Asia Minor in the latter half of the 8th century B.C. Thus, historians doubt the actual existence of an individual named "Homer" credited as the author of the "Iliad;" but, they also presume that the literature was indeed written by ancient Greeks in the late 8th century B.C.

Now, let us examine the bibliographical evidence of transmission of the Iliad to the present:

- Written 900 B.C.
- There are 643 manuscript copies of the Iliad.
- The only preserved MS with the complete text dates to the 13th century A.D.
- The earliest MSS with a portion of the whole text dates to 400 B.C.
- The timespan from the latest date written (900 B.C.) to the earliest [partial] copy (400 B.C.) is 500 years.
- Thus, Homer's Iliad, with 643 MSS in existence, having an earliest MS copy dating only 500 years from the time of its writing is widely accepted as a completely reliable literature or history by scholars. In other words, there is no doubt in their minds that the existing MSS of Iliad are indeed actual copies of an original document that has never been located.

By comparison, let us examine the bibliographical evidence of transmission of the New Testament to the present:

- Written A.D. 40-100
- There are more than 24,000 manuscript copies of the books of the New Testament.
- The earliest MSS copy dates to A.D. 125.
- The time span from the date written (A.D. 100) to the earliest copy (A.D. 125) is 25 years.

Textual Comparison of the New Testament and Homer's Iliad

Textual comparison between copies of ancient MSS generally reveals variations in the actual text between one copy and another. These variations may be differences in spelling, punctuation, grammar, or differences in the actual content of the text itself. Most variants of ancient MSS reveal differences in spelling, punctuation, and grammar. Obviously, the greater the number of copies in existence proportionately increases the statistical probability of differences between them.

The Iliad and the New Testament are both good books to compare. Just as the New Testament is Sacred to Christians, the Iliad was "Sacred" to the ancient Greeks, and both books were written in Greek. Both texts underwent textual changes and criticism of their Greek manuscripts. However, a scholarly examination of textual variants among all extant MSS reveals 764 lines of the Iliad in question, with only 40 lines (400 words total) of the New Testament are in doubt. Thus, the total textual corruption of the Iliad is 5.0% as compared to only 0.5% for the New Testament

The New Testament contains approximately 20,000 lines, of which 40 lines are in question. This equals 0.5% (one half of one percent).

The Iliad contains approximately 15,600 lines, of which 764 lines are in question. This equals five percent. That's ten times more variants than the New Testament in a document only three-quarters its length.

There is yet another very strong bibliographic support for the accuracy of the New Testament in its large numbers of translations into other languages besides Greek. This fact is unusual since ancient literature was rarely translated into another language. However, Christianity is a missionary faith and has been from its inception in the 1st century A.D. The earliest versions of the New Testament were prepared by missionaries for use among peoples whose native language was Syriac, Latin, or Coptic. These translations were prepared around A.D. 150 (once again a very close time interval to the original autographs) and currently number more than 15,000 existing MSS.

The Internal Evidence Test for the Reliability of the New Testament

The bibliographical test determines only if a MSS transmits what was originally written in the autograph(s). The task still remains to determine the extent of credibility of that written record. This is the matter of internal criticism.

In the case of the New Testament, which essentially records the accounts of the life and teaching of Jesus Christ, the writers of the various books and epistles were either eyewitnesses themselves, or they recorded the accounts of eyewitnesses to the actual events or teachings of Jesus. Moreover, there is a closeness in the recorded accounts of the writers of the gospels that is extremely effective in certifying the accuracy of what is recorded.

That a few simple men should in one generation have invented so powerful and appealing a personality, so lofty an ethic, and so inspiring a vision of human brotherhood, would be a miracle far more incredible than any recorded in the gospels.

Every writer and Apostle was persecuted and killed (Luke unknown), the ultimate question has to be asked, why would each and every one of them be willing to die for a lie, you would expect that at least one of them would have recanted of his story, but there are no writing that state such a thing.

The External Evidence Test for the Reliability of the New Testament

External evidence is the third test of historicity of ancient MSS. This test subjects the document in question to any supporting external historical materials that would confirm or deny the internal testimony of the document itself. "Conformity or agreement with other known historical or scientific facts is often the decisive test of evidence, whether of one or more witnesses."

The external attestation of the New Testament is so complete that if every copy of the New Testament were lost (including all modern Bibles), the complete document could be assembled solely from various quotations of it in the writings of the early Church Fathers and others.

The earliest manuscripts we have of major portions of the New Testament are p 45, p 46, p66, and p 75, and they date from 175-250 A. D. The early church fathers (97-180 A.D.) bear witness to even earlier New Testament manuscripts by quoting from all but one of the New Testament books.

- Clement (30-100 A.D.) wrote an epistle to the Corinthian Church around 97 A.D. He reminded them to heed the epistle that Paul had written to them years before. Recall that Clement had labored with Paul (Philippians 4:3). He quoted from the following New Testament books: Luke, Acts, Romans, 1 Corinthians, Ephesians, Titus, 1 and 2 Peter, Hebrews, and James.
- The apostolic fathers Ignatius (30-107 A.D.), Polycarp (65-155 A.D.), and Papias (70-155 A.D.) cite verses from every New Testament book except 2 and 3 John. They thereby authenticated nearly the entire New Testament. Both Ignatius and Polycarp were disciples of the apostle John.
- Justin Martyr, (110-165 A.D.), cited verses from the following 13 books of the New Testament: Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Acts, Romans, 1 Corinthians, Galatians, 2 Thessalonians, Hebrews, 1 and 2 Peter, and Revelation.
- Irenaeus, (120-202 A.D.), wrote a five volume work Against Heresies in which, He quoted from every book of the New Testament but 3 John. He quoted from the New Testament books over 1,200 times.

The Reliability of the Old Testament

Thus far, a cursory examination of the historiography of the New Testament has been presented. But how do the Old Testament MSS compare? After all, both the Old and the New Testaments comprise the Bible as a whole. Before examining the reliability of the Old Testament, the reader needs to remember that the credibility of the New Testament is established beyond all reasonable doubt. And, Jesus referred repeatedly to the Old Testament Scripture -- both in quoting Scripture as well as attesting to its reliability and canonicity. At best, such consideration must contribute to the external evidence for the reliability of

the Old Testament. With all due respect to such rigorous objectivity the Christian also needs to carefully consider what the Lord has said about Hebrew Scripture.

Bernard Ramm speaks of the accuracy and number of Biblical manuscripts of the Hebrew Scriptures: "Jews preserved it as no other manuscript has ever been preserved. With their massora they kept tabs on every letter, syllable, word and paragraph. They had special classes of men within their culture whose sole duty was to preserve and transmit these documents with practically perfect fidelity... who ever counted the letters, syllables and words of Plato or Aristotle? Cicero or Seneca?"

The Old Testament does not have the wealth of MSS evidence as the New Testament; however, once the facts of the extreme caution exercised by the Jews in transcription are brought to light, one will readily see the uniqueness of this Scripture in its reliability.

Following the council of Jamnia in A.D. 70 the canon of Hebrew Scripture was formally established and efforts were taken to duplicate copies of the Scripture for use by the widely scattered Jews. During the period A.D. 100-500 Hebrew civil and canonical law was cataloged by a group of Hebrews known as the Talmudists. They had an extremely intricate system of transcribing synagogue scrolls that approaches fanaticism. Indeed, a Christian begins to glimpse the zealous attention to minute detail that characterized the Hebrew religious system condemned by Jesus. To wit:

- A synagogue scroll must be written on the skins of clean animals, that were
- Prepared for the particular use of the synagogue by a Jew;
- The skins must be fastened together with the strings taken from clean animals;
- Every skin must contain a certain number of columns, equal throughout the entire codex.
- **The length of each column must not extend over less than 48 or more than 60 lines; and, the breadth must consist of thirty letters;**
- The whole copy must be first lined; and if three words be written without a line, it is worthless;
- The ink should be black, neither red, green, nor any other color, and be prepared according to a definite recipe;
- An authentic copy must be the exemplar, from which the transcriber ought not in the least deviate;
- **No word or letter, not even a yod, must be written from memory, the scribe not having looked at the codex before him;**
- Between every consonant the space of a hair or thread must intervene;
- Between every new parashah, or section, the breadth of nine consonants;
- Between every book, three lines;
- The fifth book of Moses must terminate exactly with a line; but the rest need not do so;
- Besides this, the copyist must sit in full Jewish dress;
- **Wash his whole body;**
- **Write the name of God with a new pen only.**
- And should a king address him while writing that name, he must take no notice of him.
- Any scroll in which the above regulations were not strictly observed was condemned to be buried in the ground or burned; or they were banished to the schools, to be used as reading books. Once a scroll was transcribed, the Talmudists were so convinced that it was an exact duplicate of the codex they copied from, they gave the new copy equal authority. Thus, when one considers the rigid rules and phenomenal accuracy of the Talmudic copyists in preparing a new scroll we begin to understand the absence of numerous ancient Old Testament MSS, and one must also be convinced of the reliability of the extant copies.

Following the Talmudists was the Massoretic Period between A.D. 500-900AD. Not sufficiently comfortable with the rigid Talmudic rules for transcribing Scripture, the Massorettes devised an incredibly complex system of safeguards against mistakes in transcription. Sir Fredric Kenyon says, "Besides recording varieties of reading, tradition, or conjecture, the Massorettes undertook a number of calculations which do not enter into the ordinary sphere of textual criticism. They numbered the verses, words, and letters of every book. They calculated the middle word and the middle letter of each. They enumerated verses which contained all the letters of the alphabet, or a certain number of them; and so on. These

trivialities, as we may rightly consider them, had yet the effect of securing minute attention to the precise transmission of the text; and they are but an excessive manifestation of a respect for the sacred Scriptures which in itself deserves nothing but praise. The Massorettes were indeed anxious that not one jot nor tittle, not one smallest letter nor one tiny part of a letter of the Law should pass away or be lost." Indeed, for many years the oldest MSS of the Old Testament was a Massoretic copy dated to A.D. 916.

With the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls in 1947 the bibliographic evidence of the Old Testament received even more support. Prior to that discovery, the oldest Hebrew Old Testament MSS was dated to A.D. 916. That left a time interval of more than 1,300 years since the completion of the last book of Hebrew Scripture around 400 B.C. That fact cast serious doubts on the bibliographical reliability of the Hebrew Bible since it was no closer to the date of its autographs than many secular ancient MSS. Adding the weight of New Testament MSS that were dated so closely to the original autographs, there was real concern regarding the historicity of the Hebrew Scriptures. This is one the reason for the significance of the Dead Sea Scrolls.

Yet, from the archaeological record and the dating of Dead Sea Scroll MSS the Old Testament reliability is phenomenal. One of the scrolls discovered was a complete MS of the Hebrew text of Isaiah; it is dated at 125 B.C. by paleographers. Its internal evidence is such that since this single book is more than 1,000 years older than the previously extant MS it is incredible that there was only one word of three letters in question! Furthermore, as F. F. Bruce writes, "An incomplete scroll of Isaiah, found along with the other in the first Qumran cave, and conveniently distinguished as 'Isaiah B,' agrees even more closely with the A.D. 916 Massoretic text." External support for the Old Testament continues to be unearthed in archeological finds of ancient libraries and other MSS.

Note on the 200,000 Errors:

Many scholars have spent a lifetime of study of the textual variants. The following is the conclusion of the importance of these variants as they relate to the integrity of the New Testament text.

- Again the Definition of Textual Variants: Since all Greek manuscripts of the New Testament prior to Erasmus' first printed Greek New Testament were copied by hand scribal errors or variants could have crept into the texts.. When these Greek New Testament manuscripts are compared with each other we find evidence of scribal errors and places where the different manuscripts differ with one another.
- There are over 200,000 variants in the New Testament alone. How do these variants effect our confidence that the New Testament has been faithfully handed down to us?
- These 200,000 variants are not as large as they seem. Remember that every misspelled word of an omission of a single word in any of the 5,600 manuscript would count as a variant.
- A word of caution must be observed to understand what the word 'variant' truly means when applied to textual comparisons of documents of antiquity. In their text, When Skeptics Ask, the authors, Norman L. Geisler and Ronald M. Brooks, point out "It is easy for someone to leave the wrong impression by saying that there are 200,000 'errors' that have crept into the Bible when the word should be 'variants.' A variant is counted any time one copy is different from any other copy and it is counted again in every copy where it appears. So when a single word is spelled differently in 3,000 copies, that is counted as 3,000 variants. In fact, there are only 10,000 places where variants occur [in the New Testament] and most of those are matters of spelling and word order. There are less than 40 places in the New Testament where we are really not certain which reading is original, but not one of these has any effect on a central doctrine of the faith. Note: the problem is not that we don't know what the text is, but that we are not certain which text has the right reading. **We have 100 percent of the New Testament and we are sure about 99.5 percent of it.**"

5.) Unique in its Prophecy

Unique among all books ever written, the Bible accurately foretells specific events -- in detail -- many years, sometimes centuries, before they occur. Approximately 2500 prophecies appear in the pages of

the Bible, about 2000 of which already have been fulfilled to the letter, Concerning the coming Messiah, Jesus fulfilled all 300. -- 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)!

God is not the only one, however, who uses forecasts of future events to get people's attention. Satan does too. Through clairvoyants (such as Jeanne Dixon and Edgar Cayce), mediums, spiritists, and others, come remarkable predictions, though rarely with more than about 60 percent accuracy, never with total accuracy. Messages from Satan, furthermore, fail to match the detail of Bible prophecies, nor do they include a call to repentance.

The acid test for identifying a prophet of God is recorded by Moses in **Deuteronomy 18:21-22**. According to this Bible passage (and others), God's prophets, as distinct from Satan's spokesmen, are 100 percent accurate in their predictions. There is no room for error.

The Seventy 7s of Daniel

(1) Some time before 500 B.C. the prophet Daniel proclaimed that Israel's long-awaited Messiah would begin his public ministry 483 years after the issuing of a decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem (Daniel 9:25-26). He further predicted that the Messiah would be "cut off," killed, and that this event would take place prior to a second destruction of Jerusalem. Abundant documentation shows that these prophecies were perfectly fulfilled in the life (and crucifixion) of Jesus Christ. The decree regarding the restoration of Jerusalem was issued by Persia's King Artaxerxes to the Hebrew priest Ezra in 458 B.C., 483 years later the ministry of Jesus Christ began in Galilee. (Remember that due to calendar changes, the date for the start of Christ's ministry is set by most historians at about 26 A.D. Also note that from 1 B.C. to 1 A.D. is just one year.) Jesus' crucifixion occurred only a few years later, and about four decades later, in 70 A.D. came the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus.

Messiah Born in Bethlehem

(2) In approximately 700 B.C. the prophet Micah named the tiny village of Bethlehem as the birthplace of Israel's Messiah (Micah 5:2). The fulfillment of this prophecy in the birth of Christ is one of the most widely known and widely celebrated facts in history.

Messiah Betrayed for 30 Pieces of Silver

(3) In the fifth century B.C. a prophet named Zechariah declared that the Messiah would be betrayed for the price of a slave -- thirty pieces of silver, according to Jewish law -- and also that this money would be used to buy a burial ground for Jerusalem's poor foreigners (Zechariah 11:12-13). Bible writers and secular historians both record thirty pieces of silver as the sum paid to Judas Iscariot for betraying Jesus, and they indicate that the money went to purchase a "potter's field," used -- just as predicted -- for the burial of poor aliens (Matthew 27:3-10).

Messiah would be Crucified

(4) Some 400 years before crucifixion was invented, both Israel's King David and the prophet Zechariah described the Messiah's death in words that perfectly depict that mode of execution. Further, they said that the body would be pierced and that none of the bones would be broken, contrary to customary procedure in cases of crucifixion (Psalm 22 and 34:20; Zechariah 12:10). Again, historians and New Testament writers confirm the fulfillment: Jesus of Nazareth died on a Roman cross, and his extraordinarily quick death eliminated the need for the usual breaking of bones. A spear was thrust into his side to verify that he was indeed, dead.

Cyrus will Conquer Babylon

(5) The prophet Isaiah foretold that a conqueror named Cyrus would destroy seemingly impregnable Babylon and subdue Egypt along with most of the rest of the known world. This same man, said Isaiah, would decide to let the Jewish exiles in his territory go free without any payment of ransom (Isaiah 44:28; 45:1; and 45:13). Isaiah made this prophecy 150 years before Cyrus was born, 180 years before Cyrus

performed any of these feats (and he did, eventually, perform them all), and 80 years before the Jews were taken into exile.

Israel Would be Carried off into Slavery

(6) The prophet Moses foretold (with some additions by Jeremiah and Jesus) that the ancient Jewish nation would be conquered twice and that the people would be carried off as slaves each time, first by the Babylonians (for a period of 70 years), and then by a fourth world kingdom (which we know as Rome). The second conqueror, Moses said, would take the Jews captive in ships, selling them or giving them away as slaves to all parts of the world. Both of these predictions were fulfilled to the letter, the first in 607 B.C. and the second in 70 A.D. God's spokesmen said, further, that the Jews would remain scattered throughout the entire world for many generations, but without becoming assimilated by the peoples or of other nations, and that the Jews would one day return to the land of Palestine to re-establish for a second time their nation (Deuteronomy 29; Isaiah 11:11-13; Jeremiah 25:11; Hosea 3:4-5 and Luke 21:23-24). This prophetic statement sweeps across 3,500 years of history to its complete fulfillment -- in our lifetime.

The Rebirth of the Nation Israel

(7) The exact location and construction sequence of Jerusalem's nine suburbs was predicted by Jeremiah about 2,600 years ago. He referred to the time of this building project as "the last days," that is, the time period of Israel's second rebirth as a nation in the land of Palestine (Jeremiah 31:38-40). This rebirth became history in 1948, and the construction of the nine suburbs has gone forward precisely in the locations and in the sequence predicted.

Given that the Bible proves so reliable a document, there is every reason to expect that the remaining 500 prophecies, those slated for the "time of the end," also will be fulfilled to the last letter (see Signs of the End, Tribulation Doms, and The Rapture Promise). Who can afford to ignore these coming events, much less miss out on the immeasurable blessings offered to anyone and everyone who submits to the control of the Bible's author, Jesus Christ? Would a reasonable person take lightly God's warning of judgment for those who reject what they know to be true about Jesus Christ and the Bible, or who reject Jesus' claim on their lives?

Now is the day of salvation! Now is the time of God's favor! Please do not let it go by without further consideration.

6.) Unique in its Internal Code

Genesis chapter 5 gives a genealogy of Adam. It is no coincidence the each name has a meaning, and when you put the names together, it has a message for us.

Adam	--Man (is)
Seth	--Appointed
Enosh	--Mortal
Cainan	--Sorrow (but)
Mahalalel	--The Blessed God
Jared	--Shall come down
Enoch	--Teaching
Methuselah	--His death shall bring
Lamech	--The Dispairing
Noah	--Comfort, Rest

7.) Unique in Its Archeological Proof

time and time again the Bible spoke of people or places long before any archeological evidence could support it. Here are a few examples:

Assyrian King Sargon

The Assyrian King Sargon was long time known only from the bible account (Isaiah 20;1), it was used as proof the Bible was not authentic. Then archaeological excavations produced the ruins of Sargon's magnificent palace at Khorsabad.

Pontius Pilate

That Pilate existed only on the pages of the Bible, they could find no records of him in historical writings. Then in 1961, in Caesaria, an inscription was found on a stone that said (To the people of Caesarea Tiberium Pontius Pilate Prefect of Judea)

Hezekiah Tunnel

In Jerusalem today a person can walk through a tunnel 1,749 foot long that was cut through solid rock over 2,700 years ago. It is called Hezekiah Tunnel, and is written about in (2 Kings 20:20). It was prepared for an invasion against the city and it connected the outside water source into the inside of the city, undetectable for the enemy.

8.) Unique in Reference to Health and Science

The bible isn't a book of science, but when it speaks of science it is always right on. A few Examples:

Health:

Touching the Dead

Just the last century medical personnel would go directly from handling the dead in the dissecting room to conducting examinations in the maternity ward. Infections were transferred from the dead, and many more died.

In Numbers 19:11-22, the Law of God said if anyone touches a dead person they become unclean and must wash himself.

Circumcision:

Back in the turn of the 19th century, in NYC they noticed that Jewish woman had a lower rate of cervical cancer than non-Jewish woman. Upon further study they found it was because Jewish woman only married Jewish males and the males were circumcised, and carried less bacteria than the uncircumcised.

(Genesis 17:11 KJV) And ye shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskin; and it shall be a token of the covenant betwixt me and you.

On the 8th Day

No explanation was given why the eighth day was specified for circumcision, but medical research now shows that the blood-clotting element Vitamin K rises to an adequate level at the 8th day.

(Leviticus 12:3 KJV) And in the eighth day the flesh of his foreskin shall be circumcised.

Science:

The Earth Hangs on Nothing

--- (Job 26:7 NKJV) *He stretches out the north over empty space; **He hangs the earth on nothing.***

This was written 4,000 years ago when the common belief that the earth was held up by four elephants standing on a turtle.

The Round Earth

- --- (Isaiah 40:22 NKJV) *It is He who sits **above the circle of the earth**, And its inhabitants are like grasshoppers, Who stretches out the heavens like a curtain, And spreads them out like a tent to dwell in.*

- Written approximately 2,700 years ago. Yet it was just 1492 Columbus sailed the Ocean Blue, and everyone said he was going to fall off the face of the earth because the earth was flat.

The Earth's Water Cycle

- --- (Ecclesiastes 1:7 NKJV) *All the rivers run into the sea, Yet the sea is not full; To the place from which the rivers come, **There they return again.***
- Written 3,000 years ago

The Expanding Universe

- ---- (Isaiah 51:13 KJV) *And forgettest the LORD thy maker, that hath **stretched forth the heavens,** and laid the foundations of the earth;*
- Science has proven that the universe is expanding and this was written 2,700 years ago. The word "stretched forth" means to keep expanding.

Light Divides

- (Job 38:24 KJV) ***By what way is the light parted,** which scattereth the east wind upon the earth?*
- The Light spectrum, was only discovered a few hundred years ago.

Paths in the Sea

- (Psalms 8:8 KJV) *The fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea, and whatsoever **passeth through the paths of the seas.***
- Paths in the sea wasn't known in the shipping industry until only a hundred or so years ago.

The Jet Stream

- (Ecclesiastes 1:6 NKJV) *The wind goes toward the south, And turns around to the north; The wind whirls about continually, **And comes again on its circuit.***

Thermodynamic Principles

- (2 Peter 3:10 KJV) *But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, **and the elements shall melt with fervent heat,** the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up.*

Spoken of in the Bible 2000 years ago.

9.) Unique in Circulation

THE CIRCULATION OF THE BIBLE...

1. As of 1804 - 409 million copies
2. As of 1932 - one and a third billion copies

"The world's best-selling and most widely distributed book is the Bible, with an estimated 2.5 billion copies sold, 1815-1975." - (Guinness Book of World Records)

It has Survived through Persecution:

- A.) Many have tried to burn it, ban it, and otherwise outlaw it
 - From the days of Roman emperors
 - To the present Communist-dominated countries

B.) Two illustrations of its survival through persecution:

- In 303 A.D., the Roman emperor Diocletian issued an edict to stop Christians from worshipping, and to destroy their scriptures. Only 25 years later the Roman Emperor Constantine called for 50 copies of the Bible to be prepared at the expense of the government!
- Voltaire, French atheist who died in 1778, predicted that Christianity would be swept from existence and pass into history within 100 years of his time. 50 years after his death, the Geneva Bible Society used his printing press and house to produce stacks of Bibles!

Still the #1 selling book in the world.

10.) Unique in the Price that was/is Paid to Print and Read It.

What would make someone willing to die for a book? Because they believed it.

We personally today can thank John Wycliffe's passion and desire that everyone should be free to read the good news of eternal life through faith in Christ. Not everyone agreed with that, many believed that the ordinary people should not have access to this blessed book.

Wycliffe was the first to translate this book into English in the 14th century. Four decades later after his death, Wycliffe's bones were dragged from their grave and burned, and the ashes cast into the river

In China and such places they have one Bible for the whole church. They each get one page and when they come back together they trade their pages. If they are caught with one page it is a death sentence, yet they are willing to take the risk.

Conclusion

This is by no means an exhaustive list of sources. In fact, it's just "the tip of the iceberg". But as you can see, there is a remarkable body of evidence supporting the reliability of the Bible. For the Believer this should give you a great sense of confidence in this Book. It is God inspired and life changing.

However, as we warned at the outset, the Bible does contain moral imperatives. This makes some people very uncomfortable. Perhaps you can see that the real question now is not whether the Bible is a trustworthy document, but whether you are willing to read it, consider its contents and claims, and wrestle with its moral implications. You could choose to look the other way and hope later to plead ignorance. Instead, I recommend you take the courageous approach of reading the Scriptures in the pursuit of truth.

End Notes:

I am indebted to Josh McDowell's book, Evidence that Demands a Verdict for much of the material in this study.

Evidence that Demands a Verdict: historical evidences for the Christian faith
Compiled by Josh McDowell, 1972, 1979 Here's Life Publishers, Inc.
P.O. Box 1576 San Bernardino, CA 92402, fifteenth printing

End of Study: 2 Timothy 3:16

The Uniqueness of the Bible

The Bible is the Anvil that broke all the Hammers that came against it.