

Where Did We Get Our Bible

Proving Christianity rests on the reliability of the Bible. If the Bible is exclusive in its divine revelation, then it is by far the most important Book ever written in the history of the world. Then it becomes of the utmost importance for every person to read.

The Bible is proven trustworthy in various ways by the manuscript evidence by Archeology and by prophecy. Each of these has more factual proof than any other written book we have of ancient history. From 1958 there have been over 2,500 sites in the Bible that have been confirmed by archaeological discoveries. Archaeologists continue to use the Bible as their guide to excavating Middle East lands.

Those who reject the Bible being historically accurate, are also rejecting it spiritually. They are bringing to question the Scriptures message of salvation. The reliability of Scripture is not exclusive to history or its spiritual message, but must include both. If the Bible is true, than what it speaks about man needing salvation is also true.

Only the Bible records the creation of the universe by a divine, eternal, infinite knowing being called God. The Bible contains a continuous historical record of mankind from the first man, Adam, to the end of history for mankind. Only the Bible has the most realistic worldview with solutions to mankind and the worlds dilemma.

How did we get the Bible?

There was no church council to decide what books were to be included in the canon. They were recognized by the consensus of the entire body of the church over a period of time, not by a council of appointed bishops. The books were written under the inspiration of God, they were canonical the moment they were written.

The apostle Paul wrote to the Thessalonians: “We also thank God continually because, when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but as it actually is, the word of God, which is at work in you who believe.” (1 Thess. 2:13 NIV). 2 Peter 1:19 says “We have a more sure word of prophecy”, that which is what is written. Throughout the Old Testament and to our day God has communicated to man and commanded certain men to write what was spoken down. In John 7:16 Jesus said, “My doctrine is not Mine, but His who sent Me.” This means what He taught was from God the Father in heaven. Although He never wrote a word, He picked certain men to write it down so we could have it today. Men he trained by their living with him, who followed His example and received the Holy Spirit that would lead them into all the truth and write it to preserve it.

2 Pt.1:21 states it is God’s word (prophecy) written in the language of men. As the apostles were writing down their records it was considered holy writ In 2 Peter 3:16 Peter indicated that Paul’s letters were regarded as 'scriptures' as it was penned down in his lifetime. Peter states “our

beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given to him, has written to you, as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which untaught and unstable people twist to their own destruction, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures”(2 Pet. 3:15-16). Peter writes of Paul writing of some things that are hard to understand. The Bible for the most part is easy to understand, it is easy enough that even a child can grasp its meaning. But there is milk and there is meat.

The apostles put their writings into circulation throughout the church as soon as they were written down. “I charge you by the Lord that this epistle be read to all the holy brethren” (1 Cor.1:2 and Eph.1:1). We have numerous examples of letters to be read to all. 1 Thess.5:27, “to be read to all the church’s.” Col.4:16, “read to the church of Colosse and the Laodiceans.” Gal.1:21, “to the church’s of Galatia.” Jesus tells John the apostle in Rev 1:11 “What you see, write in a book and send it to the seven churches which are in Asia: to Ephesus, to Smyrna, to Pergamos, to Thyatira, to Sardis, to Philadelphia, and to Laodicea.”

Four times Paul specifically said I am writing this with my own hand making it clear it was from the living apostles and not written 50 or 100 years later. (Gal.6:11; Philemon 1:19; 2 Thess. 3:17; Col. 4:18) All the New Testament books were written between 45-75 A.D excluding only the apostle John’s writings that were written in 85-95 A.D. To protect the writings from being lost they were copied for distribution. Schools of Scribes (scholia) copied the Scripture each by hand, also lecture rooms were created where people would copy down what they heard. What manuscript language were they in? Koine, the common Greek language spoken by the people! The bible was not written only for the aristocrat or royalty or the highly educated, but for everyday people.

No council was necessary to affirm what was already true. No book became canonical by the action of a church council. In the same way the Old Testament books were not decided upon by the Sanhedrin. The church only recognized the books that God had inspired because of the revealed record they already had and the eyewitnesses that were still alive.

There were no books written from 30-40-45 A.D. because believers had access to the apostles who were the eyewitnesses. The New Testament began to be penned down approximately 15-20-25 years after the ascension of Christ. Since many of the apostles and their immediate disciples were alive there was no concern to write what was taught, they thought Christ’s return was imminent. When the church had its first martyr Stephen persecution began and the Church was scattered. It was from this event that the letters were absolutely necessary to pen down the teachings copy and circulate them. One of the strong points in the apostles preaching is their appeal to the firsthand knowledge of the hearers; stating ‘We are witnesses of these things,’ but also, ‘As you yourselves know’ (Acts 2:22). Paul states in 1 Cor.15 written about 56- 60 A.D. To ask eyewitnesses about the events that transpired. This is about 25 years after Jesus was crucified in A.D. 33. and well within the lifetime of the eyewitnesses to ask them about the death and resurrection of Jesus as some were still alive as he wrote this. Paul indicated that his letter is based on an earlier teaching he gave (1 Cor. 15:1) to them, which he received. As the apostles went out they shared the writings and commanded them to be passed on to others. From the beginning the church copied and shared the original documents to circulate the apostles writings.

By the closing of the 2nd century, about 170 A.D., we find the expression the New Testament for the Bible.

Some point to hundreds of years later to show that it was then the Bible was put together. When the council of Carthage convened in 397 A.D. they were only putting their approval on the canon that were already received and read for more 200 years prior by the Eastern Church (and some of the western churches). It then became a fixed canon for the western church. What the council did was to determine which books did not meet the tests for canonicity besides the already accepted books. This was necessary as there were many forgeries and false letters circulating.

At the time the Scripture was being disseminated to the Church everywhere even hundreds of years after there were numerous false letters continued to circulate. So they had to apply a test by scripture itself. First they had to determine was it authoritative- did it come as "thus saith the Lord", did they recognize his voice in it. Did God speak through the human author to teach His people what they should believe and how they should live to God. Did it have the life transforming power of God in its words. It is the Bible-- God's word that convinces people of their sin and has power to give them the ability to change their fallen human nature. Was the author an apostle or was he connected to an apostle (possibly an apostolic legate one who wrote under their guidance). An example of this is: Mark wrote under Peter's authority and Luke wrote his Gospel and book of Acts under Paul's authority.

The book was also not to be in conflict with the already revealed body of scripture. The Church took their time was able to reject false books because it would delay their recognition. This would insure the right ones were accepted.

The Church understood its OT writings and was able to have the NT compared to what was already delivered by what was written and those who were eyewitnesses.

So if these letters taught doctrine contrary to what was already delivered or contradict practices of Christian living already given they were rejected. Also if they lacked the prophetic and had inaccuracies historically it was refused. The document had to be accurate in its facts, dates, and persons from its own current time. It is for this reason the Apocrypha was not accepted as inspired but used as a historic document only.

There was no church council to decide what books were to be included in the canon. They were all recognized by the consensus of the entire body of the church, not by a council of bishops. In the same way today we would reject the book of Mormon, we don't have to have a church council and have bishops to test it each of us can apply the scriptural test as we are encouraged to do in 1Thess.5 test all things. There were false prophets and lying spirits, all were required to be tested (1 John 4:1-3). Some writings claimed to be from an apostle were immediately rejected. Paul wrote to the Church in 2 Thess. 2:2 about a letter that seemed to come from him. This showed that even while they were alive people were forging letters and signing their name or making it seem as if it was from them.

Manuscript evidence

The oldest Greek manuscripts we have go back to even 85 or even as far as 65 A.D. Recently found are the scraps from a page of what was once a papyrus copy of the Gospel of Matthew chpt.26, (Nestle Aland lists this as fragment Magdalen Papyrus (P64). They are currently in the Magdalen College's library at Oxford University. They were given to the library in 1909 by a former student of the college who had acquired them in Upper Egypt near Luxor. German papyrologist Carsten Thiede an expert in Greek palaeography, maintains the dating of three small fragments of the gospel of Matt.26 to 66 A.D. (26:7-8, 10, 14-15, 22-23 and 31). This would mean that the original Gospel would be earlier still, since these are copies. Egypt has a favorable climate to preserve ancient manuscripts. Thiede states, "In a nutshell, then, our tour of indirectly dated, datable and precisely date papyri... has reached a conclusive result. The comparable material yields a date of c. A.D. 66, with a distinct tendency toward an even slightly earlier date. Conversely, there is no equally conclusive, comparable material from later periods. Thus, the usual paleographic "margin of error" would allow for earlier, but not for later, dates."

There is the Barcelona Papyrus (P67) Before 66 A.D. contains Matthew 3:9, 15; Matthew 5:20-22, 25-28.

The Paris Papyrus (P4) Luke dated not more than 66 A.D.

Johannine Codex (P66) we have almost a complete portion of John's gospel dating to about 125 A.D.

Papyrus P66 contains a large portion of the Gospel of John dates back to around 200 A.D.

Papyrus P75 contained sections of John and Luke from the early 3rd century.

Archaeologist Nelson Gleuck wrote: "We can already say emphatically that there is no longer any solid basis for dating any book of the New Testament after A.D. 80." William F. Albright the famous paleographer said that every book of the New Testament was written by a baptized Jew between the 40's and 80's of the first century and very probably between 50 and 75. Interesting that two conservatives (e.g., F. F. Bruce, John Wenham) and liberal (Bishop John A. T. Robinson) have penned defenses of early dating for the New Testament is a witness to the strength of the data for an early date. For example, in redating Matthew Mark and Luke, noted conservative British scholar John Wenham presents a convincing argument that the synoptic Gospels are to be dated before 55 A.D. He dates Matthew at 40 A.D. (some tradition says the early 30s); Mark at 45 A.D.; and Luke no later than 51-55 A.D.³⁴ Liberal bishop John A. T. Robinson argued in his *Redating the New Testament* that the entire New Testament was written and in circulation between 40 and 65 A.D. (source: *Knowing the truth about the Bible* Ankerberg and Weldon, p.19)

There are approximately 16 well-known classical authors (e.g., Plutarch, I Tacitus, Sentionius, Polybius, Thucydides, Xenophon, etc.), the earliest copies date from the range of 750 to 1600 years after the original manuscript was first penned. The total number of copies is usually less than ten and our knowledge of these works depends on a few manuscripts. When we compare this to the amount of manuscripts for the New Testament there is no contest, the abundance of manuscript evidence far surpasses any other in ancient literature.

EX: Aristophanes 451-383AD there are 10 copies from 900 A.D., a span of 1,300 years. Sophocles a (playwright) wrote Oedipus trilogy 496-406 B.C, his earliest copy is A.D. 1000, a time span of 1,400 years there are 193 copies.

Dr. F. F. Bruce, was the former Rylands Professor of Biblical Criticism and Exegesis at the University of Manchester. According to scholar, F.F. Bruce, we have about 9-10 good copies of Caesar's Gallic Wars originally written anywhere from 100-44 BC copies we have are from 1,000 years after, 7 copies of Plato written in originally written in 427-327 BC copies are from 1,200 years after, 20 copies of Livy's Roman History, 2 of Tacitus' Annals written in 100 AD copies we have are from 1,000 years after, 8 copies of Thucydides' History originally written in 460-400 B.C. copies we have are from 1,300 years after. 9 copies from Euripedes originally written in 480-406 B.C. copies are from 1500 years after. 5 copies Aristotle originally written in 384-322 B.C. copies we have are from 1,400 years after. The most documented secular work from the ancient world is Homers Illiad -- surviving on 643 manuscript copies. By contrast, there are over 5,366 Greek manuscripts of the New Testament, most of which include the Gospels. The New Testament is the most highly documented book from the ancient world with over 24,600 ancient copies altogether. All written within 35 to 300 hundred years afterward. J. Harold Greenlee states the available manuscripts of the NT is overwhelmingly greater than those of any work of ancient literature...and the earliest extant manuscripts are written much closer to the date of the original writings (*Introduction to the New Testament textual criticism* p.25)

Dr. F. F. Bruce, states of the New Testament: "There is no body of ancient literature in the world which enjoys such a wealth of good textual attestation as the New Testament." "Professor Bruce further comments, "The evidence for our New Testament writings is ever so much greater than the evidence for many writings of classical writers, the authenticity of which no one dreams of questioning. And if the New Testament were a collection of secular writings, their authenticity would generally be regarded as beyond all doubt."

Frederick Kenyon: points out that the Bible has the most reliable manuscripts in the world when compared with any other ancient book. "Scholars are satisfied that they possess substantially the true text of the principal Greek and Roman writers whose works have come down to us, of Sophocles, of Thucydides, of Cicero, of Virgil; yet our knowledge of their writing depends on a mere handful of manuscripts, whereas the manuscripts of the New Testament are counted by hundreds, and even thousands."

In his book, *The Bible and Archaeology*, "The interval, then, between the dates 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 now been removed. Both the authenticity and the general integrity of the books of the New Testament may be regarded as finally established." (Sir Fredric Kenyon, *The Bible and Archaeology*, 1940, 288).

There are 86,000 quotations from the early church. These are found in several thousand Lectionaries that are church-service books contain Scripture quotations used in the early centuries of Christianity. None of the New Testament canon we have today is lost or missing, not one verse. You could destroy all the manuscripts of the New Testament, and destroy all the

New Testaments in existence in the world, and you could reproduce all but 11-17 verses of the whole New Testament from early church writings. Sir David Dalrymple once asked himself the question, "Suppose that the New Testament had been destroyed, and every copy of it lost by the end of the 3rd century, could it have been collected together again from the writing of the Fathers of the second and third centuries?" His answer was "...as I possessed all the existing works of the Fathers of the second and third centuries, I commenced to search, and up to this time I have found the entire New Testament, except eleven verses." (EVIDENCE THAT DEMANDS A VERDICT, J. McDowell, Vol. I, pp. 50-51)

Textually we are able to restore over 99.8 percent of the original autographs from all the writings of the New Testament. There is no justifiable basis to doubt the integrity and accuracy of the New Testament writers. The New Testament passes the bibliographical tests receiving the highest mark of any ancient literature. The great Greek scholar A.T. Robertson said that the real concern is only with a thousandth part of the entire text. This would make the New Testament 99.9% free of significant variants. He dates the NT between 40 -to 65 Ad. The noted historian Philip Schaff calculated that of the variants known in his day, only 50 were of real significance, and not one affected any teaching of faith or practice.

John Ankerberg and John Weldon note "For everything else in life, we must base our decisions on degrees of probability. One hundred percent certainty is not available for anything in life, including life itself, so it can hardly be argued that a 99 percent degree of probability for inerrancy is irrelevant. People buy houses, drive cars, and get married taking much higher degrees of risk than this." There is more proof for a greater reliability for the writing of the scriptures to be accurate than anything else we are involved in life with.

For example: Ignatius who lived somewhere around 70-110 A.D. quotes from 15 of the 27 books of the New Testament. This is significant because of the fact of how early it is. Papias the Bishop of Hierapolis was a personal student of the apostle John he lived in the period of 130 A.D. He wrote "An Explanation of the Lord's Discourses," in which he quotes from John, and records traditions about the origin of Matthew and Mark. Papias noted that the apostle Mark in writing his Gospel "wrote down accurately ... whatsoever he [Peter] remembered of the things said or done by Christ. Mark committed no error ... for he was careful of one thing, not to omit any of the things he [Peter] had heard, and not to state any of them falsely." Fragments of Papias' Exposition of the Oracles of the Lord, ca. 140 A.D. (III, XIX, XX) attests that the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and John are all based on reliable eyewitness testimony (his portion on Luke is missing).

Polycarp, in his Letter to the Philippians (69-155 A.D.), quotes much of the NT Matt., Acts, Hebrews, Philippians, and reproduces phrases from nine other of Paul's letters and I Peter. Irenaeus a disciple of Polycarp 135-210 A.D. says there are only 4 Gospels. He quotes Paul and over 200 quotes from all the New Testament books except Philemon, Jude, James and 3 John, he has 1,819 quotes. Ignatius, in his Seven Letters, written about 110 A.D., during his journey from Antioch to Rome for his martyrdom, quotes from Matthew, I Peter, I John, cites nine of Paul's Epistles, and his letters bear the impress of the other three Gospels. Clement of Alexandria, who lived about AD 150 – A.D. 212, has 2,406 quotes from all but three books of the New Testament. Tertullian, who was an elder of the church in Carthage Africa lived around 160-220

A.D., quotes the New Testament 7,258 times. Of these quotes, around 3,800 are from the gospels. Other quotes from Church fathers include Justin Martyr, a native of Samaria in the second century, used in the Septuagint in all his writings, has 330 quotes.

Justin Martyr (100-160 A.D.) quotes all 4 Gospels, Acts and the epistles of Paul and Revelation. Portions of the gospels were read every Sunday in church. Tatian, about A.D. 160, made a "Harmony of the Four Gospels called the "Diatessaron," affirming that only Four Gospels, were recognized among the churches.

Clement, of Alexandria (165-220 AD) names all the books of the New Testament except Philemon, James, 2 Peter and 3 John. Origen 185-254 names all the books of both the Old and New Testaments 17,922 quotes. By 200 AD. Athanasius (who preserved the Trinity among the Church) had all 27 books of the New Testament. He said they were the springs of salvation do not add nor take away. Origen an African church father 185-254 A.D. names all the books of both the Old and New Testaments. In The Hexapla he harmonized the gospels in six columns in Hebrew and Greek.

Hippolytus, (A.D. 170-235) recognized twenty-two books. He had 1,378 quotes of Scripture. From 100-300 A.D. we have total of 36,289 patristic quotes of the Greek New Testament. This is not to be considered an endorsement of everything these men wrote, but only to show the immediate understanding of their time and the proof of the Greek New Testament. The Didache, written in Greek between 60 AD at the earliest to 100 A.D, makes 22 quotations from Matthew with references to Luke, John, Acts, Romans, Thessalonians, I Peter; and speaks of "The Gospel" as a already written document. This was used as church manual and is significant because of its early age and quoting other books of the Bible.

The earliest complete list of Scripture from Eusebius a church historian (who died 340 A.D.) He had 5,176 quotes of Scripture. He distinguished books universally received and accepted by the majority of the church. There were six books held back their acceptance. They could not be traced directly to an apostolic source. This action shows that the church wanted to ensure that the books bore direct and authentic testimony to be accepted. The concern was not of excluding canonical books, but of not including non-canonical books. The book of 2 Peter and especially Revelation had widespread hesitation as its message in symbolism was veiled, these were the last two accepted.

Persecutions took place from the reign of Caesar and then Emperor Trajan (98-117 A.D.) Other Roman Emperors who followed not only eliminating Christians, but collected the books of scripture to destroy them by having them burned. Despite all this attack the church and the Scriptures survived. The church's commission was to protect and promote the word. And many in the early church did just that as they gave their lives so that we would have the word of God today. In an effort to preserve scripture, books were buried and hidden. And many have been discovered today. So if any person attempted to corrupt the text or insert their own particular point of view into the scripture, any recent discoveries would have revealed any variations. But none have been found the text we are using today is essentially the same that was used by the early church.

There were also numerous books that were forgeries trying to be accepted in the church. Some were prior to Christ's time others came after the apostles. These presented a problem as they had biblical names and some truth in them but they countered the rest of what was already received and accepted as inspired writings. The Gospel of Thomas from the 2nd century. The Gospel of Peter mid 2nd century. The Birth of Mary and the Protoevangelium of James both are written in the middle of the second century. Acts of Peter Acts of John dated to the end of 2nd century. Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs a product of the 2nd cent., Acts of Andrew, and the Acts of Thomas end of 2nd century. Letter of Peter to James end of 2nd century. Gospel of Joseph the Carpenter from the 4th century. Many others came afterwards but the canon was closed so they were no longer a threat. When the council of Carthage convened in 397 A.D. they were only putting their approval on the canon that were already received and read by the Eastern Church for 200 years and some of the western. It then became a fixed canon for the western church.

Given the fact that the early Greek manuscripts (the papyri and early uncials) date much closer to the originals than any other piece of ancient literature critics are hard pressed to doubt this kind of factual evidence. The oldest form of manuscript are the Uncials, which were often used for literary works. Written in capital letters, the copyist usually took some effort in his task to write Greek, there are 274 Uncials. Most of the manuscripts for the New Testament books are cursives, which are a "running script" that used smaller letters, and the majority of these are minuscules. A person could write this script very quickly; and because the writing was smaller, so more could be squeezed onto each page, the number of minuscules are 2,765. Because minuscules are generally later than uncials, and also because they were easier to produce, minuscule copies outnumber uncials of the New Testament in a ratio of ten to one. Together with lectionaries -sermons 2,209, and papyri 88, the total is over 5,300 copies of the NT.

So how do we know what we have today is accurate. The events recorded in the New Testament were observed by hundreds of eyewitnesses who were living in the time it was written. They would have protested any exaggeration or alteration of the facts. When we have false reports today of any event in our history that is near our generation if it was inaccurate it is challenged and corrected because of living witnesses and historic records. There was no revisionism and they would be no less quick in protesting the falsified story than people today. They had no weight or influence in society to convince them of any falsehood that it would replace what was true. The kinds of things the Gospel writers included in their narratives gives evidence for their integrity. They record their own sins and failures, even serious offenses. They did not shine the halos of the saints but were brutally honest, describing the punishments that ensued from disobedience. Something one would not do if their intention were to make heroes out of themselves.

One of the most important factors in accuracy of the Scripture is found in John 14:26. Jesus stated that the Holy Spirit would be sent to provide an accurate recall for the apostles. He promised that the Spirit would guide His disciples "into all the truth" (John 16:3). The Spirit was active when they penned the words of Scripture. They were guaranteed a good memory for accuracy (John 16:12-15). This explains how an old man such as John, when he penned the life of Christ, could accurately describe the details of the events that occurred years earlier. The Holy Spirit gave John and the other writers accurate recall of the events. Jesus affirmed not only the

inspiration of the Old Testament but also the New Testament. Jesus said in Jn.17:8 “I have given them your words you have given me.” Jesus said my sheep hear my voice, they will flee from the voice of stranger. John 8:47 “He who is of God hears God's words; therefore you do not hear, because you are not of God.” When Jesus was questioned before Pilate he was asked what is truth? He said “everyone who hears my voice is of the truth.” This is now found in His written word. Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, “If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. “And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free”(John 8:30-32). He could not say this if he knew that the word would not last to our day

Today our bible has changed. Not in content but that it is organized with Chapter and verses. The bible was not originally written with chapter and verses. When Jesus introduced himself as the Messiah it says in Lk.4:17 “He was handed the book of the prophet Isaiah and when he opened the book He found the place where it was written, “what we know today as Isaiah 61. He read from the Jewish scrolls that were rolled up on two sides. Numbered chapters and verses later became part of the Bible in the 16th century A.D. Some were working on a numbering system much earlier by both Jewish and Christian theologians. The divisions of chapters of the bible was made by cardinal Hugo De St. Cher about 1250 AD. The first English Bible came from John Wycliff who translated it from the Latin in 1384.

In the 1440s, Johannes Guttenburg was skilled in engraving and metal working began experimenting with new ideas on printing. Guttenburg invented movable typeset and printed 200 copies of the Latin Bible. In 1550 a printer in Paris named Robert Stephens in his Greek Testament divided the scriptures into chapter and verses published the first version, 5 years later his Vulgate was published in 1555. The first English Bible having complete divisions (chapters and verses) was the Geneva Bible published in 1580. Voltaire the French philosopher boasted 50 years from now the world will hear no more about the Bible. God has a sense of humor and irony, exactly 50 years later the Geneva Bible society used his house and the same printing press to print their Bibles.

To disbelieve in the New Testament recorded documents that we have today one must also disregard much of what we know of Greco Roman history. Our knowledge of these cultures and anything in the past depends upon written, historical documentation, (and archeology) without which we would have no knowledge of past history. What we accept for secular history has far less evidence and is certainly less adequate than the evidence for Jesus, the Bible and Christianity. This is why so many archeologists, lawyers and great minds who have wanted to debunk the Bible found themselves with facts they could not any longer honestly ignore; converting them to Christ. Those who claim to be intellectually oriented should exercise the same fairness in examining the New Testament documents from the primary resources.