

Bible Proof Book:

The Bible is True, Here's Proof

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Get all the facts before making a decision

- *The only sure barrier to truth is the presumption that you already have it -- Chuck Missler,*
- *We don't know because we don't want to know; it's our will that determines what subjects we examine with our intellect. -- Aldous Huxley,*
- *Belief in the Bible has always required a measure of faith, but now this faith can be based on the evidence. -- Mark Eastman,*
- *What a shame -- yes, how stupid -- to decide before knowing the facts! -- Proverbs 18:13 (The Living Bible)*

Synopsis

There are many books today that claim to be the Word of God: The Koran, the Book of Mormon, the Bhagavad Gita, the Vedas, and others. Christians believe the Bible to be the Word of God and the eternal source of truth. Why do they believe this? It is not just 'faith'. Unlike the sacred writings of other religions, the Bible is largely a book about what God has done in the past, therefore its truths are historically verifiable. Indeed, Christianity stands or falls on its historical evidence. Those who say, "*Religious belief is a matter of faith, you can not prove that the Bible is true*" are more than likely just repeating a mantra they have heard many times before. And although this may be true for many religions, it is not true for Christianity.

Because of its historicity, you **CAN** prove the truth of the Bible. This claim, no doubt, may seem arrogant and shocking to many, but it is true. Join with me and discover how it's done. Learn astonishing prophecies made thousands of years in advance yet accurate down to the smallest detail; read about the Bible's astounding scientific accuracy – facts only recently discovered, yet written down in the Holy Scripture's up to five thousand years ago; and uncover amazing archeological discoveries that verify its truthfulness...and more.

Contained herein is evidence that a lawyer could use to prove his case in a court of law. The reader is encouraged to read it with an open mind, as if he or she were a juror in a trial. The material is presented in a scholarly "just-the-facts" format and appeals to logic, reason, and intellect.

Why even care?

The Bible claims to be the word of God. It also claims that all who believe in Jesus Christ will spend eternity in heaven, but all who do not are destined for eternal punishment in hell. Isn't your everlasting soul worth two hours - the length of time it will take to read this - to see if it is true? Charles Spurgeon once said, "it's shocking to think that a change in the weather has more effect on some people's lives than the dread alternative of heaven or hell."

Is the Bible true? We all live our lives, more or less, consistent with what we think is true. If truth exists – and it does – it seems the worst possible outcome is to live ones life without it. Further, we all will die. To live our lives without truth is sad, but to die without truth is a tragedy.

Having said that, I implore you to spend a few minutes and read about the evidence that exists supporting the Bible's truthfulness. You will not regret it. But please try to keep an open mind and remember the proverb above that talks about not deciding something before knowing all the facts.

NOTE: Many references are used in this booklet, paper or PDF file - depending on the format you are reading – books, magazine articles, DVD's, videos, and Internet articles. Since just about anybody can put anything on the Internet these days, only reputable websites have been used. If you are reading this on paper, be advised, you can also view it online at www.BibleProofBook.com and the hyperlinks will – at least they should - work.

God Exists

When it comes down to it, there are really only two worldviews: those who believe in God, and those who do not. Proving that God exists is easy. Perhaps that is why more than ninety percent of the population believes in God. The very existence of the universe proves that there is a God. Think about it. There are only three possibilities for the existence of the universe. *One*, it has always existed. *Two*, it came into being by itself. *Three*, it was created. Prior to the twentieth century, many thought that the first option, that the universe was eternal, was true, but this has now been utterly rejected by the scientific community. All the evidence confirms that the universe is not eternal: the motion of galaxies, the background radiation, proton decay, and the fact that the universe is winding down and wearing out (the second law of thermodynamics) all prove that it could not be eternal. Option *two*, that it created itself is philosophically and logically ludicrous: something cannot create itself. A basic law of physics is that from nothing, nothing comes. The only other option is that something or someone created it (something or someone outside the boundaries of the universe). This ‘someone’ God.

Moreover, consider this: if I hold up a painting for you to look at, what further evidence do you need to see to prove that there was a painter; the painting itself is evidence of a painter. So it is with the universe. Just like the painting could not paint itself, neither could the universe create itself. (Our universe is explored further in the *Science* Section). Just like the painting that needs a painter, so too, the universe needs a creator.

Who is this ‘someone’ that created the universe?

Current Beliefs

Writing for www.EveryStudent.com, Mark Hanzard said that one day not too long ago he was talking to a student on a college campus about Christianity. The young man was bright, intelligent, and well versed in science and philosophy. "*Christianity is good for you,*" the student said, "*but it's not right for me. I think you ought to believe whatever makes you happy and gives you peace.*"¹ This is typical of how many – if not most – people think these days. It is becoming more and more evident that we live in a pluralistic society that believes:

- There are many different paths to god (if there is a god), and everyone chooses their own god and their own path;
- Truth is subjective and relative (i.e. what is true for you is not necessarily true for me);
- One person’s truth is just as valid as another person’s truth (i.e. there are no absolutes).

Furthermore, most Americans take pride when discussing their open minds, liberality of thought and potpourri of beliefs. A 1993-94 Barna Research poll revealed that nearly two out of three adults contend that the choice of one religious faith over another is irrelevant because all religions teach basically the same thing.² Another Barna poll found that Four of every ten American adults believe that when Christians, Jews, Buddhists, and others pray to their god, all of them are actually praying to the same god, but simply using different names for that deity.³

Different Religions Teach Different Things

Is this true? Is everybody praying to the same god? Do all religions teach the same thing? The answer to both questions is No. Actually, nothing could be further from the truth. Even a cursory examination of the beliefs and ideologies of the various religions in the world reveals the incongruity among them; they all make different truth claims. The core doctrines at the heart of these religions do not agree and cannot be reconciled. For example, how can Buddha be another mes-

¹ “Two Kinds of Truth” <http://www.everystudent.com/wires/twokinds.html>

² Cited from, *Aren't all religions basically the same*, www.ChristianAnswers.Net

³ www.barna.org

senger pointing to the same God when Buddha did not believe in God? Hindus believe there are many deities while Muslims believe there is only one.

Christians believe God is a Personal Being who can be known, and who reveals Himself in Three Persons (Father, Son, & Holy Spirit), He loves, He thinks, He is omniscient, omnipotent and, most importantly, is a God of grace. Allah (the Muslim god) on the other hand, is revealed by the Koran as unknowable, far off, neither Father, Son nor Spirit. In Christianity, Jesus is the Son of God and the third person of the Trinity. Muslims reject the Trinity and believe Allah had no son. The Bahai think that Moses, Krishna, Jesus, and a few others are prophets of God. Christians believe Jesus is the Messiah, while Jews think he was a false prophet. All the various religions have different doctrines. (See “*Connecting with the Divine*” for more on what the differences are).¹

The Law of Non-contradiction

In logic and philosophy, the law of non-contradiction states that something cannot *be true* and *not be true* at the same time (e.g. the statements: 2+2 is 4, and 2+2 is not 4 are contradictory and both of them cannot be true). As we look at the various religions we see this same scenario and are left with the irrefutable conclusion that all religions cannot, at the same time, be true. For example, the Christians think Jesus is the Messiah, the Jews think He is not the Messiah. These statements cannot both be true. Either He is the Messiah or He is not the Messiah but He cannot be both. Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, Christianity, etc... all make different – often contradictory – truth claims. Therefore they cannot all be true.

Yet if all religions make different truth claims (as we have just seen), and they cannot all be right. Which one is right? Can a person prove which religion is true? If so how? I believe that Christianity and the Bible are true and can be proven. I ask the reader to keep an open mind and let me present my case before making a decision; as Chuck Missler has said on many occasions, “*The only sure barrier to discovering the truth is the presumption that you already have it.*”

How do you prove something? How do you establish truth? You do it by examining evidence. This is how our law courts work - lawyers present evidence and then jurors evaluate the evidence and decide whether or not what they heard is true. Having said that let me talk a little bit about the difference between *Subjective* and *Objective* evidence.

Subjective Evidence – non-verifiable

Subjective evidence is evidence that you cannot evaluate for yourself -- you have to simply accept or reject what the person says. Basically it is someone’s opinion.

- For example, Fred says, “*My foot sure hurts a lot.*” Is he lying? How much is “a lot”? What is Fred’s idea of pain? ... a sharp stabbing pain, or just his foot fell asleep?
- Julie says, “*That was a hard test!*” Compared to what? Did she study? Is this just a subject she finds particularly difficult?
- Bill says, “*Boy, that was a great football game!*” Compared to what? Who was playing - his son, the team he coaches, two professional NFL teams?

Objective Evidence - verifiable

Objective evidence, on the other hand, is evidence you can examine and evaluate for yourself.

- If Fred walks in with a cane and you see a piece of glass stuck in his foot, you can make a decision without hearing Fred’s opinion!
- If you read the test Julie talked about, you can decide for yourself whether it was hard.
- Watching a video of the football game and comparing it with known statistics will tell you if it was a great game or not.

¹ www.everystudent.com/features/connecting.html

Why is it important to have *Objective* evidence that your religion is true? The answer should be obvious. It is so you can evaluate the evidence and decide for yourself if it is true or not.

Why should a person believe Christianity is true? Because of the objective evidence Christianity offers. Christianity differs from all other world religions on the issue of verifiability. In fact, John Warwick Montgomery says, “only Christianity stakes its claim to truthfulness on historical events open to critical investigation. Christianity can claim credibility *because* of such evidence.” He then adds, “Regrettably, what is often overlooked in the field of comparative religion today is that no genuinely historical evidence exists for the foundational religious claims of Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, or any religion other than Christianity.”¹ Even non-religious atheists agree that the history in the Bible is of paramount importance. The well-known atheist Thomas Huxley wrote,

Christian theology must stand or fall with the historical trustworthiness of the Jewish Scriptures. The very conception of the Messiah, or Christ, is inextricably interwoven with Jewish history; the identification of Jesus of Nazareth with that Messiah rests upon the interpretation of passages of the Hebrew Scriptures that have no evidential value unless they possess the historical character assigned to them.²

Faith Versus Evidence

We will intellectually and objectively examine the evidence for Christianity shortly, but first a comment about faith versus evidence. The Bible teaches that no one can know God without faith in Christ. It is this faith, not evidential demonstration that lies at the heart of Christianity, but at the same time, the Bible claims to be historically true. Other religions rest on spiritual truths that lie divorced from any historical or contextual claim. However, faith in Jesus rests upon the truthfulness of the Bible. Faith in Christ is inseparable from the belief that certain events occurred and that the record of those events is true. The life of Jesus is more than just a spiritual event, it is an event in history. This means there is empirical evidence that can be examined.

For example, Christians believe in the resurrection of Christ (a spiritual event), but the resurrection requires an empty tomb (a historical event). Christianity stands or falls on historical evidence, and as such it can be empirically and objectively verified.

In an excellent article titled *Faith and Facts*, Gregory Koukl writes: “I don't like the word ‘faith.’ Not because faith isn't valuable, but because it's often deeply misunderstood. Faith is often perceived as what you use when all reason is against you. It is often perceived as religious wishful thinking, in which one squeezes out spiritual hope by intense acts of sheer will. Supposedly people of faith believe the impossible; people of faith believe that which is contrary to fact; people of faith believe that which is contrary to evidence; people of faith ignore reality.”³ He goes on to explain that Biblical faith is not something Christians have *in spite of* the evidence but something they have *because* of the evidence. I might add, that it is objective, verifiable evidence.

According to Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, Faith means “*trust or confidence that is placed in some person or thing.*” Mark Eastman has said that “*Belief in the Bible has always required a measure of faith, but now this faith can be based on the evidence.*”

Christians believe the Bible is true – we have *faith*, *confidence*, and *belief* – because of the eyewitness testimony, the manuscript evidence, the archeological evidence, the fulfilled prophecies, the resurrection and more. We have faith in the Bible and in Jesus Christ *because* of these things.

A Bible Based on Fact

Speaking of faith and facts, it might surprise many people to find out that the Bible itself repeatedly warns against naiveté (Proverbs 1:22, 8:5, 14:15, 14:18, 22:3) and urges its readers to

¹ John Warwick Montgomery, "How Muslims Do Apologetics," in *Faith Founded on Fact*, Nelson, 1978.

² Thomas H. Huxley, *Science and Hebrew Tradition Essays*, pp. 207–208, 1897.

³ Gregory Koukl, *Faith and Facts* <http://www.str.org/site/News2?page=NewsArticle&id=5242>

acquire knowledge (Proverbs 2:10, 8:9, 10:14, 12:1). Christians are admonished to make a right judgment (John 7:24), to test everything and hold on to the good (1 Thess. 5:21), and to be prepared to give an answer for the hope we have (1 Pet. 3:15). Additionally, the Apostles insisted what they reported was historical fact (more on this later), they also warned about believing in fables or myths not grounded in fact (1 Timothy 1:4, 4:7, 2 Timothy 4:3-4, Titus 1:14) and stated confidently that their message was based on fact (Acts 26:25-26, 2 Peter 1:16).¹

Christianity, then, unlike many other religions, encourages critical thinking, discourages naïveté, and offers factual reasons and evidences for its astounding claims – that God entered our physical reality and left concrete footprints in history.²

The Uniqueness of Jesus Christ.

Many people see no difference between Jesus and other so-called holy-men. But there is a vast difference. Norman Geisler, has a Ph.D. in philosophy from Loyola University; he is the co-founder and Dean of Southern Evangelical Seminary in Charlotte, NC; he is the author of more than fifty books, and has debated hundreds of skeptics of Christianity. He says this: “Jesus Christ is unique in every way... He stands above all other religious or moral teachers... He is unique in His supernatural nature, [and] in His superlative character... No other person in history has claimed to be God. Even when the disciples of other religious leaders tried to exalt and deify their leader, there is no proof to that claim that can be compared to the fulfilled prophecies, miracles, and resurrection of Jesus.”³

Dr. Michael Green is an internationally respected author, speaker and scholar. He is currently Senior Research Fellow at Wycliffe Hall, Oxford University, England. He recently authored the text *But Don't All Religions Lead to God? Navigating the Multi-Faith Maze*.⁴ In this book, Dr. Green writes: "Jesus is unique among religious leaders in claiming to bring God to our world in His own person and making good that claim by such powerful evidences."⁵

Furthermore, Green writes: "Perhaps the greatest difference of all lies in the Christian assertion that none of us can save ourselves and make ourselves acceptable to God, try as we may: all the other faiths assert that by keeping their teachings a person will be saved, fulfilled or reborn."⁶ Christians believe that salvation is a gift of God. It is not what *we do*, but what *God did* that saves us: *For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life (John 3:16)*. We are saved because God – the Creator of all things – took human form, died on the cross, and forgave the sins of anyone who believes in Him. All other faiths say, “do this” (and you will be saved), Jesus, on the cross, said, “it is done,” (*tetelestai*).

When we examine all the great religious leaders, prophets, and teachers that ever lived, there is nobody equal to Jesus. Moses, Confucius, Buddha, nor Lao Tse (Taoism) never claimed to be anything other than sinful men. Mohammed, Joseph Smith, Zoroaster, nor Guru Nanak (Sikhism) ever gave evidence they were prophets from God. No one comes close to Jesus – not Allah of Islam, Brahman, Brahma, Shiva, or Krishna, the mythical deities of Hinduism nor any other god, comes close to the uniqueness, majesty, or love of Jesus. Furthermore, ***any other religion can have its founder removed and it will not matter much, but remove Christ from Christianity and you have nothing left.***⁷ If Jesus did not die on a cross to save mankind from sin than Christianity means nothing.

¹ Boa, Kenneth, et al; *Twenty Compelling Evidences That God Exists: Discover Why Believing In God Makes So Much Sense*; Cook Communications; 2005; p15.

² Ibid; p16.

³ Geisler, Norman, *Baker Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics*, pgs 137-139.

⁴ Baker Book House, 2002.

⁵ See <http://christiananswers.net/q-aiia/religionssame.html>

⁶ <http://christiananswers.net/q-aiia/religionssame.html>

⁷ Ankerburg, John; *Fast Facts on Defending Your Faith*; Harvest House; pg 36.

If the claims of religious leaders mean anything, and they must, than no one else in history claimed or did what Jesus did. Jesus said, *"I am the light of the world; whoever follows me will never walk in darkness"* (John 8:12). Nobody else ever said that. He said *"I am the way the truth and the life, no one comes to the father except through me"* (John 14:6). Nobody else ever said that. He said, *"For unless you believe that I am He, you shall die in your sins"* (John 8:24). Nobody else ever said that. The Bible, speaking of Jesus, says, *"Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved"* -- Acts 4:12. *He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him* -- John 3:36.

No, Jesus Christ is unique in all of history. The belief's that there are many paths to God is, upon examination, unfounded; Jesus is the only way to heaven. The primary reason that Jesus is the only way to heaven is because He alone forgives sin and offers eternal life (John 10:28), something that the founder of no other major religion has claimed to, or can, do. Many people try to earn their way into heaven by being good or doing good works. But being good or doing good works is not what gets you to heaven. Being forgiven gets you there, and Jesus is the only one who can do that. As Judith Ritchie wrote in her teaching editorial: "There is one major defining difference between the gospel of salvation conceived by man, and the Gospel of Jesus Christ. That is, that in the Gospel of Jesus Christ, God does everything and man does nothing. In all things there is *total* dependence upon God for *every single aspect of life*. Salvation, protection, sustenance, covering, our future, our very breath – our very existence - depends upon God and God alone. We do nothing except trust and obey" (emphasis in original).¹

NOTE: In proclaiming the exclusivity of Christ, a Christian does not assume a posture of superiority, or arrogance; he merely speaks as a sinner saved by grace. As D. T. Niles once put it, "Evangelism (sharing the Gospel message with unbelievers) is just one beggar showing another beggar where the food is." Furthermore, in one sense, Christianity is not really exclusive because it is open to everyone. It does not matter what age, sex, ethnicity, culture, or race a person is, anyone can become a Christian.

Can Jesus' Claims Be Objectively Verified: An Issue of Paramount Importance?

Can Jesus' claim that He is truth, that He is the only way to heaven, be objectively verified? This is an issue of paramount importance; I would venture to say nothing is more important. Your eternal destiny lies on this fact and how you act upon it. Someone once said that perhaps our biggest folly would be to ignore the God who is there, who everyone knows is there, and to live as if he does not exist or matter. It is folly because it is a kind of intuitive and intellectual suicide. We all live our lives, more or less, consistently with what think is true. Further, we all die. To live our lives without truth is sad but to die without truth is a tragedy. If truth exists – and it does – it seems the worst possible outcome is to live ones life without it.

Who is Jesus: Liar, Lunatic, or Lord

The reason I brought up the exclusivity and claims of Christ was because we need to evaluate their truthfulness. In Christian circles there is a saying that Jesus is either *A Liar, A Lunatic, or The Lord*. Let me explain: Jesus claimed to be God. Now this is either true or false. If it is false then we have two choices either He is a liar or a lunatic. On the other hand, if it is true then He is Lord and God. C. S. Lewis created the Liar, Lunatic, or Lord trilema some years ago. He was arguing against the idea that many people have had through the years, that Jesus was simply a good moral teacher or a Rabbi, a sage, or a prophet. Lewis correctly noted that this is not an option. Jesus claimed to be God; if it is true then He is Lord. If it is false He is either a Liar or a Lunatic.

¹ Pursuit of Truth #94, July 2007

Now if He is a liar or a lunatic, He cannot be considered a good moral teacher, a Rabbi, a sage, or a prophet.¹

In anticipation of writing this paper/booklet, I visited an atheistic website to see what secularists and non-Christians were saying about Jesus. What this atheistic website had to say about the Liar, Lunatic Lord trilema was laughable. *First*, they said, *this argument hinges on the assumption that Jesus did in fact exist. This is at least debatable.*

Proving that Jesus existed is not even worthy of paper and ink, there is so much evidence that Jesus existed it is hard to believe they said that. No legitimate scholar today denies that Jesus was a historic figure who lived in Galilee some 2,000 years ago, that he did remarkable wonders and acts of charity, and that He died a horrible death on a Roman cross just outside Jerusalem. *Second*, they said the argument is not valid because there are other options. One option they suggested was that Jesus was misquoted – “*Jesus did not claim to be God, He was misquoted.*” This needs to be addressed because it is also what the Jesus Seminar folks say.

Every Easter we (the public) are bombarded by shows which claim that Jesus was not God and that He was deified later by the Christian church. This is absurd. Pages (entire books) could be, and have been, written explaining the fact that Jesus claimed to be God. I will attempt to do so in a couple paragraphs.

Did Jesus Claim to Be God

This is a crucial question. It is one thing for the followers of a person to say that He must have been God. It is quite another for the person Himself to say that He is God. So, did Jesus claim to be God? Yes. Not only did the Disciples proclaim Christ's deity, but He did too. There are many places in the Gospel records where He did so - both directly and indirectly. Here are just a few.

John 8:58

Jesus said to them, 'Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was born, I am.'

In this passage Jesus is involved in a controversy with the Pharisees. The subject of the discussion was Jesus' own identity. In John 8:56, Jesus states that Abraham was glad to see Him. This statement really confused the Pharisees, and they questioned how He could possibly have been around at the time of Abraham who lived thousands of years prior to Jesus' birth. Jesus responded by saying: "*Before Abraham was born, I AM.*" The expression, "I AM" was not a phrase that a Jew would even say, let alone in reference to themselves; for it was the unpronounceable name of God (Exodus. 3:14), and it would have been considered blasphemous to use that name for oneself. In referring to Himself as "I AM," He was saying that He was God. Does this sound far-fetched to you? Is it not possible that we are reading all kinds of weighty theological information into a simple statement that Jesus made? Fortunately, there is clear information on how to interpret this clause, because in the next verse we see the Pharisees picking up stones to throw at Him—the traditional response to evident blasphemy. Verse 59: "*Therefore they picked up stones to throw at Him; but Jesus hid Himself, and went out of the temple.*" Christ's listeners got the message exactly as He meant it: He was claiming to be God.

This “I AM” comes from the book of Exodus. The Israelites were being held as slaves by the Egyptians, and In Exodus chapter 3 God told Moses that He had heard the cries of His people (the Israelites) and would free them from their years of bondage. God told Moses to tell this to the people, so Moses asked Him a question: When I tell this to the people, whom shall I say sent me? In verse 14 God answered, “*And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM: and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you.*”

This I AM is the Hebrew phrase “*ani hu,*” in Greek it is “*ego eimi.*”

¹ Lewis, C.S; *Mere Christianity*; Macmillian publishing; Rev Ed 1984; p 41.

Jesus used this phrase – ego eimi, I AM – many times of Himself. You will find it 24 times in the Gospel of John alone. Here are a few:

- John 6:35, "*I AM the living bread,*"
- John 10:11, "*I AM the good shepherd,*"
- John 4:26 Jesus says to the woman at the well, "*I AM, the one speaking to you,*"
- John 6:20 Jesus walking on the water, came to the disciples in a boat on the sea of Galilee and said, "*It is I be not afraid*" (In Greek it says "I AM be not afraid")
- John 8:24: "*Therefore I said to you that you will die in your sins, for unless you believe that I AM, you will die in your sins.*" (Jesus is saying unless you believe He is God, you will die in your sins).

John 10:30

I and My Father are one

In another debate about Jesus' identity, He says, "*I and My Father are one.*" Once again this is a self-checking passage. We could debate for a long time exactly what Jesus might have meant, but the next verse leaves no doubt about what He communicated to His immediate audience. Verse 31 says, "*Then the Jews took up stones again to stone him.*" Once again they knew that He had claimed deity for Himself.

Mark 6:50, & Matthew 14:27

In Mark 6:50 and Matthew 14:27, Jesus told the Disciples to board a boat and go across the Sea of Galilee and He would meet them on the other side. They had not yet reached the other side when they saw something that frightened them. They saw a figure walking on the water. Scripture tells us they thought it was a ghost but it was Jesus Himself, live and in the flesh. In Mark 6:50 we read: "*For they all saw Him, and were troubled. And immediately He talked with them, and said unto them, Be of good cheer: it is I, be not afraid.*" The literal translation of *it is I*, is actually "I AM" and referring to the I AM in Exodus.

Luke 22:70-71 and Parallel Passages in Matthew and Mark

Art thou then the Son of God? And he said unto them, Yes I AM.

Here, Jesus is on trial before the Sanhedrin (the Jewish council). After some futile efforts to convict Him on various charges, the High priest turned to Jesus directly and asked Him, "Are you the Son of God?" and Jesus responded, "Yes, I AM."

It appears that we have a double claim here. Jesus acknowledged that He was the Son of God and also used "I AM" in His response. Some scholars of late have questioned whether the claim to be the "Son of God" really entails a claim to being "God."

Was He the *Son of God*, or *God*? It is possible that at times the title was used simply to refer to the Messiah, but such an interpretation is impossible in this context. In the next verse (as well as the reactions reported in Matthew 26:63-66), the reaction of the Pharisees tells us exactly how we are supposed to understand about what Jesus said and meant. It was not blasphemy to claim to be the Messiah, but it certainly was blasphemous to claim to be God, and that is exactly what Jesus did. Verse 71 records their response: *And they said, "What further need do we have of testimony? For we have heard it ourselves from His own mouth."* They wanted to stone Him for blasphemy. (See also Mark 14:60-62).

Did Jesus claim to be God? These representative passages make it very clear that He did. There are hundreds of other passages that could be used to show that Jesus claimed to be Divine /God /The Messiah, but you do not have to remember all of the specific scriptures that show evidence of Jesus' claim to divinity. It can be summed up in one sentence. "**The only reason Jesus was crucified was because He claimed to be God.**" It is that simple, the Jewish leaders (via the Romans) crucified Jesus for blasphemy - because He claimed to be God. John 10:33 - *The Jews an-*

swered him, saying, for a good work we stone thee not; but for blasphemy; and because that thou, being a man, claim to be God. Note, the text does not say for doing miracles, for being a teacher, a Rabbi, or even for saying He was the ‘*Son*’ of God, but that He claimed to ‘*be*’ God. The Jewish leaders wanted to kill Him, but because they were under Roman rule they did not have the authority to put someone to death so they had the Romans crucify Him.

I also want to point out what Psychologist Dr. Gary Collins observed in *The Case for Christ*. Collins noted that “anybody can claim to be God, but Jesus not only claimed to be God, but He backed up that claim with plenty of confirming evidence. With amazing feats of healing, with astounding demonstrations of power over nature, with transcendent and unprecedented teaching, divine insights into people, and ultimately with His own resurrection from the dead.”¹

¹ Strobel, Lee; *The Case for Christ*; audio tape; side B.

Finally, on to the evidence - *objective* evidence.

Prophecy: Evidence #1

Perhaps the most convincing and hardest to refute piece of evidence confirming the Bible's truthfulness is prophecy. Prophecy is something that sets the Bible apart from all other religious books.¹ The Bible contains literally thousands of prophecies that have come to pass. In fact, there are 8,362 prophetic verses in the Bible,² most of which have already been fulfilled. **The amazing thing is that while there have been literally thousands of fulfilled prophecies not once has the Bible ever been wrong - that's right, it has a 100% accuracy rate, 100% of the time.**

Prophecy And The Nature of Time

The reason Biblical prophecy is so accurate (as we will see shortly) is because God has the ability to see the past, present, and future simultaneously and therefore, can tell us what will happen. In order to understand how God can do this, I should explain a little bit about the relationship between God and time. Most of us think of time as a line; we probably can remember back to grade school, when the teacher drew a line on the blackboard. On the left of the line was the beginning of a kingdom or an event or perhaps someone's life, and on the right side was the end of this kingdom, event or life. Therefore, we tend to think of eternity as a very long line with infinity on the left and infinity on the right. We visualize God as someone who has lots of time.

That may sound nice but it is bad physics. God is not someone with lots of time; rather He is someone who is outside of our space/time*³ domain altogether. As an analogy, think of a parade. Standing on the sidewalk, we can see the floats going by one at a time. We do not really know what is coming until it gets to us. For us, life is a sequence of events: the past has already happened, we are in the present, and the future has not yet happened. (See Figure 1)

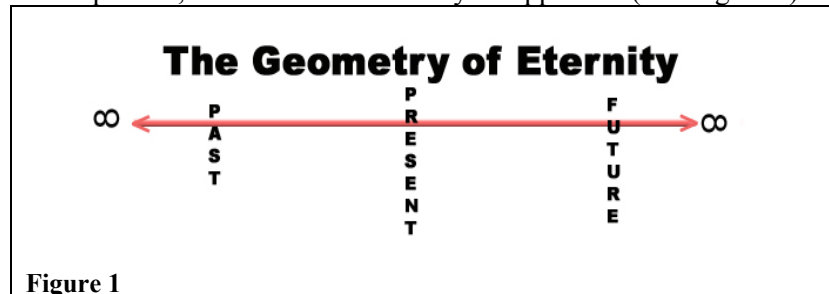


Figure 1

Yet someone in a blimp or helicopter can see the whole parade simultaneously; for him, the beginning and the end (the past, the present, and the future) are all happening at the same time. God is like the person in the blimp – He is outside of our space/time dimension altogether.

Since God has this ability to see the past, present, and future simultaneously, He is able to use this ability to tell us what will happen. God can see history before it happens. This is what prophecy and foreknowledge is – history written in advance, *before* it happens.

God, via the Holy Spirit, wrote things in the Bible that, at the time the authors wrote them, could not possibly have been known. (e.g. prophecies covered now, and scientific foreknowledge covered shortly). There is no 'past,' 'present,' and 'future' with God, He just 'is' – He is the 'I AM that I AM' (Exodus 3:14).

¹ Berean Call Newsletter, 11/30/07.

² J. B. Payne, *Encyclopedia of Biblical Prophecy*.

³ When physicists and astronomers speak of space and time it is usually together as a unit (space/time); time did not exist before space existed, nor space before time.

Biblical Prophecies

When it was written, nearly 28% of the Bible's content was prophetic.¹ Prophecy, as said previously, is something that sets the Bible apart from all other religious books,² and is absolutely unique to the Bible.³ Of the 26 other books people of faith believe are divinely inspired, none of these writings contain any specific fulfilled prophecies. Chuck Missler says, “you will not find any prophecy’s in Islam’s Koran, the Hindu Vedas, the Bhagavad-Gita, the Book of Mormon, New Age spirit guides, channelers, mediums, psychics, et al...”⁴ As the Bible states, *God alone knows the end from the beginning and declares from ancient times things that are not yet done* (Isa 46:10). In other words, He knows the future. Jesus said, “*I am telling you now before it happens, so that when it does happen you will believe that I am He*” (John 13:19).

Moreover, the prophecies in the Bible are very specific and accurate. Nostradamus claims to have made hundreds of prophecies that have come true, but if you read his prophecies you will find them to be vague and unclear. His symbols and language can be taken to mean a number of historical events. (For more on Nostradamus see the footnote).⁵ However, unlike Nostradamus and other similar so-called ‘prophets,’ Biblical prophecy is very specific. One such example written with extreme specificity is regarding the city of Tyre. (This is typical of all Biblical prophecies).

The City of Tyre

In Ezekiel 26, written in 587 B.C., Ezekiel prophesied with astonishing detail that the mighty city of Tyre would be destroyed. Here is what the Bible says:

Ezekiel 26:3-7,12,14,21

3 therefore this is what the Sovereign LORD says: I am against you, O Tyre, and I will bring many nations against you, like the sea casting up its waves.

4 They will destroy the walls of Tyre and pull down her towers; I will scrape away her rubble and make her a bare rock.

5 It shall be a place for the spreading of nets in the midst of the sea: for I have spoken it, saith the Lord GOD: and it shall become a spoil to the nations.

6 And her daughters who are in the field shall be slain by the sword; and they shall know that I am the LORD.

7 For thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I will bring upon Tyrus, Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon, a king of kings, from the north, with horses, and with chariots, and with horsemen, and companies, and much people. [...]

12 And they shall make a spoil of thy riches, and make a prey of thy merchandise: and they shall break down thy walls, and destroy thy pleasant houses: and they shall lay thy stones and thy timber and thy dust in the midst of the water. [...]

14 And I will make thee like the top of a rock: thou shalt be a place to spread nets upon; thou shalt be built no more: for I the LORD have spoken it, saith the Lord GOD. [...]

21 I will make thee a terror, and thou shalt be no more: though thou be sought for, yet shalt thou never be found again, saith the Lord GOD.

The Prophecy:

Tyre was made up of two parts, a mainland port city and an island city half a mile off shore. Ezekiel predicted the following:

- 1) Tyre would be destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar (it even mentions the King’s name - vs 7: that in itself is amazing),
- 2) That many nations would fight against her (vs 3),

¹ Lahaye, Tim, et al; *The Popular Encyclopedia of Bible Prophecy*; Harvest House; 2004; pg1; et al.

² Berean Call Newsletter, 11/30/07.

³ Campbell, Charlie, *One Minute Answers to Skeptics' Top Forty Questions*, Aquintas Publishing, 2005, p 29; et al.

⁴ Missler, Chuck; *How We Got Our Bible*; Koinonia House; 2000.

⁵ See www.emjc3.com/nostradamus.pdf

- 3) The debris of the city would be thrown into the ocean (vs 12),
- 4) The city would be made like a bare rock (vs 4)
- 5) It would never be rebuilt again (vs 21),
- 6) And fishermen would come there to spread their nets (vs 14).

The Fulfillment:

The fulfillment comes in two stages. First, in 573 B.C. Nebuchadnezzar destroyed the mainland city of Tyre (thus fulfilling verse 7, & 8). But while this was happening many of the refugees of the city secretly sailed to the island-city of Tyre where it remained a powerful city for many years.

Then in 333 B.C. Alexander the Great laid siege to the island-city of Tyre, but he did not have a navy, so using the rubble of mainland Tyre he built a causeway to the island, then captured and completely destroyed the island-city (thus fulfilling verse 3 and 12).

Today, the great ancient city of Tyre lies buried in ruins and has never been rebuilt (fulfilling verse 14b, & 21). There is another city called Tyre but it is not the same one. It is a small fishing town where fishing boats come to rest and fisherman dry (*spread*) their nets, thus fulfilling verse 14a.¹ There is absolutely no way this happened by chance without God's foreknowledge. Yet this is just one example among hundreds.

The Day Jesus Enters Jerusalem

Another absolutely incredible prophecy is found in Zechariah and Daniel, and fulfilled in the Gospels. This prophecy foretells, 483 years in advance, the very day (and manner) that Jesus would arrive in Jerusalem.

The Prophecy

Zechariah 9:9 says: Rejoice greatly, O Daughter of Zion! Shout, Daughter of Jerusalem! See, your King comes to you, righteous and having salvation, gentle and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.

Daniel 9:25 says: Know and understand this: From the issuing of the decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until the Anointed One, the Ruler, comes, there will be seven 'sevens,' and sixty-two 'sevens.'

The Calculations

The word "sevens" in this verse in Daniel is the Hebrew word "shabuim." Much like the word "decade" means ten in English, shabuim means seven in Hebrew. In this context shabuim means seven 'seven-year periods' and sixty-two 'seven-year periods'. Seven 7-year periods + 62 seven-year periods = 69 seven-year periods. Sixty-nine 7-year periods is 483 years (69 X 7 = 483). The ancient calendar was based on a 360 day year, so 483 years multiplied by 360 days = 173,880 days.

Daniel said that the Messiah would come 173,880 days after the "issuing of the decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem." So the next question is, when was the decree given to restore and rebuild Jerusalem?

The Fulfillment

The answer is found in Nehemiah chapter 2. Nehemiah was the cupbearer to king Artaxerxes; he was very sad one day and the king asked him why. He told the king that it was because the city of his people was destroyed. So the king gave him permission to rebuild it.

Nehemiah chapter 2: 1-5 says:

In the month of Nisan in the twentieth year of King Artaxerxes... [T]he king said to me, "What is it you want?" Then I answered the king, "If it pleases the king, let him send me to the city in Judah where my fathers are buried so that I can rebuild it."

¹ "Ezekiel," Alexander, Ralph H.; *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*; Zondervan, 1986; Pg 869.

The chapter goes on to say that the king gave Nehemiah permission to do whatever it took to rebuild Jerusalem.

Hebrew tradition says that if the day is not given then it is assumed to be the 1st day of the month, which meant that the decree was given the 1st day of Nisan in the 20th year of Artaxerxes the king (vs 1). On our calendar, this was March 14th, 445 BC. If you add 173,880 days to March 14th, 445 BC you will get April 6, 32 AD. What happened April 6, 32AD?

As explained in Luke 19:35-38, Jesus rode into Jerusalem on a donkey and presented Himself as the Messiah, the King, just as Daniel and Zechariah prophesied: *"They brought the donkey to Jesus, threw their cloaks on the colt and put Jesus on it. As he went along, people spread their cloaks on the road. When he came near the place where the road goes down the Mount of Olives, the whole crowd of disciples began joyfully to praise God in loud voices for all the miracles they had seen, saying, "Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!"* Christians celebrate this as Palm Sunday – the week before Easter Sunday.

This incredible prophecy predicts 483 years in advance the very day Jesus would enter Jerusalem. Not only that, but that He would arrive riding on a donkey. (For more of this type of prophetic evidence see footnote.)¹

Prophecies About Jesus

Speaking of Jesus . . . Jesus had various credentials to support His claims to being Messiah, God's only Son. One of the most profound yet often overlooked credentials is the fulfillment of prophecy in His life. Jesus repeatedly appealed to the prophecies in the Old Testament to substantiate His claims of being the Messiah. Luke 24:27 says, *And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, Jesus expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself.* Additionally, Jesus said to them *"These are the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning Me"* -- Luke 24:44.²

The Old Testament details literally hundreds of prophecies about Jesus, which were fulfilled in the New Testament. Prophecies such as:

- His place of birth,
- His lineage,
- The exact date He would enter Jerusalem,
- How He would enter Jerusalem (riding on a donkey),
- How He would die (crucifixion),
- That He would die among criminals,
- He would be buried by a rich man,
- He would be betrayed by a friend for 30 pieces of silver,
- He would rise from the dead on the third day,
- His hands and feet would be pierced,
- He would be rejected by the nation of Israel,
- And more. All written hundreds of years in advance.

There are over 300 incredibly detailed predictions that Jesus specifically fulfilled.

Psalm 109:2-3 says that He would be *"despised and rejected by men:"* fulfilled is in John 15:25, *"They hated Me without a cause."* Zechariah 11:12 says the Messiah would be betrayed by a friend for 30 pieces of silver. It was fulfilled in Matthew 26:15, which says the chief priests told Judas they would give him *"30 pieces of silver"* if he showed them where Jesus was. The astounding detail in this prophecy alone is amazing: He was not just betrayed, not betrayed for money, but for *"thirty pieces of silver,"* (not less than 30 or more than 30 but exactly 30, not gold

¹ See *Evidence for the Bible, and Old Testament prophecies fulfilled in history*, from www.emjc3.com/prophecy101.htm.

² McDowell, Josh; *A Ready Defense*; Nelson Reference; 1992; p 209.

So 1 in 10 to the 157th is simply amazing. In fact, mathematicians tell us that anything beyond 10⁵⁰ is impossible (*they do not say improbable, they say impossible*).¹ They say impossible possibly because there are only about 10¹⁷ seconds since the universe began. (It is widely believed that the universe is between 10 to 20 billion years old, NASA estimates it at 13.7 billion years: this is about 10¹⁷ seconds). Yet, 10 to the 157th is for only 48 prophecies not 300 plus. Jesus fulfilled not 8 prophecies, not 48 prophecies, but over 300 of prophecies. We cannot even conceive of this probability. It is less than 1 chance in 10⁹⁴², that is a 1/10 with 942 zeros after it. This is nothing short of a miracle, especially since there are only 10 with 66 zero (10⁶⁶) atoms in our entire galaxy.² There is no way this happened by chance; Jesus is the Messiah. He in turn verifies the Bible's truthfulness.

17 Prophecies of Jesus Christ

#	Subject	Prophetic Scripture	Fulfilled
1	Descendant of David	Jeremiah 23: 5-6	Matthew 1:1
2	Born in Bethlehem	Mica 5:2	Luke 2:4-5, 7
3	To be born of a virgin	Isaiah 7:14	Luke 1:26-27, 30-31
4	Worshipped by shepherds	Psalms 72:9	Luke 2:8-15
5	Blind, deaf, and lame are healed by the Messiah	Isaiah 29:18, Isaiah 35:5-6	Luke 7:22, Matthew 11:3-5
6	Triumphal entry	Zechariah 9:9	Mark 11:7, 9, 11
7	Betrayed by a close friend	Psalms 41:9, Psalms 55:12-13, Zechariah 13:6	Luke 22:47-48, Matthew 26:49-50
8	Betrayed for thirty pieces of silver	Zechariah 11:12	Matthew 26:14-15
9	Betrayal money used to buy Potter's field	Zechariah 11:13	Matthew 27:6-7
10	Scourged (whipped)	Isaiah 53:5	Matthew 27:26
11	Crucified with malefactors	Isaiah 53:12	Mark 15:27-28
12	Pierced through hands and feet	Zechariah 12:10, Psalms 22:16	John 20:25-27
13	Soldiers gambled for His clothing	Psalms 22:17-18	Matthew 27:35-36
14	No bones broken	Psalms 34:20	John 19:32, 33, 36
15	Darkness over the Land	Amos 8:9	Matthew 27:45
16	Buried with the rich	Isaiah 53:9	Matthew 27:57-60
17	To be resurrected	Psalms 16:10, Psalms 30:3, Psalms 49:15, Psalms 118:17	Mark 16:6-7

To view all 324 prophecies Jesus fulfilled go to www.emjc3.com/prophecy101.htm
 To see how the probabilities are calculated see *What is the Statistical Probability to Prophecy Fulfillment* at www.khouse.org/6640/CD111-1/ (audio), or *Science Speaks* at www.emjc3.com/sciencespeaks.htm (text).

Unprecedented

It is unprecedented, dare I say, even supernatural, how the Bible fulfills prophecy. After you are done reading this article, a Web Page I recommend and encourage you to spend some time on is **100prophecies.org**. It lists ten prophecies fulfilled today, ten fulfilled recently, ten fulfilled in 1948, ten fulfilled in the 1900's, ten fulfilled before 1900, ten fulfilled before 1800, etc... This is from their *Evidence for the Bible* section, at www.100prophecies.org/provable.htm.

Another great part of their website is from their *Evidence that Jesus is Son of God* section, available at www.100prophecies.org/evidence.htm. Also see chapter 6 and 19 of *A Ready Defense*, viewable at www.greatcom.org/resources/areadydefense/.

¹ Eastman, M; Missler, C.; *Creator Beyond Time and Space*; Word for Today; Nov. 1995; p 75.

² Missler, Chuck; *Learn The Bible in 24 Hours*; Thomas Nelson; Sept. 2002; pg 158.

Again, the Old Testament alone contains thousands of very specific prophecies that have already come to pass. The fact that these prophecies were literally fulfilled gives us assurance that future unfulfilled prophecies regarding the rapture of the church, the battle of Armageddon, the New Heaven and New Earth, etc. will also be literally fulfilled.

Indeed, fulfilled prophecies are the most astonishing piece of evidence that confirms the supernatural origin of the Bible, which is why I put it first. It not only demonstrates the truthfulness of the Bible but it also shows that, statistically speaking, it is *impossible* for it not to be true (remember mathematicians say anything beyond 10^{50} is *impossible*¹).

Before moving on to the next section, here are four possible objections, and their answers, for those who are critical of Biblical prophecy:

Objection 1 – Modern Psychics Make Predictions Too

Do you think that predictions and prophecies aren't really evidence for the divine origin of the Bible because modern psychics make predictions too? This line of thinking is possibly understandable but unjustified.

Before mentioning the track record of modern psychics, let me first address one thing: Deuteronomy 18:22 says that the test for someone who prophesied in the name of the Lord was that they had to be 100% accurate. If they were 99% accurate and 1% wrong (if they had just one prophecy that didn't come to pass), verse 20 says that they were to be stoned to death. This was a practice that, no doubt, gave pause to any who were not absolutely sure their message was from God. As I have already noted earlier, the Bible is 100 percent accurate.

Now how about modern psychics. Josh McDowell notes that a study conducted between 1975 and 1981 revealed that “of the seventy-two predictions only six of them” came true. Furthermore, “in 1976 *The Peoples Almanac* did a study of twenty-five top psychics. The results: of the total seventy-two predictions, sixty-six (92 percent) were totally wrong.”²

Objection 2 – Someone Altered The Manuscripts

All the prophecies about Jesus were made hundreds or thousands of years before He was born. Because of the accuracy of the prophecies about Him, many skeptics have tried to insist that the ancient manuscripts have been altered. They have thereby tried to deny that they are even prophecies, and have said that some unscrupulous people acquired the manuscripts and inserted the prophecies found in them. This might sound feasible until you realize that the Septuagint (the Hebrew Old Testament) was translated into Greek between 285-270 BC. This Greek translation shows that there was over a two-hundred-year gap between the prophecies being recorded and their fulfillment in Christ. It is an indisputable fact of history.

Objection 3 – Jesus Deliberately Fulfilled The Prophecies

Another argument people try and make is to say that Jesus deliberately fulfilled these prophecies. The problem with that argument is not only the sheer number of them, but most of them were outside of His control. For example, how could He choose where He was going to be born, who His parents were, or His lineage? Nor could He possibly control all the minute details within those prophecies. Did He tell the priests to give Judas 30 pieces of silver? Did he tell Judas to give the money back and to throw it on temple the floor? Did he tell the Romans to pierce His hands and his feet, or His side? Did He tell the Roman guards at the cross to gamble for his

¹ Eastman, M; Missler, C.; *Creator Beyond Time and Space*; Word for Today; Nov. 1995; p 75.

² McDowell, Josh; *The New Evidence That Demands A Verdict*; Thomas Nelson; 1999; p194

clothes? etc...etc... No He did not. That is only a couple examples among 324. For more information regarding this issue see footnote.¹

Objection 4 – The NT Writers Fabricated The Prophecies

Yet another objection that is sometimes made is that the New Testament writers fabricated all the prophecies. There are many reasons why this does not fly. One of them is not only the excessively large number of them (324), but also the fact that the events surrounding Jesus life were well known. People knew where He was born, they knew His heritage, they watched him get crucified, they watched his hands and feet get pierced, his side pierced with a spear, etc... Plus, the New Testament was written when the enemies of Christ were still alive, and if it was not true plenty of people would have been more than happy to point it out. Furthermore it goes totally against the character of the disciples. So, upon examination, none of the objections hold up.

Objection 5 – Coincidence

The sheer number of prophecies precludes this scenario.

To conclude this section, prophecy reveals four things:

1. It proves that God exists,
2. It establishes the divine origin of the Bible,
3. It authenticates the deity of Jesus Christ,
4. It demonstrates the inspiration of Scripture.

But there is much more than just prophetic evidence. We will examine the manuscript evidence next.

¹ See chapter 6 and 19 of *A Ready Defense*, 1992, viewable at www.greatcom.org/resources/areadydefense.

The Manuscripts: Evidence #2

Another piece of evidence that demonstrates the Bible's truthfulness is the number and reliability of the New Testament manuscripts themselves. Critics often assert that the Bible is not trustworthy, often alleging that it was written so long after the events it records that we can not possibly trust it to be historically reliable, or asserting that the Bible has been copied and recopied down through the centuries so often that we can not be sure what the writers said. These are questions that need to be addressed.

When Were The Manuscripts Written? Can We Trust Them?

In actuality, objections such as these only reveal a person's bias and/or lack of knowledge about the issue, because the manuscript evidence, as we will see, is extremely good.

First lets deal with the number of manuscripts. There are 5,300 Greek manuscript or manuscript portions of the New Testament, plus 10,000 from the Latin Vulgate, and 9,300 other versions for a total of over 24,000 extant manuscripts, (many available for inspection right now). Besides the actual manuscripts, there are also some 86,000 direct quotations from both the early church fathers and Lectionaries (church-service books containing sermons and Scripture quotations used in the early days of Christianity). In fact, the entire New Testament, with the exception of eleven verses, could be reconstructed just from the writings of the first century pastors – you do not even need the manuscripts.¹

Additionally, when the New Testament documents are compared with other writings of antiquity for the numbers of early copies and/or the proximity of the copies to the original, the New Testament is far superior. Few scholars question the validity and authenticity of ancient classical literature on the basis of the manuscripts we possess, yet this manuscript evidence is vastly inferior to that of the New Testament. For example, of sixteen well-known classical authors (Plutarch, Tacitus, Suetonius, Polybius, Thucydides, Xenophon, and ten others), the total number of extant copies is typically less than ten, and the earliest copies date from 500 to 1600 years after the original manuscript was penned.² When you compare that to the New Testament, with over 24,000 manuscripts, written not from 500 to 1600 years after the event, but within 20 to 80 years after the event (as will be shown), it becomes ridiculous how much manuscript evidence there is.

- There are far more copies of the New Testament documents than of any other comparable ancient document,
- The manuscripts go back closer in time to the originals than for any other ancient documents,
- The manuscripts are consistent – virtually no changes or differences (covered shortly).

The chart on the next page comparing the Bible to other ancient literature is very informative. No other book is even remotely close to the Bible on either the number of manuscripts or early dating of the copies. The average secular work from antiquity survives on only a handful of manuscripts; the New Testament, however, boasts thousands.

A Visual Illustration

The authors of *Reinventing Jesus* say that the New Testament manuscripts are one thousand times more plentiful when compared with other ancient Greek writers of the same time period. Then they give us this visual illustration: If the average-sized manuscript were two-and-one-half inches thick, all of the works of an average Greek author would stack up four feet high, while the New Testament manuscripts would stack up over a mile high.³

¹ Norman L. Geisler; *A General Introduction to the Bible*; Moody; Chicago; 1986; chap 24.

² McDowell, Josh; *Evidence that Demands a Verdict*; p 42.

³ Komoszewski, J., et al; *Reinventing Jesus*; Kregel Publications; 2006; p 82.

Consider the chart below:

Not only are there far more copies, but the New Testament manuscripts go back closer in time to the originals than for any other ancient documents.

Consider the chart below. Plato, for example, wrote his Tetralogies in 427-347 BC yet the earliest manuscripts we have date to 900 AD, a 1200 year gap, and there are only 7 copies. Aristotle wrote between 384-322 BC but the earliest manuscripts we have are from 1100 AD – a 1400 year gap. Plus there are only 49 copies, etc.... Compare that with the Bible, which was written between 50 – 100AD, and the earliest manuscripts we have are from 125AD – a gap of only 25 years. Plus there are 24,000 copies (ten times more than all the other ancient literature put together).

AUTHOR	When Written	Earliest Copy	Time Span	No. of Copies
Caesar	100-44 B.C.	A.D. 900	1000 yrs.	10
Livy	59 B.C.-A.D.17			20
Plato (Tetralogies)	427-347 B.C.	A.D. 900	1200 yrs.	7
Tacitus (Annals of Rome)	A.D. 100	A.D. 1100	1000 yrs.	20
Pliny the Younger (History)	A.D. 61-113	A.D. 850	750 yrs.	7
Thucydides (History)	460-400 B.C.	A.D. 900	1300 yrs.	8
Suetonius (De Vita Caesarum)	A.D. 75-160	A.D. 950	800 yrs.	8
Herodotus (History)	480-425 B.C.	A.D. 900	1300 yrs.	8
Sophocles	496-406 B.C.	A.D. 1000	1400 yrs.	193
Catullus	54 B.C.	A.D. 1500	1600 yrs.	3
Euripides	480-406 B.C.	A.D. 1100	1500 yrs.	9
Demosthenes	383-322 B.C.	A.D. 1100	1300 yrs.	200
Aristotle	384-322 B.C.	A.D. 1100	1400 yrs.	49
Aristophanes	450-385 B.C.	A.D. 900	1200 yrs.	10
Homer (Iliad)	900 B.C.	400 B.C.	500 yrs.	643
New Testament	A.D.50-100	A.D. 125	25yrs.	over 24,000

Regarding the dating of the manuscripts, Sir Frederic Kenyon, former director and principal librarian of the British Museum, and one of the leading authorities on the reliability of ancient manuscripts, drew this conclusion:

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.¹

Not only is there abundant manuscript evidence, but it is reliable.

A Copy of a Copy of a Copy - Telephone

Another argument often posed is that the New Testament has been copied and recopied so much that one can no longer trust what was once written. This is a completely unfounded and biased statement. People often compare it to the telephone game nearly everyone played as a child. One kid whispers into another kid's ear, then that kid whispers it to a third kid, who whispers it to a fourth, then to a fifth, and so on. This continues until the boy or girl at the end hears something completely different from the original message. There three reasons this analogy does not work:

First, Craig Blomberg points out that half the fun in playing the telephone game is that it is whispered so the person may have not heard it right in the first place and you cannot ask for them to repeat it, plus *because* it is whispered it greatly adds to the fact the next person will goof up. Blomberg says that if you want to use that analogy for the gospel message in the first century

¹ Kenyon, F. G. *The Bible and Archaeology*. New York and London: Harper, 1940, pp. 89, 288.

community you have to allow for constant monitoring; every third person would be able to ask aloud, “did I get it right.” He says that the early Christians took their holy writings very seriously.¹

Second, in the telephone game the transmission is all done orally, but because the Biblical manuscripts were transmitted in written form (not orally). Because we are working with written texts it is much easier to spot errors or reconstruct the originals. Not only that, but when reconstructing the manuscripts, scholars can look at all the links in the chain, not just the first and the last.²

Third, Lee Strobel corrects this analogy in *Case for Christ: Student Addition*. He says a better analogy would be that the first kid tells two other kids, who themselves tell two other kids. And so it goes until at the end you have dozens and dozens. If at the end one version says, ‘pieces of board,’ another is ‘Jesus is board,’ and a third says, ‘Freeze us a gourd’ you can be pretty sure the original message got distorted somewhere along the way. This is not the case with the New Testament Manuscripts. Strobel states: “What if nearly every kid ended up with ‘Jesus is Lord’? If you heard 99 out of 100 kids say ‘Jesus is Lord’ you can be pretty confident that this is what the original message was.” He continues, “there are over 5,000 copies of the New Testament manuscripts in Greek, 10,000 copies in Latin, 8,000 in Armenian, Slavic, and Ethiopic, and throw in some miscellaneous copies because there are over 24,000 manuscripts. And the amazing thing is that they all say the same thing. You will find some spelling errors and stuff like that, but 99.5% of them agree with one another, and there is no contention among any doctrinal issue.”³ Virtually all other scholars back this up as well. Professor Daniel Wallace notes that a side-by-side comparison between the two main text families (the Majority Text and the Modern Critical Text) shows agreement a full 98% of the time.⁴ Chuck Missler says that “less than 1% of the Scriptures are under competent dispute” and “no doctrine of the Scriptures depends upon any of the disputed passages.”⁵

A much better analogy than the telephone game would be this:

Suppose your Aunt Sally has a favorite recipe that she likes very much. Her friends like it too and ask her for the recipe. Sally writes it by hand and gives it to her three bridge partners (Aunt Sally is still in the technological dark ages—no photocopier or email). They, in turn, make copies for ten of their own friends.

All goes well until one day Aunt Sally’s pet schnauzer eats the original copy of the recipe. In a panic she contacts her three friends who have mysteriously suffered similar mishaps, so the alarm goes out to the others in attempt to recover the original wording.

Sally rounds up all the surviving hand-written copies, twenty-six in all. When she spreads them out on the kitchen table, she immediately notices some differences. Twenty-three of the copies are exactly the same. Of the remaining three, however, one has misspelled words, another has two phrases inverted (“mix then chop” instead of “chop then mix”) and one includes an ingredient none of the others have.

Do you think Aunt Sally can accurately reconstruct her original recipe from this evidence? Of course she can. The misspellings are obvious errors. The single inverted phrase stands out and can easily be repaired. Sally would then strike the extra ingredient reasoning it’s more plausible one person would add an item than 25 people would accidentally omit it.

Even if the variations were more numerous or more diverse, the original could still be reconstructed with a high level of confidence if Sally had enough copies.

This, in simplified form, is how scholars do “textual criticism,” an academic method used to test all documents of antiquity, not just religious texts. It’s not a haphazard effort based on

¹ Strobel, Lee; *The Case for Christ*; Zondervan; 1998; pg 44.

² Strobel, Lee; *The Case for The Real Jesus*; Zondervan; Sept. 2007; p 81

³ *The Case for Christ: Student Addition*; Zondervan; 2002; Pg 61.

⁴ Wallace, Daniel; *The Majority Texts and The Original: Are They Identical?* Bibliotheca Sarca; April-June, 1991; pps 157-8.

⁵ Missler, Chuck; *How We Got Our Bible*; Koinonia House Inc.; 2000.

hopes and guesses; it's a careful linguistic process allowing an alert critic to determine the extent of possible corruption of any work. --adapted from "Has The Bible Been Changed."¹
Once again, there are over 24,000 hand-written copies or partial copies of the NT manuscripts.

Not only that, but in *Why the 'Lost Gospels' Lost Out*, Ben Witherington adds some insight as to how careful the early Christians were in translating the scriptures:

On the whole, Christian scribes were notably conservative in how they handled their copies. Worried that a verse might be misunderstood, sometimes they would seek to clarify that which could be overlooked, distorted, or misconstrued. Sometimes they would find alternate readings in the margins of the manuscripts they were copying from, and they would include both readings lest they leave out the correct one. These scribes had a profound sense that they were copying the sacred Scriptures, and they did not want to leave anything out that the originally inspired author had included.²

Not only are there 24,000 manuscripts; not only has it been accurately translated; but also important is the fact that the New Testament was written by eyewitnesses.

Ask any judge, prosecutor or defense attorney about the value of eyewitness testimony and they will tell you how important it is. Even newspaper reporters are taught to interview eyewitnesses in order to corroborate their stories. As Lee Strobel writes in his book, *The Case For Christ*, one of the most dramatic moments in a trial is when a witness describes in detail the crime he or she saw and then points confidently towards the defendant and says "he did it, I saw him do it." It is enough to send a defendant to prison for life, or worse. That is in a court of law, but eyewitness testimony is just as crucial in investigating historical matters. What eyewitness accounts do we possess? Actually, we have a lot. We have the testimony of people who personally interacted with Jesus, who listened to His teachings, who saw the miracles He performed, who witnessed His death and burial and who saw Him after His resurrection.³

In fact, all of the New Testament writers were not only of the generation of Jesus, but was either an eyewitness to Jesus' deeds or was an interviewer of eyewitnesses. The Biblical gospels, as well as Paul's writings contained numerous statements that, at the time written, were publicly verifiable (see Acts 2:22, & 2:32). Besides, there were many people (Jewish Leaders as well as Roman officials) who did not want this new religion of Christianity to take hold; they would have been all too happy to testify that what the Apostles were saying wasn't true. Christianity never would have gotten started if it weren't based on historical truths that could be verified.

If I told you that George Washington was President of the United States five years ago, would you believe me? I hope not! Why? Because it is easily verifiable, that is why. The same situation existed regarding the New Testament. The facts were easily verifiable when the New Testament was being written.

For example, the Magdalen Papyrus, which contains part of the Gospel of Matthew was once thought to be from the late 2nd century. Recently, however, it was re-examined with a scanning laser microscope. A scanning laser microscope can differentiate between twenty micrometers (millionths of a meter): measuring the papyrus, height and depth of the ink, and can even determine the angle of the stylus used by the scribe. An expert in this area, "Dr. Thiede compared the fragments with four other known references and determined that the Magdalen fragments were either an original from Matthew's Gospel, or an immediate copy, written while Matthew, the other disciples and other eye witnesses were still alive!"⁴ This is proof that the Gospels were written and read by people who saw the resurrected Christ with their own eyes.

¹ Koukl, Gregory; "Has The Bible Been Changed"; www.str.org

² <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2004/006/7.26.html>

³ Strobel, Lee; *The Case for Christ*; pgs 19, 20.

⁴ Missler, Chuck; Personal Update; April, 2001, <http://www.khouse.org/articles/2001/333>.

Jesus performed numerous “miracles, signs and wonders;” and He did them in the presents of many witnesses. The Gospel of John alone uses the noun ‘witness’ 14 times and the verb ‘testify’ 33 times.¹ The signs performed by Jesus are thoroughly attested to, even by hostile witnesses who wanted Christianity to disappear and fade away. Acts 4:16 says, “*what shall we do with these men? For that a notable sign has been performed through them [which] is manifest to all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and we cannot deny it*” (also see Acts 26:26).

The writers of the New Testament knew the value of first-hand testimony and appealed to it many times.

Luke has been called a first rate historian by many modern historical scholars. The beginning of Luke’s Gospel says, “*Many have undertaken to draw up an account of the things that have been fulfilled among us, just as they were handed down to us by those who from the first were eyewitnesses and servants of the word. Therefore, since I myself have carefully investigated everything from the beginning, it seemed good also to me to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, so that you may know the certainty of the things you have been taught*” (Luke 1:1-4).

Luke says that he “*carefully investigated everything,*” and that they “*from the first, were eyewitnesses*” of what Jesus did.

More Eyewitnesses

- John says, “*That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled...*” (1 John 1:1).
- Peter says, “*For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty.*” (2 Peter 1:16).
- Luke, this time in Acts, says, “*The former treatise have I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach, Until the day in which he was taken up, after that he through the Holy Ghost had given commandments unto the apostles whom he had chosen: To whom also he showed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God*” (Acts 1:1-3). This of course is after the death and burial of Jesus. Luke says that Jesus showed himself alive for “*forty days.*” by “*many infallible proofs*” Note: *many infallible proofs* in the Greek is *en pollois tekmariais* and is an expression which is defined in lexicons as “decisive proof” and indicates the strongest type of legal evidence.
- In the book of Corinthians it says, *that Jesus appeared to more than 500 people at once, most of which are still alive.* Paul (the writer of first and second Corinthians) basically says hey if you do not believe me, ask some of the people that saw him, they are living downtown, they are still alive you can ask them yourself! The complete passage says: “*For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures: And that he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve: After that, he was seen by more than five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present*” (1 Corinthians 15:3-6).
- Peter, preaching to a group of people in the second chapter of Acts says, “*men of Israel, listen! God publicly endorsed Jesus of Nazareth by doing tremendous miracles through him, as you well know. But God, following his prearranged plan, let you use the Roman government to nail him to the cross and murder him. Then God released him from the*

¹ Rhodes, Ron; *Answering the Objections of Atheists, Agnostics, and Skeptics*; Harvest House Publishers; 2006; p76.

horrors of death and brought him back to life again, for death could not keep this man within its grip” (Acts 2:22-24, TLB). Notice the words, “*as you well know.*” Peter is saying that Jesus did all these miracles to show you that He was the Messiah; you saw Him do them, you saw Him cure lepers, raise the dead, heal the sick, cure the blind, you saw Him with your own eyes, you heard Him with your own ears, you saw Him get crucified and die, you saw how God raised Him from the dead. You saw it! And how did they respond? Did they say, “we don’t know what you’re talking about,” or “that’s not what happened.” No. The Bible says their response was that they repented, asked for forgiveness, and 3,000 of them accepted Jesus as their Lord and Savior. Read Acts 2:41.

Moreover, the Judeo-Christian scriptures are intentionally very specific. They do not say, ‘hey folks, there is a man claiming to be God’s Son, He has done some pretty impressive stuff.’ Rather, the Bible gives, names, dates, locations, specific miracles, the number of people present, etc... “This isn’t true of other religions;”¹ you cannot scrutinize other religions this way because they don’t connect with history.

The early Christians were crucified, fed to the lions, beheaded, became burning torches in Nero’s garden, and many other such fates, because they knew the truth of what they were hearing and proclaiming. Christianity went from one thousand adherents in AD 40 to *thirty-four million* in AD 350. Why? Because of the overwhelming evidence it was true. Everybody knew it.

When was the New Testament Written?

Skeptics and even some “so-called” Christians have claimed the New Testament was written in the 2nd or 3rd century. However, this is not what the evidence reveals. For example, parts of Matthew are written in Acts. Paul was a central character in Acts and Paul died in 62AD² but we do not find out in Acts, which means Acts was finished before 62AD. Acts is really the 2nd half of the Gospel of Luke, and Luke incorporates parts of Mark. This means Mark is even earlier and would have been written – at the latest - by 60AD or in the late 50s.³

Furthermore, the New Testament is not in chronological order, Paul’s letters probably started in the late 40s and continued into the early 50s.⁴

In 1 Corinthians 15:3-7 Paul is reciting a creed of the early Christian church; a creed that can be traced back to within 4 to 8 years of the crucifixion itself.⁵ Most New Testament scholars point out that one of the ways we know 1 Corinthians 15:3-7 is a credal statement is that it appears to have been in a more primitive Aramaic, and it is also in hymnic form. This means it was stylized Greek, non-Pauline words, which indicates that it predated Paul and was widely used, probably recited in worship experiences in a song or a hymn and universally acknowledged.⁶

I can already hear the skeptic muttering: “4 to 8 years! Come on it seems pretty unlikely that anyone could remember what was said *years* before writing it down.” This is a good observation and deserves a response. There are three issues here:

First, we need to understand that we are talking about an oral culture. Rabbis would have entire books committed to memory, so it really was not that big of a deal in the culture in which they lived.

Second, the Apostles simply wrote the things they had said orally hundreds of times previously.⁷ Furthermore, it wasn’t individual memory we are talking about, but community memory.

¹ Strobel, Lee; *Case for the Real Jesus*; Zondervan; 2007; p 78

² Dr. Gregory A. Boyd; *Jesus Under Siege*; 1985

³ Strobel, *Case for Christ*, pp 33-34

⁴ Strobel, *Case for Christ*, p 34

⁵ Hanegraaff; *The Third Day*; p 42; et al

⁶ Gary R. Habermas; *Did Jesus Rise from the Dead*; San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1987, p 86.

⁷ Komoszewski, Sawyer, et al; *Reinventing Jesus*; Kregel Publications; 2006; p 33.

If the Apostles said a falsehood, you can be sure someone listening would correct them and say, “wait a minute, I was there too, and you’re not telling it right.”

Third, one needs to realize that God, not men, is the author of the Bible. 2 Timothy 3:16 says “*All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness,*” and 2 Peter 1:20-21 says “*knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.*” Indeed, God had the writers write exactly what He wanted written. Jesus promised His disciples the Holy Spirit would enable them to remember His teachings so that they could communicate them accurately to others. He said to the Apostles, “*These things I have spoken to you, while abiding with you. But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you*” (John 16:25-26). Jesus, who is absolutely reliable, believed that what the disciples wrote about Him would be just as true as if He wrote it Himself. As Paul Little observes, although the Bible was written by many different people, it only had one author – God.¹ Mark Cahill notes, No one has yet been able to identify a single historical mistake anywhere in the Bible. This in itself is amazing. **If man (apart from God) wrote it, we would certainly have discovered some historical errors after all these years – but there are none.**² (Sometimes people think they have found errors, but with a little research, they always get cleared up).

This goes for prophecy too. If man (apart from God) wrote it, we would certainly have discovered some prophetic errors after all these years – but again, there aren’t any.

The Bottom Line

In an interview in Christianity today, Biblical archeologist and Professor of Semitic Languages, William F. Albright wrote, “...every book of the New Testament was written by a baptized Jew between the forties and the eighties of the first century AD.”³

Most scholars hold this view. William Lane Craig says the New Testament is authentic, written by eyewitnesses, and he says the claim that “Jesus was merely a man who was deified later” is purely an unsubstantiated myth.⁴ Virtually all reputable Bible scholars concur with these statements. We have:

- thousands of manuscripts,
- written by eyewitnesses,
- written while people were still alive and the facts could be verified,
- manuscripts that were faithfully copied, having a 99.5% agreement with one another,⁵

All testify towards the reliability of the New Testament.

The Accuracy of the Old Testament

How about the Old Testament? Unlike the New Testament, the Old Testament was not written in one generation but over a much longer period of time (approximately between 1,500 BC to 400 BC).⁶ However, it is also incredibly accurate. The Dead Sea Scrolls, for example, were discovered in eleven caves along the northwest shore of the Dead Sea between the years 1947 and 1956. Fragments of every book of the Hebrew canon (Old Testament) except for the book of Esther were found. The Dead Sea Scrolls were most likely written by the Essenes between 200 BC and 68 AD, and have revolutionized textual criticism of the Old Testament. The supreme value of the

¹Little, Paul; *Know What You Believe*; Cook Communications; 2003; pgs 12-14.

² Cahill, Mark; *One Thing You Can't do in Heaven*; Biblical Discipleship Publishers; 2002; p 155.

³ William F. Albright, interview in "Christianity Today," June 18, 1963.

⁴ Hanegraaff, Hank; *The Third Day*; W Publishing Group; 2003; p 45.

⁵ *The Case for Christ: Student Edition*; Zondervan; 2002; p 61.

⁶ See: When was the Bible written and who wrote it? <http://www.carm.org/Bible/Biblewhen.htm>.

Dead Sea Scrolls lies in the ability of Biblical scholars to compare them with the Massoretic Hebrew texts of the tenth century AD.

A close comparison of the Dead Sea manuscript of Isaiah with the Massoretic text of Isaiah (a 1,000 year time difference) revealed them to be extremely close in accuracy to each other. A comparison of Isaiah 53, for example, shows that only 17 letters differ between the two texts.

Ten of these are mere differences in spelling (like our *'honor'* and the English *'honour'*) and produce no change in the meaning at all. Four more are very minor differences, such as the presence of the conjunction *'and'* which are stylistic rather than substantive. The other three letters spell the Hebrew word for 'light.' This word was added to the text by someone after [the clause] *'he shall see'* in verse 11 (see NIV). Out of 166 words in this chapter, only this one word is really in question, and it does not at all change the meaning of the passage. Biblical scholars tell us that this is typical of the whole manuscript of Isaiah.

This is, no doubt, because of the process the Scribes used to translate their Holy Scriptures. When the Old Testament Scrolls were starting to get old and worn out the Jewish scribes would make new ones. As previously stated there are 24,000 original manuscript copies of the New Testament. The reason that we do not have more Old Testament Manuscripts is that after the Jews copied them from the old copy to the new copy, the old manuscript was destroyed. The scribes were very confident of their copies, and after they were done, they were held in higher authority than the original.

To show you how meticulous they were when translating them, consider this:

- The manuscripts could only be copied onto the skins of kosher animals.
- The copyist had to be in full Jewish dress while he was translating the texts.
- If he was writing God's name and someone entered the room, the copyist could not even acknowledge them until he had finished writing the name of God.
- Between each letter there had to be a space the exact width of a hair (no more, no less): if not the copyist had to throw away what he had done and start all over from the beginning.
- Once the copying was completed, every letter was counted to be sure no errors were made. The copy was then given higher authority and the old document was destroyed.²

Section Summary

So, just from the manuscript evidence and textual criticism alone, we can be confident that the Bible we hold in our hand today is an accurate representation of what happened thousands of years ago.

Many scholars have correctly stated that if we do not accept the facts written in the Bible then we should not accept anything from history. The bottom line is that the New Testament has an overwhelming amount of manuscript evidence supporting its reliability.

But there is more, the next section discusses the writings from outside the Bible.

¹ Little, Paul; *Know Why You Believe*; Intersity Press; 1970; p 62.

² McDowell, *Evidence That Demands a Verdict*, p 53.

Writings Outside the Bible: Evidence #3

As has just been demonstrated, there is an incredible amount of manuscript evidence supporting the Bible's truthfulness, but there are also other writings outside the Bible that affirm the eyewitness account and confirm its accuracy.

Clement was a leading elder in the church at Rome. In his epistle (letter) to the Corinthians (AD 95), he cites passages from Matthew, Mark, and Luke, and introduces them as the "actual words of Jesus."¹ (Clement, incidentally, was called by Origen in *De Principis* 'a disciple of the apostles' (themselves eyewitnesses of Jesus Christ).²

Papias, the bishop of Hierapolis in Phrygia and author of *Exposition of Oracles of the Lord* (AD 130), cites the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. He specifically refers to John's Gospel as "containing the words of Jesus."³

The Seven Epistles of Ignatius (AD 110-117) contain quotes from Matthew, John, Acts, Romans, First Corinthians, Ephesians, Philippians, Galatians, Colossians, First and Second Thessalonians, First and Second Timothy, James and First Peter.

Polycarp, a disciple of John, quotes passages from Matthew, Mark, and Luke, refers to them "as the actual words of Jesus."⁴

Ireneaus, a disciple of Polycarp, quotes from 23 of the 27 New Testament books, omitting only Philemon, James, 2 Peter, and 3 John.⁵

Clement, Papias, Ignatius, Polycarp, Ireneaus, and many others validate the first century dating, the primary-source value, and the theology of the New Testament.

Granted these are Christian sources, but there are many non-Christian sources that testify of the truths portrayed in the Bible as well. This invalidates the argument that posits the theory that only Christian sources testify about Jesus. The following are all non-Christian references.

The Roman Historian: Tacitus

Tacitus was a Roman historian living during the time of Jesus. His *Annals*, written about 115 AD, mention the emperor Nero's persecution of the followers of Christ in Rome in 64AD - the year of the great fire. There were suspicions that the emperor himself had started the fire. This is what Tacitus writes:

To dispel the rumor, Nero substituted as culprits, and treated with the most extreme punishments, some people, popularly known as Christians.... The originator of that name, Christus [Jesus Christ], had been executed when Tiberius was emperor, by order of the procurator Pontius Pilatus. But the deadly cult, though checked for a time, was now breaking out again not only in Judea, the birthplace of this evil, but even throughout Rome, where all the nasty and disgusting ideas from all over the world pour in and find a ready following (Annals 15:44).

Although not very flattering to Christians, notice the following points from Tacitus:

- Christ not only existed but was executed while Tiberis was emperor (14-37 AD),
- He was executed by order of Pontius Pilate (procurator from 26-36 AD),
- Christianity had its origins in Judea,
- There were enough followers of Christ in Rome by AD 64 to be made scapegoats by the emperor Nero.

¹ Rhodes, Ron; *Answering The Objections of Atheists, Agnostics, & Skeptics*; Harvest House Publishers; 2006; p 132.

² Book II, Chapter 3

³ Rhodes, Ron; *Answering The Objections of Atheists, Agnostics, & Skeptics*; p 133.

⁴ *ibid.*

⁵ *ibid.*

The Roman Governor: Pliny

Pliny was the governor of the Roman province of Bithynia, in present-day Turkey. In about 112 AD he wrote to the emperor Trajan asking for advice on how to deal with the followers of Christ in his province because he was executing so many of them. In Epistles X.96 Pliny wrote:

They were in the habit of meeting before dawn on a fixed day. They would recite in alternate verse a hymn to Christ as to a god, and would bind themselves by a solemn oath, not to do any criminal act, but rather that they would not commit any fraud, theft or adultery, nor betray any trust nor refuse to restore a deposit on demand. This done, they would disperse, and then they would meet again later to eat together (but the food was quite ordinary and harmless).

Notice from what Pliny says that:

- By the beginning of the second century, there was already a Christian community in Bithynia large enough to come to the attention of the Roman governor,
- They practiced the teachings of Christ and were honorable people,
- They worshipped Christ as God.

The Babylonian Talmud

The Talmuds were Rabbinic commentaries on the Jewish scriptures (the Old Testament). Of course, the Jews were not overly sympathetic to the heretical new religion that Jesus founded. Nevertheless, in Sanhedrin, 43A we read a fascinating reference to Jesus' existence, His supernatural ministry and His crucifixion:

On the eve of Passover they hanged Yeshu [Jesus]. And an announcer went out in front of him for forty days, saying: 'He is going to be stoned, because he practiced sorcery and enticed and led Israel astray. Anyone who knows anything in his favor, let him come and plead in his behalf.' But not having found anything in his favor, they hanged him on the eve of *Passover*.

(One version of this text even says 'Yeshu the Nazarene'.)

There are of course, some differences here from what the Gospels describe. (Note: When this kind of discrepancy arises, critics have a remarkable tendency to believe that it is the Gospels that are wrong and the other document that is right, rather than vice versa - even though the documentary evidence for the Gospel account, as we have just seen, is much stronger.)

Despite the discrepancies, notice that:

- 'Yeshu the Nazarene' is described as someone who engaged in sorcery. This is a typical way Jewish writers accounted for the miracles of Jesus,
- He was put to death,
- His death took place at the time of the Passover,
- His death was by 'hanging' - which was often used by Jews to describe crucifixion - see Luke 3:39, and Galatians 3:13.

There are various other passages in the Talmuds as well.¹

The Jewish historian Flavius Josephus

Flavius Josephus was a Jewish historian who wrote around the end of the first century. He wrote the twenty-six volume "*Antiquities of the Jews*" among other things. *Antiquities of the Jews* covers the whole of history up to 66 AD. In his writings, Josephus mentions the Pharisees, the Sadducees, and the Herodians. He mentions Caiaphas, Pontius Pilate, John the Baptist, Jesus, and James the brother of Jesus and a number of other things related to Christianity as well. In book 18 chapter 3 paragraph 3 of *Antiquities* the text says:

About this time there lived Jesus, a wise man, if indeed it is lawful to call him a man, for he was a performer of wonderful deeds, a teacher of such men as are happy to accept the truth. He won over many of the Jews and many of the Gentiles. He was the Christ, and when Pilate, at the suggestion of the leading men among us, had condemned him to the cross, those who had loved him at the first did not forsake him; for he appeared to them alive again on the third

¹ See Josh McDowell; *Evidence that demands a Verdict*; 1994; updated 1999.

day, as the prophets of God had foretold these and ten thousand other wonders about him. And the tribe of Christians, so named from him, are not extinct to this day.

Some skeptics and liberal theologians have said that it seems unlikely that an Orthodox Jew such as Josephus who, apparently, never converted to Christianity, would have written some of the statements in this passage and suggest that the Christians may have altered it. The main points of contention are the clauses, “He was the Messiah,” “if it be lawful to call him a man,” and “He appeared to them alive on the third day.” However there is strong evidence from ancient manuscript evidence that this was in the original. “It is present in all the extant ancient manuscripts and was quoted by the early church fathers, such as Eusebius, as early as 325 C.E.”¹

However, even without the possible alterations, notice what this passage tells us about Jesus:

- He was a real historical person,
- He was a teacher,
- He was a performer of wonderful deeds (i.e. miracles),
- He was crucified by Pilate,
- He founded a new religion and gathered a band of followers (i.e. Christians), who continued to follow him after his death.

And if you include the disputed passages, which, because of the evidence, I think should be done, you can add:

- Jesus was the Messiah,
- After his crucifixion and burial, He rose from the dead three days after He was buried.

Moreover, there is a second reference to Jesus in the works of Josephus. In *Antiquities* 20.200, he describes how, in 62 AD, the high priest Ananus was deposed because he had illegally convened the Sanhedrin (the highest Jewish religious court). It says:

He had brought before them the brother of Jesus the so-called Christ, who was called James, and some other men, whom he accused of having broken the law, and handed them over to be stoned.

Notice the following points from this brief quotation:

- Jesus had a brother called James,
- James was executed by the Jewish leaders in 62 AD,
- There were claims that Jesus was the Messiah (“*Jesus the so-called Christ*”).

In this section I only mentioned a few written sources outside the Bible who wrote about Jesus and events of the New Testament, but in *Jesus: The Complete Story*² we are told there are “Eighty first and second century sources which testify of Jesus.”

¹ Eastman, Mark, Missler, Chuck; *Search for Messiah*; Word for Today; 1996; p 242.

² BBC Warner; 2004.

Archeology: Evidence #4

Archeology, another piece of objective evidence, can do one of three things:

1. It might *disprove* something in the biblical documents. (However, there is *no known case* where archaeology decisively disproves anything in the Bible. In fact, it confirms the Biblical record over and over again, as we shall see).
2. It could provide *direct confirmation* of what the Bible says. (It does this).
3. It can provide *background information* that helps us understand what the Biblical documents say. (It does this too).

There is a growing mass of evidence from archaeology that confirms the Bible's truth.¹

Confirming the Truth of the Matter.

In trying to determine if a witness is being truthful, lawyers will often test all the elements of his or her testimony that can be tested. If the investigation reveals that the person was wrong in those details, it casts considerable doubt on the veracity of their entire story. However, if the minutiae check out, this is a good indication that the witness is being reliable in their overall account.

For instance, if someone were telling about a trip they took from Seattle, Washington, to Tijuana, Mexico, and mentioned that they had stopped in San Diego, to see the movie Titanic at the Mission Valley Theater and that they had eaten a large Mars bar they bought at the concession counter, investigators could determine whether such a theater exists in San Diego as well as if it was showing this particular film and selling this specific brand and size of candy bar at the time they said they were there. If the investigators findings contradicted what the person claimed, it would seriously tarnish their trustworthiness. However, if the details checked out, it would not "prove" that their *entire* story was true of course, but it would significantly enhance their trustworthiness and reputation for being accurate.

This is partly what archaeology accomplishes. The premise is that if an ancient historian's incidental details check out to be accurate time after time, it greatly increases our confidence in other material that the historian wrote but which cannot be as readily crosschecked.

QUESTION: Does archaeology affirm or undermine the New Testament when it checks out the details in those accounts?

ANSWER: Without a doubt, it affirms it; there is no question that the credibility of the New Testament is greatly enhanced by archeology.

Middle Eastern archaeological investigations have shown the Bible to be true and unerringly accurate in its historical descriptions again and again ad infinitum. Dr. William Albright, who was not a friend of Christianity, but was probably the foremost authority in Middle East archaeology in his time, wrote: "*There can be no doubt that archaeology has confirmed the substantial historicity of the Old Testament.*"² Nelson Glueck, a renowned Jewish archaeologist, has stated, "*No archaeological discovery has ever contradicted a biblical reference.*"³ These are two very powerful (but true, as we will see) truth-affirming statements. But archaeologist Dr. Bryant Wood goes even further when he says, "*In every instance where the findings of archaeology pertain to the Biblical record, the archaeological evidence confirms, sometimes in detailed fashion, the historical accuracy of Scripture.*" He goes on to say, "*In those instances where the archaeological findings seem to be at variance with the Bible, the discrepancy lies with the archaeological evidence, i.e., improper interpretation, lack of evidence, etc. -- not with the Bible.*"⁴

¹ For example, see <http://www.facingthechallenge.org/arch.htm> (you can link to it from www.emjc3.com)

² William F. Albright; *Archaeology and the Religion of Israel*; Baltimore; John Hopkins; 1953; 176.

³ Nelson Glueck; *Rivers in the Desert: A History of the Negev*; Farrar, Strauss, and Cudahy, 1959; 31.

⁴ Dr. Bryant C. Wood, archaeologist, *Associates for Biblical Research*.

Often we find the Biblical record of historical events contradicted by traditional secular scholarship, only to have subsequent archaeological discoveries later vindicate the Biblical historical record.

Nineveh. For example, the history of Nineveh, the capital of the Assyrian Empire, at one time was regarded as a myth by some scholars who denied even the existence of this ancient city. That was until 1849 when the Nineveh ruins were discovered, thus validating the Biblical accounts. Many other discoveries follow this pattern as well.¹

Ancient Babylon. A similar situation occurred in regard to ancient Babylon. The Biblical description of the fall of Babylon in Daniel chapter five was at substantial variance with traditional scholarship until subsequent discoveries proved the Bible correct.²

The Hittites. This also happened with the discovery of the Hittite civilization. For many years the existence of the Hittites, a powerful people who lived at the time of Abraham (Genesis 23:10-20), was questioned because no evidence of them had ever been found. Critics claimed they were a myth. Secular skeptics would mock the Christian scholars and laugh: *Hey, found the Hittites yet? ha ha ha.* They no longer do this however. In fact, you can now go to the University of Chicago and get a doctorate in Hittite Studies.³

I just love it when skeptics point out *apparent* contradictions in the Bible; I say apparent because, upon investigation, they always get cleared up.

Luke's Accuracy as a Historian

Luke wrote both the Gospel that bares his name and the book of Acts. Combined, these two books constitute more than a quarter of the New Testament. So if we want a precise view of what they depict, it is very important that they are accurate. When archaeologists check out the details of what Luke wrote, what do they find? Was he a historian who could be trusted to get the facts right or not?

A general consensus of both liberal and conservative scholars is that Luke is very accurate as a historian. He is knowledgeable, he is eloquent, his Greek approaches classical quality, he writes as an educated man, and archaeological discoveries have shown over and over again that Luke is meticulously accurate in what he has to say. Josh McDowell calls Luke one of the most accurate historians of all time. Within these two books the author is very specific with reference to historical data: including persons, places, and titles. In fact, in the first verse of Luke chapter three, there are fifteen historical references that can be verified. Luke 3:1 reads as follows: "Now in the fifteenth year (1) of the reign of Tiberius Caesar (2), Pontius Pilate (3) being governor (4) of Judaea (5), and Herod (6) being tetrarch (7) of Galilee (8), and his brother Philip (9) tetrarch (10) of the region of Ituraea and Trachonitis (11 & 12), and Lysanias (13) was tetrarch (14) of Abilene (15)."⁴ Is it any wonder that E. M. Blaiklock, professor of classics at Auckland University concludes that "Luke is a consummate historian to be ranked in his own right with the great writers of the Greeks."⁴ Similarly, historian and author, F. F. Bruce wrote, "A man whose accuracy can be demonstrated in matters where we are able to test, is likely to be accurate in matters where testing is not available... Luke's record entitles him to be regarded as a writer of habitual accuracy."⁵

There have been many instances in which scholars initially thought Luke was wrong in a particular reference only to have later discoveries confirm that he was correct in what he wrote. For instance, in Luke 3:1 he refers to Lysanias being the tetrarch (governor) of Abilene in 27 AD. For years critics pointed to this as evidence that Luke did not know what he was talking about, be-

¹ Missler, Chuck; *Prophecy 20/20: Profiling the Future Through the Lens of Scripture*; Thomas Nelson; 2006; p29.

² Ibid.

³ Rhodes, Ron; *Answering The Objections of Atheists, Agnostics, & Skeptics*; Harvest House Publishers; 2006; p 130.

⁴ McDowell, Josh; *Christianity: Hoax or History*, Tyndale House Publishers; 1989; p 60.

⁵ McDowell, Josh; *The Resurrection Factor*; Here's Life Publishers; 1981, p 34.

cause, they said, Lysanias was not a tetrarch of Abilene but rather the ruler of Chalcis half a century earlier. If Luke cannot get the basic facts right, they suggested, then nothing he has written could be trusted. Well, that's when archaeology stepped in. Archaeologists found an inscription from the time of Tiberius (14 to 37 AD), which names Lysanias as tetrarch in Abila near Damascus - just as Luke had written. It turned out there had been two government officials named Lysanias! Luke (once again) was shown to be exactly right.¹

Another example is Luke's reference in Acts 17:6 to politarchs (translated as "city officials" by the NIV) in the city of Thessalonica. For a long time critics thought Luke was mistaken, because no evidence of the term 'politarchs' had been found in any ancient Roman documents. However, an inscription on a first-century arch was later found that begins, 'In the time of the politarchs...' You can go to the British Museum and see it for yourself. In fact, archaeologists have found more than thirty-five inscriptions that mention politarchs, many of them in Thessalonica from the same period Luke was referring to. Once again the critics were wrong and Luke was shown to be right.²

Some skeptics have pointed out that in Luke 18:45 it says that Jesus was walking into Jericho when he healed the blind man Bartimaeus, while Mark 10:46 says He was coming out of Jericho. They insist this a clear-cut contradiction that casts doubt on the reliability of the whole New Testament?" However, the turn of the archeologists spade revealed a different story. A German archeologist named Ernest Sellin, working on an excavation in Israel in 1907 discovered that there were actually two Jericho's in Jesus time. An old Jericho (from the Old Testament story of Joshua) and a new Roman city of Jericho. The two cities, both called Jericho, were separated from one another by about a mile. Problem solved! No contradiction. They were both right. Jesus healed the blind man while He traveled between the two cities. Approaching Luke's Jericho, but leaving Mark's Jericho.³ Again, when there are *apparent* contradictions in the Bible, upon investigation, they always get cleared up. Always.

In Luke's second volume, the book of Acts, the Apostle Paul traveled in the eastern Roman Empire preaching and teaching for more than a dozen years. Luke provides us with a complex and detailed narrative of those journeys. He tells us about local political boundaries and titles. Luke describes the social characteristics of cities and provinces. He tells us about the distances traveled on land and on sea, and reveals how long it took to cover those distances. He describes Paul's arrests and trials, and details legal maneuverings in different jurisdictions. He tells of Paul's dealings with individuals who also appear in pagan and Jewish historical sources.

Indeed, Luke is astonishingly accurate when recording the political, social, and legal details of the cities and provinces of the eastern Roman Empire. His accuracy becomes even more impressive when we discover that many of those details were true only in the middle decades of the first century, the era of Paul's travels.⁴

Luke mentions 32 countries, 54 cities, and 9 Mediterranean islands; he also lists 95 people by name, 62 of whom are not named elsewhere in the New Testament.⁵ Time after time Luke has been accurate. Now, if Luke was so painstakingly accurate in his historical reporting, then there is no logical basis to assume he was inaccurate in his reporting of matters that were far more important, not only to him but to others as well. In theological matters: what Jesus taught, who He was, and what He did. And, in matters like the resurrection of Jesus, the most influential evidence of his deity, which Luke says was firmly established by "*many infallible proofs*" as has been previously pointed out in the '*Manuscript Section*.'

The accuracy you find in Luke and Acts is typical of the whole Bible too. In fact, archaeologists regularly use the Bible to find their dig sites.

¹ Strobel, Lee; *The Case For Christ*, Zondervan; 1998; pg 97.

² Strobel; *Case For Christ*, pg. 98.

³ Campbell, Charlie; *One Minute Answers To Skeptics' Top Forty Questions*; Aquintas Publishing; pg53-54.

⁴ Jefferson White; *Evidence & Paul's Journeys*; Parsagard Press; 2001; p 2

⁵ Metzger, Bruce; *The New Testament: Its Background, Growth, Content*; p. 171.

The book *Evidence & Paul's Journeys*, by Jefferson White,¹ is an excellent book confirming archeological evidence supporting the Bible's truthfulness. White describes the archaeological evidence for:

- Sergius Paulus, the governor or proconsul, of Cyprus (p 11),
- Gallio, the proconsul of the Roman province of Achaia (p 33),
- Erastus, the city treasurer of Corinth (p 38),
- Demetrius, the silversmith of Ephesus (p 40),
- The Asiarchs who governed Ephesus (p 41),
- The temple barrier in Jerusalem (p 47),

and many other discoveries. He explains how it all fits with what the Bible says.

White also describes how the book of Acts' description of Paul's arrest in Jerusalem, and subsequent trials at Caesarea fit in with the known facts of history. He writes: "Throughout the narrative of Paul's Judean arrest and trial, Luke refers to a number of people and events whose existence and relationships are confirmed by the secular histories of the time" (p 63).

The book has a detailed chapter describing the nautical evidence relating to Paul's shipwreck on Malta (pgs 66-82). It also deals in-depth with the problem of reconciling Luke's account of Paul's travels in Acts with Paul's own account of his movements in Galatians chapter two.

White's overall conclusion is: *The Acts account of Paul's journeys is as reliable as we may expect history to be. So far as it can be tested by objective evidence, Acts has proved to be an astonishingly accurate record of events* (pg 134, emphasis mine). Again, if the Bible's incidental details check out to be accurate time after time, this increases our confidence in other material that cannot be as readily crosschecked.

I would recommend *Evidence & Paul's Journeys* for anyone who wants to understand the reliability of the historical accounts in the New Testament. Chapter after chapter, for 168 pages, White basically writes: "the Bible says...and this is what archeologists find," "the Bible says... and this is what archeologists find," "the Bible says... and this is what archeologists find."

The Bible simply is incredibly accurate. Which, by the way, is what you would expect if its source were a transcendent, all-powerful, all-knowledgeable God.

Another good book in this area is *The Historical Jesus: Ancient Evidence for the Life of Christ* by Gary R. Habermas. Habermas – a scholar and theologian - often debates with top atheists who cannot counter his arguments. He shows the difference between honest literary/historical investigation and biased proclamations. He is not afraid to take on skeptics, meeting their hypotheses head-on. He not only details opposing viewpoints, but provides heavily footnoted sources to back up his argument that Jesus is a real person – the Son of God -whose historical life is reported with so much evidence that it is hard to ignore.

There are probably more than a thousand good books regarding the archeological accuracy of the Bible – no exaggeration.

Other Religious Books

This isn't the case with other religious books. Many scholars and laymen, for example, have searched the history of the Americas for evidence that the Book of Mormon is true, as has similarly been done in the Middle East with the Bible. While the Bible has proven itself accurate through archaeological findings over and over again ad infinitum, evidence for claims made in The Book of Mormon continue to be largely non-existent.

According to the Smithsonian Institution of Washington, D.C., the following items (which, according to the *Book of Mormon*, existed in the Americas between 600 B.C. and 421 AD) have absolutely no evidence of existing during the time in question: silk, horses, steel, iron, coins, don-

¹ Parsagard Press; Jan, 2001.

keys, cattle, oxen, pigs, grain and wheat. If *The Book of Mormon* were true, certainly *some* evidence for these items would have been unearthed by modern-day archeologists.

Has the Mormon Church uncovered even a single coin as mentioned in the book of Alma? No, nor have *any* of the items been found.¹ None of the things are there which, according to the Book of Mormon, are supposed to be there. None of the geography (valleys, lakes, rivers, and hills), none of the empires (no trace of any city, town, or civilization) have been found. Nothing.²

Compare this with the Bible. In 2000 years, there has not been one single archeological discovery disproving anything in the Bible. In fact, “there have been more than 25,000 archeological discoveries that have verified the names of persons, places, events, and customs mentioned in the Bible.”³

The Bottom Line About Biblical Archaeology

To summarize this section, listen to the following two quotes: Dr Clifford Wilson, formerly director of the Australian Institute of Archaeology, has said: “*I know of no finding in archaeology that’s properly confirmed which is in opposition to the Scriptures. The Bible is the most accurate history textbook the world has ever seen.*”⁴ This is the verbiage Chuck Missler uses when he writes, “*The Bible is the most accurate account of history known to man.*”⁵ “The most accurate history textbook the world has ever seen,” or “the most accurate account of history known to man.” Think about that for a moment, and then try and tell me that the Bible is just a book written by men.

But that’s not all. The Bible exhibits scientific foreknowledge that is almost uncanny. We will explore this next.

¹ See <http://christiananswers.net/q-cc/cc-archaeology.html>

² Johnson, Scott, Kramer, Joel; *The Bible vs. The Book of Mormon*; Oct, 2005

³ Campbell, Charlie; *One Minute Answers to Skeptics’ Top Forty Questions*; Aquintas Publishing; 2005; p 30; also see: Rhodes, Ron; *Answering The Objections of Atheists, Agnostics, & Skeptics*; Harvest House Publishers; 2006; p 130.

⁴ ICR radio transcript No. 0279–1004

⁵ Missler, Chuck; *Prophecy 20/20*; Thomas Nelson publishers; 2006; p 132.

Scientific Accuracy: Evidence #5

Another piece of evidence that demonstrates the Bible's truthfulness is the scientific foreknowledge contained within its pages. Personally, I love science, so the scientific foreknowledge the Bible exhibits is fascinating to me. Yet, probably the most significant reason for the widespread rebellion against traditional values in every realm – social, moral, political, educational, and religious – is the commonly held impression that the Biblical principals have been outdated by the discoveries of modern science. Many people often have the impression that numerous scientific fallacies exist within the pages of Scripture and only uneducated or gullible people believe in the Bible. However, as we will see, this belief is ill founded and misplaced. A closer study of historical facts shows that when the Biblical text is carefully examined one will quickly discover an uncanny scientific accuracy unparalleled by any document of antiquity.

The steady progress of technology has not undermined the Bible's scientific accuracy at all. Not a single scientific fact or discovery has ever disproved a Biblical statement. On the contrary, the Bible has actually shown itself to be accurate countless times. If you think that you have to turn off the intellectual part of your brain in order to be a Christian then you're wrong. In fact, the opposite is true.

Many, if not all, of the major branches of science were founded by Bible believing Christians. Five of the greatest physicists in history: Newton, Faraday, Thompson, Maxwell and Einstein all believed in a Creator God. I think *The Wall Street Journal* put it best when it declared, "If a little science takes one away from God, a great deal of science brings one back to God."¹ W.E. Gladstone said it this way: "I have known ninety-five of the world's great men in my time, and eighty-seven were followers of the Bible." Gregory Koukl is correct when he wrote, "Part of the reason for the apparent scientific contradictions [between the Bible and modern science] have to do not with scientific facts, but with scientific *interpretations* [of those facts]."²

The Bible does not use scientific jargon nor is it a scientific text per se, but the Bible does describe scientific phenomena in common terminology with unmistakable clarity. Just some of these truths include:

- A finite universe (Genesis 1:1)
- An expanding universe (Psalm 104:2, Isaiah 40:22, Jeremiah 10:12 and elsewhere)
- A universe that is winding down and wearing out (Psalm 102:26 and elsewhere)
- The spherical shape of the Earth (Isaiah 40:22)
- The Earth floats in space (Job. 26:7)
- The stars are innumerable (Jeremiah 33:22)
- The existence of valleys and mountains in the seas (Jonah 2:6 et al)
- The existence of springs and fountains in the sea (Genesis. 7:11; 8:2; Proverbs. 8:28)
- The existence of paths (ocean currents) in the seas (Psalm 8:8)
- The water cycle (Job. 26:8; 36:27-28; 37:16; 38:25-27; Psalm. 135:7; Ecclesiastes. 1:6-7)
- The fact that all living things reproduce after their own kind (Genesis. 1:21; 6:19)
- The nature of health, hygiene, sanitation and sickness (Genesis. 17:9-14; Leviticus. 12-14)

I will touch on all these points (but please note, this barely skims the surface).

The Bible Contains No Inaccurate Myths

In *Creator Beyond Time and Space*, Mark Eastman points out many parallels between what is written in the Bible and what has been discovered by scientists in the last century. On page 105 he says, "the reader will discover that where the Bible speaks on scientific issues it is **one-hundred percent accurate** [emphasis mine]." (Not just mostly accurate, but 100% accurate,

¹ October 10, 1994

² Is The Bible Authoritative, <http://www.str.org>

wow). Furthermore, he says that in virtually all other religious books (excluding the Bible) it is common to find scientifically inaccurate myths about the physical universe and the life forms on planet Earth. The Koran, for example, says “that (1) the stars are really missiles used by angels to shoot demons, (2) that human embryos go through a ‘blood clot’ stage, (3) that people used to be 90 feet tall, (4) that the sun sets in a pool of murky water, and (5) that ants can talk.”¹

Eastman says that what is unique to the Bible is that not only are there no inaccuracies, but that the Bible is astonishingly accurate time and time again. He concludes that this is proof that the writers who penned it must have had supernatural inside information.² This validates the Bible as being the one-and-only true Word of God.

The Bible’s description of the universe itself is amazingly accurate. The Bible describes a finite universe, an expanding universe, and a universe where everything is running down and wearing out, among other things.

A Finite Universe

There are really only two possibilities for the origin and existence of our universe: either it is eternal, or it had a beginning. For thousands of years the accepted paradigm was that the universe was eternal. However, in the last hundred years staggering scientific discoveries have led astronomers to conclude that the universe is not eternal. The evidence is in: virtually all scientists agree that the motion of galaxies, the background radiation, proton decay, and the second law of thermodynamics (the fact that the universe is winding down and wearing out), among other things, all demonstrate why it can not be eternal – it had a beginning. In *The Nature of Time And Space* (1996), scientists Stephen Hawking and Roger Penrose state, “almost everyone now believes that the universe, and even time itself, had a beginning.”³

The obvious implication is that if the universe had a beginning, how did it begin? Either a force outside our space-time domain created it, or it created itself. That it created itself not only defies logic, it is contrary to every law of physics and science that we know of. Matter cannot create itself – nothing can. The only other option is that it was created. Of course, the Bible says that God was the ‘force’ that created the Earth, the universe and everything in it. In Genesis 1:1 we read “*In the beginning God created the heaven and the Earth.*”

In his book *Journey to the Stars*, NASA astronomer, Robert Jastrow, a self-described agnostic, stated that twentieth century evidence for a finite universe was something anticipated by the Bible thousands of years ago. “*Most remarkable of all,*” says Jastrow, “*astronomers have found proof that the universe sprang into existence abruptly, in a sudden moment of creation, just as the Bible said it had*” (emphasis mine).⁴

The beginning and origin of the universe, then, is strong evidence for the existence of God. For more on the origin of the universe see www.emjc3.com/universeorigin.htm.

An Expanding Universe

That the universe is finite is only part of the story. Not only do we live in a finite universe, but we also live in an expanding universe. It was once thought that galaxies were just rotating in space. However, scientists have discovered that galaxies are moving away from each other at millions of miles per hour.⁵ This however is also consistent with the Bible. Psalm 104:2 says, “*He [God] stretches out the heavens,*” Isaiah 44:20 says, “*He [God] stretches out the heavens like a canopy, and spreads them out like a tent to live in,*” (also see Isaiah 45:12, 51:13, Jeremiah

¹ Wood, David; *Comparing The Best Arguments for Islam and Christianity*; http://www.answering-islam.org/Authors/Wood/best_argument.htm

² Word for Today; Costa Mesa, CA; 1996; pgs 105-106.

³ Rhodes, Ron; *Answering the Objections of Atheists, Agnostics, and Skeptics*; Harvest House; 2006; p 52.

⁴ Jastrow, Robert; *Journey to the Stars*; Bantam Books; 1989; pg 43.

⁵ Rhodes, *Answering the Objections of Atheists, Agnostics, and Skeptics*; p 59.

10:12, 51:15, et al). “Stretching out the heavens” is not just poetic speech but an actual physical phenomenon. The universe is “expanding from a central point of origin like an inflating balloon.”¹

However, in attempt to avoid having to acknowledge a Creator God, scientists have dubbed the creation and expansion of the universe a result of an explosion – they call it the “Big Bang.” But there are many problems with this hypothesis. What caused the explosion? Where did the matter come from, where did the order come from, why are planets spinning in different directions? and many other things too! See, “*Why The Big-Bang Fizzles*” at www.emjc3.com, and “*Its about Entropy not Evolution*” also at www.emjc3.com.

A Universe That is Wearing Out

Not only is it expanding, but the universe is also wearing out and winding down, just like the Bible says. One way physicists know this is by studying protons. Protons are positively charged particles that reside in the nucleus of every atom. What scientists now know is that protons break down and decay into quarks which themselves decay into antiquarks, pions, positive electrons, and electromagnetic radiation. This decay process occurs very slowly, but is **irreversible**.²

Furthermore, our sun is basically a giant fireball burning tons of fuel per second. It cannot go on forever. Eventually it (and every star in the universe) will burn out.³

Yet it is elucidated in the Scriptures thousands of years ago. In Psalm 102: 25-26 (and elsewhere) it says, “*In the beginning You laid the foundations of the Earth...they will perish, but You remain; they will all wear out like a garment.*” The book of Psalms, written thousands of years ago, tells us what scientists have only recently discovered. Could this be a telltale sign of the Bible’s divine origin? Yes, I think so.

The Spherical Shape of the Earth.

For much of Earth’s history, certainly while the Bible was penned, it was thought that the Earth was Flat. However Job 22:14 says, “*Thick clouds cover Him, so that He cannot see, and He walks above the circle of heaven.*” And Isaiah 40:21-22 says, “*Have ye not known... have ye not understood from the foundations of the Earth? It is He that sitteth upon the circle of the Earth...*” We now know the truth of these statements. The Earth is a sphere, just like Isaiah and Job said it was. How did they know that? The Bible, once again, demonstrates that its origin came from outside our time and space.

The Earth is Floating in Space.

Throughout the centuries philosophers, theologians and scientists have speculated about the resting-place of planet Earth. Upon what or whom the Earth is resting became an important part of mythology in many ancient cultures. To the ancient Greeks the candidates were Atlas or Hercules. The Hindus believed that elephants or turtles were the pillars upon which the Earth rested. Only the Bible describes that the Earth is suspended in space. In the book of Job we read: “*He stretches out the north over empty space; He hangs the Earth on nothing*” (Job 26:7). When we consider that twenty-eight centuries ago the prevailing view of the Earth was that it was flat and resting on the back of an animal or a Greek god, the Biblical view of a spherical Earth suspended on nothing is astonishing. A good guess? I think not, rather, I believe it evinces the supernatural origin for the text.

¹ Boa, Kenneth, et al; *Twenty Compelling Evidences That God Exists: Discover Why Believing In God Makes So Much Sense*; Cook Communications; 2005; p 36.

² Eastman, Mark; *Creator Beyond Time and Space*; Word for Today; Costa Mesa, CA; 1996; pg. 12.

³ Boa; *Twenty Compelling Evidences That God Exists...*; p 39.

The Stars Are Innumerable.

At the time the Bible was penned (1,500 BC. to 100 AD.) there were no telescopes to aid in the study of the cosmos. On a clear night, unencumbered by the light of the moon, about 3,000-4,000 stars could be seen with the unaided eye. Yet in the eighth century B.C. God told the prophet Jeremiah that their were so many stars they could not be numbered: "*As the host of heaven cannot be numbered, nor the sand of the sea measured...*" (Jeremiah 33:22). When Jeremiah wrote this verse there was no way he could have known that the stars were innumerable. In fact, as evidenced by the many star charts that were done prior to the advent of the telescope, astronomers once believed that it *was* possible to number the stars.

Today astronomers now estimate that there are at least 100 billion stars in our Milky Way galaxy, and 100 billion galaxies in the universe. For anyone to count the total number of stars would literally be an impossible task. In fact, counting at a rate of ten stars a second it would take over 100 trillion years to count them. Surely the "*host of heaven*" cannot be numbered just as Jeremiah stated! Even that assumes we can see them all. Surly there are galaxies beyond the reach of our telescopes.

Paths and Currents in the Seas.

In 1855 Matthew Fontaine Maury (1806-1873), who is known as the "Father of Oceanography," published a book on his remarkable discovery that the oceans possess predictable currents and paths. He encouraged the use of shipping lanes to increase efficiency and decrease the number of accidents. Eventually, Maury was dubbed "Pathfinder of the Seas." In the book, *Matthew Fontaine Maury: Pathfinder of the Seas*,¹ C.L. Lewis recounts the entire story.

Though Maury's discovery was indeed important to his time, it was hardly a new revelation. Nearly twenty-eight centuries earlier the psalmist wrote, "*the fish of the sea that pass through the paths of the seas*" (Psalm 8:8). It is echoed by the prophet Isaiah who wrote, "*Thus says the LORD, who makes a way in the sea and a path through the mighty waters*" (Isaiah 43:16).

When these verses were written (Approximately 1100-703 B.C.) the only seas known to the ancient Hebrews were the Mediterranean and Red Seas as well as the large inland lakes (The Dead Sea and the Sea of Galilee). None of these bodies of water possess significant observable currents. Furthermore, at that time there was no empirical knowledge of shipping lanes or "paths in the seas." Matthew Maury's discovery was based on observational data collected from the fifteenth to nineteenth centuries A.D., thousands of years after the psalmist penned that very concept. In fact, the story is that Maury got the very idea from reading the Scriptures to his grandfather.

Valleys and Mountains in the Seas.

Until modern times people thought the ocean floor was sandy like the desert, and saucer shaped—deepest in the middle. But in the 1900s oceanographers found the sea had many deep valleys, canyons and mountains. The deepest canyons are called trenches. The Marianas Trench in the Pacific is so deep that if Mt. Everest, 29,000 feet high (about 5.5 miles), was dropped into it, the peak would still be a mile below the water's surface. There are also underwater mountains. The Atlantic Ocean contains an undersea mountain range 10,000 miles long – the Mid Atlantic Ridge.

Yet three-thousand years ago the Judeo-Christian Bible spoke of the valleys and mountains in the sea. In Psalm 18:15 David wrote of God being the creator of "*the valleys of the sea.*" God asked Job (38:16): "*Have you walked in the recesses [valleys] of the sea?*" The prophet Jonah was thrown off a ship and spoke of falling to the bottom of the mountains in the sea: "*I [Jonah] went down to the bottoms of the mountains*" (Jonah 2:6). Indeed, the Bible is the inspired Word of God.

¹ AMS Press (1969)

Subatomic Particles

One of the greatest discoveries of the last one hundred years is the elucidation of the structure of the atom. All matter in the universe consists of atoms - or their component parts: protons, neutrons and electrons. These are composed of smaller subatomic particles such as quarks, pions, gluons, etc... all of which are invisible to the human eye. There is a fascinating verse in the New Testament that seems to anticipate this invisible atomic structure: "*By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that **the things which are seen were not made of things which are visible.***" (Hebrews 11:3). Is this a coincidence? I do not think so. It speaks to the existence of a Supernatural Creator and the divine origin of the Bible.

The Water Cycle

About 300 years ago Pierre Perrault and Edme Marriotte discovered the concept of oceanic evaporation. They proved that evaporation from the ocean produced clouds, that the clouds drifted over land and released rain that formed into rivers, and the rivers in turn run back into the ocean. Today, we all know this and even learn it as children, but it was a major discovery 300 years ago. Yet the Bible exclaims in Ecclesiastics 1:6-7, "*The wind goes toward the south, and turns around to the north; the wind whirls about continually, and comes again on its circuit. 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.*" Solomon described this whole process in Ecclesiastics in 926 BC. Coincidence? I don't think so.

When The Sky Went Dark

Perhaps one of the most troubling verses in the New Testament is about the 'darkness over all the land' that happened during the crucifixion of Jesus Christ: *Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land unto the ninth hour* (Matthew 27:45).

Was this really a historical event? Is their corroboration outside the Bible? The answer to both questions is 'Yes.' Dr. Gary Habermas, in his book *The Historical Jesus*, writes about a historian named Thallus, who in 52 AD wrote of such an event.¹ Although 52 AD doesn't line up exactly with Christ's crucifixion in 33 AD, there is a second reference to the event that does match. Paul Mier cites *Ciero's Chronology* (written in 137AD) where he talks about the 202 Olimpiad (which was in 33AD) and describes how it became dark in the 6th hour (noon) and the stars could be seen, and of an Earthquake in Bithniia & Nicaea, in northwest Asia Minor.² Speaking of the Earthquake, here is what Matthew 27:51 says happened when Jesus died: *Then, behold, the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom; and the earth quaked, and the rocks were split.* So, secular history confirms both the earthquake and the solar eclipse. Another coincidence? I don't think so.

Medical Science

The medical insight and foreknowledge the Bible exhibits is equally incredible. For example, in the book of Genesis God directed Abraham to circumcise all newborn males on the eighth day (Genesis 17:12), a tradition that Orthodox Jews have faithfully observed for thousands of years. Why the eighth day? A remarkable discovery made in the twentieth-century can shed light on the reason for circumcision on the eighth day. According to Dr. Mark Eastman and other medical professionals, the blood clotting mechanism is immature when an infant is born. Any cut or injury in the first few days of life can result in excessive bleeding – even death. But after several days of life the vitamin K in the infant's diet allows the blood-clotting factor prothrombin to be produced in sufficient amounts to effect efficient clotting of the blood.

¹ College Press Publishing Company; June, 1996; pp 196-7.

² Strobel, Lee; *The Case For Christ*, pp 84-5.

Today, infants are given an injection of vitamin K at birth (so circumcision can be done right away). Consequently, efficient blood clotting is established within hours. Without this injection, it turns out that the prothrombin concentration reaches its peak on the eighth day of life!¹ What a coincidence. How did Abraham know to circumcise on the eighth day? Could it be because an omniscient all-knowing God revealed it to him? I think the answer is yes, obviously. But there is more medical data than just circumcision.

Hygiene

In the book of Deuteronomy (23:12-14), Moses instructed the Israelites to bury human waste products for hygienic purposes. While the merits of this procedure seem obvious to us now, during the Middle Ages Europe was nearly wiped out because they failed to heed this advice. People died in such large numbers and so fast that there weren't enough people to bury the dead.

As a direct result of dumping human waste into the streets, millions of people died from the "Black Death" (Bubonic Plague), a disease caused by the microscopic organism "Yersinia Pestis." These organisms thrived in human waste and were carried into the homes by fleas and rats! Had they simply followed the biblical teaching these horrible plagues would never have occurred.

In fact, faithful Jews were often blamed for poisoning the water supply and were persecuted and murdered in terrible numbers during that time because, for the most part, they weren't contracting the disease.²

Germ

Speaking of hygiene and germs, Encyclopedia Britannica documents that in 1845 a young doctor in Vienna named Dr. Ignaz Semmelweis was horrified at the terrible death rate of women who gave birth in hospitals. As many as 30 percent of them died after giving birth. Semmelweis noted that doctors would examine the bodies of patients who died, then, without washing their hands, go straight to the next ward and examine expectant mothers. This was their normal practice because the presence of microscopic diseases was unknown. Semmelweis suggested that doctors wash their hands before examinations and the death rate immediately dropped to two percent.

Look at the specific instructions God gave His people for when they encounter disease: "*And when he who has a discharge is cleansed of his discharge, then he shall count for himself seven days for his cleansing, wash his clothes, and bathe his body in running water; then he shall be clean*" (Leviticus 15:13). Until recently, doctors washed their hands in a bowl of water, which was a vast improvement but even this left invisible germs on their hands. However, the Bible says specifically to wash in "running water." Coincidence? I do not think so.

The Circulatory System

In Leviticus 17:11 God stated that "*...the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood that makes atonement for the soul.*" This statement, "the life of the flesh is in the blood," implies that the blood contains vital ingredients that sustain the life of animals and man. Though this statement may seem obvious to us now, this has not always been the case. Up until recent times it was believed that the blood needed to be "let out" when people fell ill. Consequently, for centuries physicians practiced "blood letting" (draining the blood out of an individual) in an attempt to rid the body of unwanted poisons. As you might guess many of these people died from the procedure. In fact, George Washington was a victim of this very procedure at the end of his life!

In the twentieth century, medical science has proven the truth of this statement of Moses. The blood of man and animals carries all of the necessary nutrients for the maintenance and repair of living systems. Without a functioning cardiovascular system and an adequate supply of blood,

¹ Dr. Mark Eastman; *The Bible: an Extraterrestrial Message* Briefing Pack; Koinonia House; 2000

² Missler, Chuck; *Technology In The Bible* Briefing Pack; Koinonia House; 2008

there can be no life – something that Moses understood nearly 3,500 years ago! Another coincidence? I don't think so.

The Medical Science of the Time.

During the time that Moses wrote those words, the Egyptian's had the following remedies:

- *Loosing hair?* Apply six fats (horse, hippopotamus, crocodile, cat, snake, & ibex),
- *Have an embedded splinter?* Apply worms blood and ass's dung,
- *Turning gray?* Anoint with blood of a black calf that has been boiled in oil or fat of a rattlesnake,
- *Can't beat that headache?* Why not try an incantation to falcon-headed Horus, or a soothing poultice of ass's grease?

Other prescriptions included lizard's blood, swine's teeth, stag's horn, lotus, frankincense, ass's grease, and animal fats.¹

Amazingly Accurate

Again, the Bible not only exhibits incredible scientific and medical accuracy. It also does not contain any inaccuracies, traditions, or myths.

Far from being a scientifically inaccurate book, the Bible exhibits knowledge about physics, hygiene, medicine, the Earth, and the universe that apparently could only have come from a being that exists outside our space-time*² domain. In the book of Job alone there are a mere two-dozen disclosures of such scientific foreknowledge.³

An Amazing Discovery

In *Creator Beyond Time and Space*, Mark Eastman concludes his chapter on the scientific accuracies in the Bible with the following example:

Imagine yourself on an archaeological expedition in the Dead Sea region of Israel and an absolutely astonishing discovery is made. In a recently discovered cave you find an ancient papyrus containing a complete set of plans that accurately describes the structure and function of a Boeing 747! Would you be impressed? [How can this be?]

You turn the scrolls over to ancient manuscript experts who conclude that the scrolls were written in Hebrew nearly 2,200 years ago! Still skeptical, you transfer the plans to the local university radiometric dating lab. The results are the same. The ink and the papyri are found to be from before the time of Christ!

The press immediately reports the story and the academic community begins their analysis. The skeptics assert that the whole thing is an elaborate hoax. However, the evidence is clear. The scrolls are ancient. Some assert that an advanced extraterrestrial civilization took the plans back in time and planted them in the caves. Still others declare that a supernatural transcendent being gave this twentieth-century scientific knowledge to the ancient scribes who recorded it only to be found centuries later.

Each of these analyses shares a common thread. Each theorist knows that ancient scribes could possess no knowledge of 747's unless someone with twentieth-century scientific and engineering know-how instructed them.

According to the UFO proponents, this knowledge was transported into the past by extraterrestrial beings that have the ability to transcend time.

On the other hand the skeptic knows that, under natural circumstances, such scientific foreknowledge is impossible. Since the skeptic does not believe in the supernatural realm, are fraudulent.

¹ These and other similar procedures can be found in ancient Egyptian records such as the Ebers Papyrus

² When physicists and astronomers speak of space and time it is usually together as a unit (space-time); time did not exist before space existed, nor space before time.

³ Henry Morris; *The Remarkable Record of Job*; Institute Creation Research; 1988.

To the believer in a transcendent Being, the answer is obvious. The detailed scientific knowledge required to design and build a 747 was sent back by a Creator, who transcends our time domain, to a time where such knowledge was otherwise unknowable.

This story serves to illustrate the incredible, supernatural nature of the biblical text. The possession of twentieth-century scientific foreknowledge (in this analogy, the 747 plan's) by ancient scribes could only have come about through a miraculous disruption of the space-time continuum. Likewise, the scientific foreknowledge within the biblical text must have come from a being with a transcendent nature as well. This knowledge, while always possessed by the Creator, was 'faxed' into our space-time domain to a people and time where such knowledge was, under natural circumstances, impossible.

How are we to interpret such scientific foreknowledge in a non-theistic worldview? The skeptic might assert that the biblical writers, though mere mortals, "got lucky." Over thousands of years, from three continents, the forty authors of the Bible just happened to describe, by chance, the nature of our universe, the laws of physics, planet Earth and its life forms in a way that is in complete harmony with twentieth-century science. Such an assertion is at best incredulous. Surely no one would contend that the ancient scribes who wrote the plans for a 747 got "lucky" as they doodled on ancient papyri. And yet the scientific foreknowledge in the Bible is quite specific and accurate. [...] When the arguments are broken down, the most logical assumption is that the ancient scribes were guided by a Transcendent Being with extraordinary "inside information."¹

As previously stated, in virtually all ancient religious and non-religious documents, it is common to find scientifically inaccurate myths about the nature of the universe and the life forms on planet Earth. Any cursory review of ancient literature will readily confirm this statement. However, the Bible is unique because of the conspicuous absence of such myths. Not only are the myths not there, but throughout the Bible we find scientifically accurate concepts that were not discovered by modern scientists until very recent times.

We have examined only a small number of the many verses in the Bible that reveal an uncanny scientific foreknowledge. This alone is evidence of its supernatural origin.

Today, the reliability of the Bible is increasingly attacked often because of its perceived scientific inaccuracies. But as we have just seen, it is unwarranted because science is not an enemy of the Bible. On the contrary, modern science continues to confirm what the Bible said six thousand years ago.

Consider the following as kind of a summary

The Bible Says	Science now	Science then
The universe is finite	The universe is finite	The universe is infinite
The Earth is a sphere	The Earth is a sphere	The Earth is flat
The Earth floats in space	The Earth floats in space	The Earth held up by a strong-man
Innumerable number of stars	Innumerable number of stars	Stars numbered about 3,000
Currents exist in ocean	Currents exist in the ocean	No ocean currents
Mountains and valleys in ocean	Mountains and valleys in ocean	Ocean is flat & saucer-shaped
Blood is the source of life	Blood is the source of life	Had to 'bleed' people
Wash in running water	Wash in running water	Germs unknown

¹ Word for Today; Nov, 1995; pp 118-120.

The Resurrection of Jesus Christ: Evidence # 6

The final piece of evidence I want to focus on is the resurrection. The resurrection of Jesus Christ is perhaps the most significant event in the history of the world, certainly in Christianity. If the resurrection did not happen then Christianity is a false religion because it proclaims it did happen. On the other hand, if it is true - *because it is true* - then it is not only another proof of Christ's divinity and the Bible's truthfulness, but it also means that all who accept Jesus as their savior are spared from death and hell.

Theologian Gerald O'Collins wrote, "*in a profound sense, Christianity without the resurrection is not simply Christianity without its final chapter. It is not Christianity at all.*"¹

So, is there sufficient evidence available to warrant belief in the resurrection? Unequivocally, without a doubt, yes! As I have said throughout this booklet, Christianity is based in history. The fact of Jesus Christ's resurrection is the most important event of history and therefore, appropriately, is the most certain fact in all of history. It is supported by a wider variety of testimonials and other evidence than any other historical event that has ever taken place since the world began.² (Read some of the quotes below, and see for yourself). D. James Kennedy once stated that the body of evidence for the resurrection is so strong that the really difficult task is not proving that it took place, but trying to prove that it didn't!

"Is Christianity Valid?"

The resurrection takes the question: "*Is Christianity valid?*" out of the realm of religious philosophy and makes it a question of history.

Hundreds of people down through the years have thoroughly investigated the facts surrounding the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Lawyers, skeptics, atheists, agnostics, professors, authors, historians and others – highly educated, highly qualified people, many of whom set out trying to disprove Christianity – came to conclude that the resurrection is one of the most well established facts of history ever. Listen to their words:

- Dr. Paul L. Maier, professor of ancient history at Western Michigan University, concluded, "*If all the evidence is weighed carefully and fairly, it is indeed justifiable, according to the canons of historical research, to conclude that the tomb in which Jesus was buried was actually empty on the morning of the first Easter. And no shred of evidence has yet been discovered in literary sources, epigraphy or archaeology that would disprove this statement*" (emphasis mine).³
- Lord Caldecote, Lord Chief Justice of England, has written: "*the evidence [for the resurrection] is a fact beyond dispute*" (emphasis mine).⁴
- Best selling author Josh McDowell points out in his book, that there is an overwhelming amount of historical evidence supporting the resurrection. He quotes B.F. Wescott, an English scholar, who said, "*Taking all the evidence together, it is not too much to say that there is no historic incident better or more variously supported than the resurrection of Christ.*" McDowell – who set out trying to disprove Christianity – says before doing his research he had never realized there was so much positive historical, literary and legal testimony supporting its validity (emphasis mine).⁵
- Professor Thomas Arnold, fourteen years the headmaster of Rugby, author of the three-volume *History of Rome*, and holder of the chair of modern history at Oxford, was well acquainted with the value of evidence in determining historical facts. This great scholar wrote:

¹ Gerald O'Collins, *The Easter Jesus*, 1973, p 134, cited in Strobel, *The Case For Christ*, 1998, p 206

² 'How do we know Christ really rose from the dead?' www.christiananswers.net

³ Maier, Paul; Independent Telegraph Press; Long Beach, CA; Apr 21, 1973; pg A-10

⁴ McDowell, Josh; *A Ready Defense*; Thomas Nelson; 1992; pg 216.

⁵ McDowell, Josh; *A Ready Defense*; Thomas Nelson; 1992; pg 216

“I have been used for many years to study the histories of other times, and to examine and weigh the evidence of those who have written about them, and I know of no one fact in the history of mankind which is proved by better and fuller evidence of every sort, to the understanding of a fair inquirer, than the great sign which God hath given us that Christ died and rose again from the dead” (emphasis mine).¹

- Harvard Law Professor, Dr. Simon Greenleaf examined the historical evidence for the resurrection of Jesus Christ to ascertain its truth. He applied the principles contained in his three-volume treatise on evidence. His findings were recorded in his book, *An Examination of the Testimony of the Four Evangelists by the Rules of Evidence Administered in the Courts of Justice*. Greenleaf came to the conclusion that, “according to the laws of legal evidence used in courts of law **there is more evidence for the historical fact of the resurrection of Jesus Christ than for just about any other event in history. We have more evidence that Jesus Christ was raised from the dead than we have evidence that Alexander the Great ever lived – and nobody disputes that**” (emphasis mine).²
- Wilbur Smith put it this way: “Let it simply be said that we know more about the details of the hours immediately before and the actual death of Jesus, in and near Jerusalem, than we know of any other one man in all the ancient world.”³
- Dr. Frank Morrison, a lawyer who had been brought up in a rationalistic environment, believed that the resurrection was nothing but a fairy-tale. He felt that he owed it to himself, and to others, to write a book that would, once and for all, present the truth about Jesus and dispel the myth of the resurrection. Upon studying the facts however, he too, came to a different conclusion. The sheer weight of the evidence compelled him to conclude that Jesus actually did rise from the dead. Morrison wrote his book, but not the one he had planned. The book he wrote was titled, *Who Moved the Stone?* The first chapter, very significantly, is called, “The Book That Refused to Be Written.”⁴
- Lee Strobel, a former atheist and skeptic, holds a Master of Studies in Law degree from Yale Law School and was an award-winning legal editor of the Chicago Tribune. Using his journalistic skills and his legal background, he spent two years investigating the Gospels and the claims of Christianity. He writes, “*As a journalist at the Chicago Tribune I saw plenty of dead bodies – victims of fires, crimes, auto accidents, gang wars, and more. But I had never seen anyone come back to life; that was the stuff of fantasies, mythologies, and legends. After all we live in a scientific age, believing in someone being resurrected from the dead was no longer tenable. At least that was what I thought until I examined the facts. Using my journalism skills and legal training, I investigated the most audacious claim in history: that Jesus of Nazareth came back from the dead and thus authenticated His claim to being the unique Son of God.*”⁵ After two years of investigation Lee Strobel eventually fell to his knees and accepted Christ as his savior – he could not dismiss the evidence.⁶ Strobel wrote *The Case For Christ*, a book I highly recommend, which summarizes this two year journey and the evidence that caused him to make that decision.

People who were fair, who were intellectually honest, who did not have some moral bias when they investigated the facts of Christianity came to the conclusion that Jesus Christ lived, died, and was raised from the dead. The Christian faith is not based on some emotional experience, myth, rumor, philosophy, or blind faith, nor is it based on the tradition of the church. What it is based

¹ Thomas, Arnold; *Sermons on the Christian Life*; pg324 – cited in *A Ready Defense*; pg 216

² McDowell, Josh; *A Ready Defense*; pg 216.

³ McDowell, Josh; *Evidence That Demands A Verdict*; Here’s Life Publishers; 1979; pg 186.

⁴ McDowell, Josh; *A Ready Defense*; Ch 20.

⁵ Hanegraaff, Hank; *The Third Day*; W Publishing Group; 2003; pg vi

⁶ Decision Magazine; Sept 2003; pg 17-19

upon is the incontrovertible evidences of the person and work of Jesus Christ, including his bodily resurrection from the dead.

Notice I said bodily resurrection. Jesus was not just resurrected in the spirit, but in the body. When the disciples went to the tomb, Jesus physical body was not there. Luke 24:3 says, “*And they entered in, and found not the body of the Lord Jesus.*” Jewish and Roman sources both testify to an empty tomb. I point this out because there are those who deny this fact, and say the resurrection was only a spiritual event (more on this latter)

Because the resurrection really occurred in time and history, it authenticated Jesus’ claim of deity and the Bible’s truthfulness. When Jesus said that He Himself would rise again from the dead three days after he was crucified, He said something that only a fool would say unless He was sure He was going to rise from the dead. No founder of any world religion known to men ever dared say a thing like that.¹ Jesus predicted His resurrection in Matthew 16:21; 17:9; 17:22-23; 20:18,19; 26:32; Mark 9:10; Luke 9:22-27; and John 2:18-22. In effect, Jesus was saying that all that He said, all that He did, all that He taught would only be true if He came back from the dead. Which He did. Lets look at what actually happened.

What Happened that First Easter?

After being crucified, and dying, Jesus was:

1. Prepared for burial according to Jewish custom,
2. Buried in a solid rock tomb,
3. A two ton bolder was placed in front of the tomb’s entrance,
4. A cord was stretched across the tomb and sealed in place with a wax seal,
5. A four to sixteen man guard unit was stationed in front of the tomb,

Yet three days later the tomb was empty, and according to the Bible hundreds (or thousands) of people saw Jesus alive.

Facts to Be Reckoned With

Something happened about two thousand years ago that changed the course of history from B.C. (Before Christ) to A.D. (*Anno Domini* - the year of our Lord). You might even say that both the Jews and the Romans outwitted themselves when they took so many precautions to make sure Jesus was dead and remained in the grave. These precautions - the crucifixion, burial, entombment, sealing, and guarding of Christ's tomb - make it very difficult for critics to defend their position that Christ did not rise from the dead or to rationalize it away as a myth, embellishment, legend, or anything other than historical fact.

Fact #1 – The Death and Burial Preparation of Jesus

Jesus was scourged, crucified, a spear pierce His heart, four Roman professional executioners signed His death certificate.² Then, in accordance with Jewish custom, the body of Jesus was wrapped from the armpits to the ankles with strips of linen twelve inches wide. About 100 pounds of aromatic spices were mixed together to form a gummy cement-like substance and applied to, and in-between, the wrappings of the cloth surrounding the body - thus forming a cocoon-like encasement weighing about 120 pounds.³ If you have ever seen any “Mummy” movies, this is what Jesus would have looked like.

Fact #2-The Tomb

After the death and burial preparation, the body of Christ was placed in a new tomb, hewn out of solid rock (Matthew 27:60). According to scripture, Jesus was buried in the tomb of Joseph of

¹ Wilbur Smith, *A Great Certainty in This Hour of World Crisis*

² McDowell; *The Resurrection Factor*; Here's Life Publishers; 1981; p 49.

³ McDowell; *Christianity: Hoax or History*; p 18.

Arimathea (John 19:38-42, Matthew 27:57,58). Historians tell us that first-century Jewish tombs were basically caves, and usually had an entrance 4-1/2 to 5 feet high. Josh McDowell says this was the case in Jesus' burial.¹ To see a picture of a typical first-century burial tomb, the stone and the seal, as well as some of the alternate resurrection theories advanced by the critics, (e.g. Jesus did not really die, He just passed out, et al) go to www.emjc3.com/tomb.htm.

Fact #3-Large Stone

After the death, burial preparation, and being placed in the tomb, a stone was rolled in front of the entrance. Matthew records in his writings that a “*large stone*” was rolled against the front of the tomb (Matthew 27:60 NAS). Mark describes the stone as “*extremely large*” (Mark 16:1 NAS). In fact, in the Mark 16:4 portion of the Bezae manuscripts in the Cambridge Library in England, a parenthetical statement was found in the margin that adds, "...a stone which 20 men could not roll away."² The significance of this statement is realized when one considers the way manuscripts were transcribed. It was the custom that if the copyist were emphasizing his own interpretation, he would write his thought in the margin and not include it within the text. The phrase, then, was probably recorded by an eyewitness who was impressed with the enormity of the stone that was rolled against Jesus' sepulcher.³

After hearing Josh McDowell at a lecture at Georgia Tech, two engineering professors went on a tour of Israel with other faculty members. They remembered the comments McDowell had made about the large size of the stone in the lecture they had attended. So, being engineers, they considered the type of stone used in Palestine at the time of Christ and calculated the size needed to roll against a 4-1/2 to 5-foot doorway, the size of the entrance. Later, they wrote a letter to Mr. McDowell saying that a stone of that size would have to have had a minimum weight of 1-1/2 to 2 tons. No wonder Matthew and Mark said the stone was extremely large.⁴

Fact #4-The Seal

After Jesus was placed in this solid rock cave-like tomb and a 1-1/2 to 2 ton stone was rolled in front of it, the entrance was sealed.

After the guard unit (probably 16 soldiers – more below) inspected the tomb and rolled the stone in place, a leather cord was stretched across the stone and fastened at both ends with sealing clay. The clay packs were stamped with the official signet of the Roman governor. The purpose of this procedure was to prevent anyone from tampering with the grave's contents. The seal on Jesus' tomb was a public testimony that Jesus' body was actually there. It verified the fact that His body was protected from vandals by nothing less than the power and authority of the Roman Empire. Anyone trying to move the stone from the tomb's entrance would have broken the seal (a capital crime) and thus incurred the wrath and power of Rome.⁵

Fact #5- The Guard

Not only was the tomb sealed, it was also guarded by professional soldiers. Sometimes pictures of the tomb of Jesus Christ often show one or two men standing around with wooden spears and mini-skirts. At best this is a radical misinterpretation, or at worst completely deceptive.

To begin with, a Roman guard was not just one or two people but a four to sixteen man highly trained security force. Each man was trained to protect six feet of ground. Sixteen men in a square of four on each side were supposed to be able to protect 36 yards against an entire battalion and hold it for an indefinite period of time. (A Battalion is two to six companies; a company is 100 to

¹ McDowell, Josh; *A Ready Defense*; ch 20

² McDowell, Josh; *A Ready Defense*, ch 20

³ McDowell, Josh; *The Resurrection Factor*; pg 66

⁴ McDowell, Josh; *The Resurrection Factor*; pg 53

⁵ McDowell, Josh; *The Resurrection Factor*; pg 59

200 soldiers). So a 16-man guard unit was capable of defending a 36 yard area against two hundred to twelve hundred soldiers until reinforcements could arrive.

Furthermore, you can be sure this guard unit thoroughly inspected (and guarded) the tomb to make sure there was no secret entrance or anything, because if anything went wrong, or if any of them fell asleep, according to Roman law and tradition, the whole unit would be put to death.¹ You can be sure they were absolutely positive the tomb was secure, and they did not fall asleep.

To sum it up:

- 1) Jesus was crucified and died,
- 2) Four executioners signed His death certificate,
- 3) He was encased in over 100 pounds of cement-like grave clothes,
- 4) He was placed in a solid rock tomb,
- 5) A two ton stone was rolled in front of the entrance,
- 6) And the tomb was sealed and guarded by highly skilled professional soldiers.

Resurrection Sunday

Despite all these precautions, on that first Easter morning, the seal was broken, the stone was rolled away, and Jesus' body was gone. According to Josh McDowell, probably the first thing that impressed the people the most that day was the unusual position of that two ton stone that had been placed in front of the entrance but now was rolled away. The stone was not just slid to the side either. To describe its position Mark used the Greek word *anakulio*, which can mean "to roll something up a slope or an incline." For Mark, to have used that verb, there would have had to be a slope or an incline coming down to the front of that tomb. But that is not all. Not only was the stone moved up an incline. John used the word *airo*, which (according to the Arndt and Gingrich Greek Lexicon) means, "to pick something up and carry it away,"² so it wasn't just slid to the side.

Now, I ask you, if the disciples had wanted to come in, and steal the body of Jesus, how could they have moved a one-and-one-half to two ton stone up a slope away from the entire sepulcher to such a position that it looked like someone had "picked it up and carried it away"? And what about the guards: even if they were asleep (which they would not have been) they would have to be deaf not to awaken if the disciples tried to tip-toe around and move the stone (which they could not have done in the first place).

Furthermore, in a literal sense, the tomb was not actually empty. What happened was this: After visiting the grave and seeing the stone rolled away, some women ran back and told the disciples the stone had been moved and Jesus' body was not there. Then Peter and John took off running. John outran Peter, and upon arriving at the tomb he did not enter. Instead, he leaned over and looked in and saw something so startling that he immediately believed. He looked over to the place where the body of Jesus had lain. There were grave clothes in the form of a body but slightly caved in and empty - like the empty chrysalis of a caterpillar's cocoon (see John 20:4-8).³ This completely negates the theory that posits that Jesus' resurrection was only spiritual.

Hallucination

There are some critics today who say that Jesus did not really rise from the dead. They claim that the appearances of Jesus after the resurrection were mere hallucinations. However, this is completely baseless. According to experts, hallucinations are linked to an individual's subconscious: one individual may have a hallucination, but hallucinations do not appear to groups of people at different times and different places. After His resurrection Jesus appeared to:

¹ McDowell, Josh; *A Ready Defense*; pg 234.

² McDowell, Josh; *The Resurrection Factor*; pg 68.

³ McDowell, Josh; *The Resurrection Factor*; pg 70; McDowell, *Christianity: Hoax or History*; pg 34.

- Mary Magdalene (John 20:11, 18; Mark 16:9),
- The other women (Matthew 28:8-10),
- Peter (Luke 24:34; I Corinthians 15:5),
- The two on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24:13-35; Mark 16:12),
- Ten of the disciples (Luke 24:36-43; John 20:19-24),
- All eleven disciples eight days later (John 20:24-29),
- Five hundred followers (I Corinthians 15:6),
- James (I Corinthians 15:7),
- The eleven disciples at the ascension (Acts 1:3-12).

According to psychologist Gary Collins, “hallucinations are individual occurrences. By their very nature only one person at a time can see a given hallucination at a time. They certainly are not something that can be seen by a group of people. Neither is it possible that one person could possibly induce a hallucination in somebody else.”¹ Besides, hallucinations would not explain the empty tomb.

Everyone Knew it Was True

Josh McDowell writes, "Have you noticed that in the Bible the references to the empty tomb all come in the Gospels? In the Acts of the Apostles, there is an enormous emphasis on the fact of the resurrection but not a single reference to the empty tomb. Now why? To me there is only one answer: There was no point in mentioning the empty tomb. Everyone, friend and opponent, knew that it was empty. The only questions worth speaking about were why it was empty and what its emptiness proved."²

The Empty Tomb and the Beginning of Christianity

An obvious fact, the most important fact, was the empty tomb. Again, the Disciples of Christ did not go off to Athens or Rome to preach that Christ raised from the dead; they went right back to the city of Jerusalem where, if what they were teaching were false, their message would have been easily disproved. The resurrection could not have been maintained even for a moment in Jerusalem if the tomb – which a 15-minute walk from the center of town could have confirmed or denied – had not been empty.³

Harvard law professor Simon Greenleaf, (mentioned earlier), a man who lectured for years on how to break down testimony and determine whether or not a witness is lying, concludes:

It was therefore impossible that they [the disciples] could have persisted in affirming the truths they have narrated, had not Jesus actually risen from the dead, and had they not known this fact as certainly as they knew any other fact. The annals of military warfare afford scarcely an example of the heroic like constancy, patience, and unflinching courage. They had every possible motive to review carefully the grounds of their faith, and the evidences of the great facts and truths they asserted.⁴

As one writer said, “Anyone who has power over death deserves to be heard. Jesus proved His power over death at the resurrection, therefore we need to hear what He says. Jesus claims to be the only way to salvation (John 14:6). He is not a way; He is not one of many ways, but Jesus is *the* way.” That is what He said, and He proved that what He said was true by rising from the dead.

¹ Hanegraaff, Hank; *The Third Day*; W Publishing Group; 2003; pg53

² McDowell, Josh; *Evidence That Demands A Verdict*; Here’s Life Publishers; 1979; p 217

³ McDowell, Josh; *The Resurrection Factor*; pg 65-67

⁴ Simon Greenleaf; *An Examination of the Four Evangelists*; Baker Bookhouse; 1965; Reprint of the 1874 ed; pg 29

Fifty Hours of Eyewitnesses

You can be sure Jesus' appearances were not hallucinations. Hundreds (even thousands) of people saw what took place. One of the earliest records of Christ's appearing after the resurrection is by Paul (I Corinthians 15:6). The apostle appeals to his audience's knowledge of the fact that Christ had been seen alive by more than five hundred people at one time. And he reminds them that the majority of these people were still alive and could be questioned. St. Paul, in effect, says, "If you do not believe me, you can ask them."

If we take more than five hundred witnesses who saw Jesus alive after His death and burial and place them in a courtroom. Do you realize that if each of these five hundred people were to testify only six minutes each, including cross-examination, you would have an amazing fifty hours of firsthand eyewitness testimony? Add to this the testimony of many other eyewitnesses and you could well have the largest and most lopsided trial in history.¹

A believer in Jesus Christ today can have the complete confidence, as did those first Christians, that his faith is based not on myth, legend, or wishful thinking but on the solid historical fact of the empty tomb and the risen Christ.²

When considering the evidence and evaluating what happened that first Easter, we must be conscious of two principles:

- 1) The theory or alternate explanation must take into account all the facts surrounding the resurrection of Christ.
- 2) One must not force the evidence into a preconceived conclusion, but let the evidence speak for itself.³

None of the alternative theories about the resurrection adequately deals with ALL the evidence of the known facts. For example, if Jesus passed out but did not die, it would not explain the guarded (sealed) tomb and the empty grave clothes? The impersonation theory would not explain the scars on Jesus' hands, feet, and side. The stolen body theory has many of the same problems as the 'passed out' theory (they all have problems of some kind).

Because of all the precautions (the guard, the stone, the seal, etc...), it is harder to believe any of the alternative theories about the resurrection than to simply believe that Jesus Christ was the Son of God, who died and was raised from the dead. The resurrection marks Him out as the Son of God (Romans 1:4), and the Savior of the world (John 3:16).

Although I am not going to cover them here, to read some of the alternate theories of the resurrection, which are advanced by critics, go to www.emjc3.com/tomb.htm or read *The Resurrection Factor*. If you read the "He did not really die" theory, the hallucination theory, the impersonation theory, the spiritual resurrection theory, etc, you will see that none of them deal with **ALL** the facts.

Only A Resurrection Explains All the Facts

As a summary of the resurrection, consider the following:

- A) How does one explain away the empty tomb, the seal, the guard unit, and the burial clothes other than a resurrection? You can't.
- B) If Jesus remained dead, how can you explain the testimony of the disciples? Three days later, you hear their voices with shouts of excitement, "We've seen a dead man who came back to life!"
- C) If Jesus remained dead, how can you explain the faithfulness of the disciples to the testimony of the resurrection – even in the face of their own deaths? Of the 11 disciples, only one died a

¹ McDowell, Josh; *The Resurrection Factor*; pg 71

² McDowell, Josh; *A Ready Defense*; pg 239

³ See McDowell, Josh; *The Resurrection Factor*; pg 76

natural death – John – and he was exiled to Patmos, an island work camp. The rest died as martyrs with the truth of the resurrection on their lips.

D) If Jesus remained dead, why did 500 people say they saw Him alive (see I Corinthians 15:6)?

E) If Jesus remained dead, how can you explain the credibility of the witnesses? In the first century, many people questioned the first-hand witnesses...and their story hasn't been disproved.

F) If Jesus remained dead, how can you explain the inability of the first century skeptics to deal with the resurrection with an alternative explanation? All the power of Rome and of the religious establishment in Jerusalem was geared to stop the Christian faith. All they had to do was to dig up the grave and to present the corpse. They did not. They could not, because there was no corpse.

G) If Jesus did not rise from the dead, his closest friends were an extraordinarily compulsive group of liars. This charge does not fit well with the ethical caliber of the writings of Jesus' disciples. Virtually all religions now concede that the writings of the apostles represent a very high level of morality.

H) If Jesus remained dead, how can you explain the reality of the Christian church and its phenomenal growth in the first three centuries AD? Christ's Church covered the Western world by the fourth century. This is quite remarkable especially when you consider that to be a Christian at that time was to live with a target painted on your back. A religious movement built on a lie could not have accomplished that.

I) Only a resurrection explains why thousands of Jews abandoned Judaism and Sabbath worship and started worshiping as Christians on Sunday.

Other Resurrection Resources

Although much of it has been duplicated here, the evidence for the resurrection is covered in even better detail in *The Resurrection Factor*, or in *Christianity: Hoax or History*. It is also covered, along with a lot of other evidences, in *A Ready Defense*. If you have Internet access you can read selected chapters of *A Ready Defense* (including the Resurrection chapter) simply by going to the following link: www.greatcom.org/resources/areadydefense.

It has been said that a picture is worth a thousand words. To see a picture depicting the resurrection scene, or to read about the death and crucifixion of Jesus, as well as some of the alternative theories about the resurrection, see www.emjc3.com/tomb.htm.

An Undeniable Fact Of History

As said earlier by Simon Greenleaf (but worth repeating), according to the laws of legal evidence used in courts of law, there is more evidence for the historical fact of the resurrection of Jesus Christ than for just about any other event in history...¹ Jesus Christ was crucified, died, was buried in a tomb, and rose from the dead. This confirms the truth of not only the New Testament, but the entire Bible.

What is the significance of this evidence and the resurrection of Jesus from the dead? Well, it means that Jesus is everything He claimed to be: He is the Son of God, the Bread of Life, the Light of the World, the Good Shepherd, the Resurrection and the Life! And most importantly He is the only way to heaven. Believe in Jesus, and you can have eternal life: "*Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved*" (Acts 4:12). This offer is open to all: "*For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved*" (Romans 10:13).

¹ McDowell, Josh; *A Ready Defense*; pg 216.

Summary

Many books today claim to be the Word of God, but only one - the Bible - backs up that claim with provable historical evidence. The evidence we looked at included: Prophetic evidence, manuscript evidence, writings outside the Bible (both Christian and non-Christian), archeological evidence, scientific foreknowledge, and the evidence for the resurrection.

Although any one of these proofs should be sufficient, surely the cumulative affect of all of them demonstrates beyond a reasonable doubt the truthfulness and reliability of the Bible. And remember, this short booklet is by no means a comprehensive look at all the data.

Here are some highlights of what we covered:

The Prophetic evidence

The Bible contains literally thousands of prophecies that have been fulfilled. At the time it was written 28% of the Bible was prophetic. It contains 8,362 predictive verses, most of which have already been fulfilled. **The amazing thing is that while there have been thousands of fulfilled prophecies, not once has the Bible ever been wrong, it has a 100% accuracy rate, 100% of the time.** This gives us assurance that the future prophecies are also correct. Jesus fulfilled over 300 prophecies. This completely defies the law of probability. The odds of fulfilling only 48 of them are $1/10^{157}$, but according to mathematicians anything beyond $1/10^{50}$ is supposedly impossible.

The Manuscript evidence

There is more manuscript evidence for the Bible than all other ancient literature combined. There are 5,300 Greek manuscript or manuscript portions of the New Testament, plus 10,000 from the Latin Vulgate, and 9,300 other versions for a total of over 24,000 extant manuscripts - these manuscript copies are very ancient and many are available for inspection right now. Besides the actual manuscripts, there are also some 86,000 direct quotations from the early church fathers and Lectionaries (church-service books containing sermons and Scripture quotations used in the early days of Christianity). In fact, the entire New Testament, except for eleven verses, could be reconstructed from the writings of the first century pastors – you do not even need the manuscripts.

The Writings Outside The Bible

While there is an incredible amount of manuscript evidence supporting the Bible's truthfulness, there are also other writings outside the Bible that affirm the eyewitness account, and confirm its accuracy. Clement, Ignatius, Papias, Polycarp, and Ireneus (and many others) validate the first century dating, the primary-source value, and the supernatural Jesus of the New Testament.

Admittedly, these are Christian sources but there are non-Christian sources too. For example: the Roman historian Tacitus; the Roman governor Pliny; the Babylonian Talmud (the Rabbinic commentaries on the Jewish scriptures); the Jewish historian Flavius Josephus; and others (there are "Eighty first and second century sources which testify of Jesus"). All of these writers confirm the Biblical Scriptures.

Archeological evidence

Middle Eastern archaeological investigations have proven the Bible to be true and unerringly accurate in its historical descriptions again and again ad infinitum. In 2000 years, there has not been one single archeological discovery disproving anything in the Bible. In fact, "there have been more than 25,000 archeological discoveries" confirming Biblical truths. More than 25,000!

A general consensus of both liberal and conservative scholars is that Luke was astounding accurate as a historian. Recall that in the first verse of Luke chapter three, there are fifteen historical references that can be verified. E. M. Blaiklock, professor of classics at Auckland University concludes that “*Luke is a consummate historian to be ranked in his own right with the great writers of the Greeks.*” There have been many instances in which scholars initially thought Luke was wrong in a particular reference only to have later discoveries confirm that he was correct in what he wrote. According to Bruce Metzger, Luke mentions 32 countries, 54 cities, and 9 Mediterranean islands; he also lists 95 people by name, 62 of which are not named elsewhere in the New Testament.

Scientific foreknowledge

Another piece of evidence that demonstrates the Bible’s truthfulness is the scientific foreknowledge contained within its pages - facts not discovered until the last 100 years yet written in the Bible 5,000 years ago. Just some of these truths include:

- A finite universe (Genesis 1:1)
- An expanding universe (Psalms 104:2, Isaiah 40:22, Jeremiah 10:12 and elsewhere)
- A universe that is wearing out (Psalms 102:26 and elsewhere)
- The spherical shape of the Earth (Isaiah 40:22)
- The Earth is suspended in nothing (Job. 26:7)
- The stars are innumerable (Jeremiah 33:22)
- The existence of valleys and mountains in the seas (Jonah 2:6 et al)
- The existence of springs and fountains in the ocean (Gen. 7:11; 8:2; Prov. 8:28)
- The existence of paths (ocean currents) in the seas (Psalm 8:8)
- The water cycle (Job. 26:8; 36:27-28; 37:16; 38:25-27; Ps. 135:7; Ecc. 1:6-7)
- The fact that all living things reproduce after their own kind (Gen. 1:21; 6:19)
- The nature of health, hygiene, sanitation, and sickness (Gen. 17:9-14; Lev. 12-14)

As Mark Eastman says in virtually all other religious documents (excluding the Bible) it is common to find scientifically inaccurate myths about the physical universe and the life forms on planet Earth. What is unique to the Bible, he says, is that not only are there no inaccuracies, but that the Bible is astonishingly accurate time and time again. He concludes that this is proof that the authors who penned it must have obtained supernatural inside information. Thus validating the Bible as being the one-and-only true Word of God.

He likens the scientific foreknowledge contained in the Bible to discovering plans to build a Boeing 747 written on ancient papyri by scribes who lived thousands of years ago.

The Resurrection

The last thing we examined was the Resurrection - perhaps the most significant event in the history of the world, and the very linchpin of Christianity. In fact, without the Resurrection there would be no Christian faith.

When Jesus said that He would rise again from the dead three days after he was crucified, He said something that only a fool would say unless He was sure it would happen. No founder of any world religion known to men ever dared say a thing like that. Basically, Jesus was saying that all that He said, all that He did, all that He taught would only be true if He came back from the dead. Which He did!

Because the resurrection really occurred in time and history, it authenticates Jesus’ claim of deity and the Bible’s truthfulness. The combined opinions of multitudes of highly qualified, highly educated professionals (lawyers, authors, historians, professors, et al) can be summed up in the words of B.F. Wescott who said: “*Taking all the evidence together, it is not too much to say that there is no historic incident better or more variously supported than the resurrection of*

Christ." We have "more evidence that Jesus Christ was raised from the dead than we have evidence that Alexander the Great ever lived."

Recall, all the precautions that the Jews and the Romans did to insure Jesus remained in the tomb. After being crucified, and dying, Jesus was:

- Certified to be dead by four professional Roman executioners,
- Prepared for burial according to Jewish custom,
- Buried in a solid rock cave-like tomb,
- A two ton boulder was placed in front of the tomb's entrance,
- A cord was stretched across the tomb and sealed in place with a wax seal,
- A four to sixteen man skilled professional guard unit was stationed in front of the tomb.

Yet three days later the tomb was empty, and hundreds (or thousands) of people saw Jesus alive.

The resurrection of Jesus is an unequivocal definitive fact of history. Jesus Christ was crucified, died, was buried in a tomb, and rose from the dead. It confirms the truth of not only the New Testament, but the entire Bible. It is supported not only archeology, but eyewitness testimony. One time there were over 500 people at once who saw Christ alive after His resurrection. Josh McDowell said, "If we take more than five hundred witnesses who saw Jesus alive after His death and burial and place them in a courtroom. Do you realize that if each of these five hundred people were to testify only six minutes each, including cross-examination, you would have an amazing fifty hours of firsthand eyewitness testimony? Add to this the testimony of many other eyewitnesses and you could well have the largest and most lopsided trial in history."

You Can Prove it Because it is Based on History

If the Bible were merely an ancient collection of writings it would be kind of interesting but not really significant; however, the Bible claims to be much more than that – it claims that it is the very Words of God and His message of salvation and love to mankind.

Of course any book might *claim* to be divinely inspired; such a claim in and of itself proves nothing. But the Bible backs up this claim. The eyewitness testimony demonstrates that what was said was accurately written down; textual criticism shows that what was written is what we have today (i.e. the copy we have today is what was first written); archeology confirms the Bible's truthfulness, and the scientific foreknowledge and fulfilled prophecies demonstrate its supernatural origin. Christianity can claim credibility *because* of historical events open to critical investigation.

Yes, we can be 100 percent certain the Bible is both accurate and true. If a person were intellectually honest with himself or herself they would have to admit, as would a juror in a trial, that the preponderance of the evidence proves that the Bible is true.

Salvation by Christ alone

Truth is not relative and all roads do not lead to God. Even though this is a common belief today, it is wrong. The Law of Non Contradiction states that something cannot be true and *not* be true at the same time, and since all religions teach something different they cannot all be true.

Jesus Christ said He was the way the truth and the life. The Bible makes it clear that Jesus is the *only way to heaven*. The primary reason that Jesus is the only way to heaven is because He alone forgives sin and offers eternal life (John 10:28), something that the founder of no other major religion has claimed to, or can, do.

Many people try to earn their way into heaven by being good or doing good works. But being good or doing good works is not what gets you to heaven. Being forgiven gets you there, and Jesus is the only one who can do that.

The unavoidable truth is that the Bible is either true or it is false. Either it is the deceptive words of men or it is the Word of God. I believe I have demonstrated its truthfulness.

If it is true – something you have to decide for yourself – then you can either meet Christ now as your Savior or you will meet Him later when all those who did not accept Him, unfortunately, get cast into hell. One way or the other you will meet Christ; it is inevitable.

Many people wonder “*how a God of Love could send anyone to hell.*” But the truth is that He doesn’t. Scripture teaches that hell was made for the devil and his angels (Matthew 25:41). “If someone rejects God’s grace and turns away from the wooing of the Holy Spirit and chooses to have nothing to do with God, God will, in the end, allow them to have their free choice.”¹ As C. S. Lewis once wrote, “The doors of hell are locked from the *inside.*”² Those who end up in hell will have only themselves to blame.

God either sent His Own Son into the world to convict the world of its sin and to forgive those who accept Him, or He did not. If He did, then your eternity is decided, not by God, but by you. God has done everything possible – except make the choice for you. He can’t. Each of us must make *that* choice for ourselves.

According to the Bible once a person is born they will live forever in one of two places – heaven or hell. Heaven is a place of peace, serenity, joy and happiness; on the other hand, hell is a place of suffering and torment where there will be “weeping and gnashing of teeth” – forever. Christians go to heaven, but everyone else enters hell.

No one is forcing you to become a Christian. God has given everyone a free will – to choose Him, or not choose Him, but considering what the Bible says about heaven and hell and one’s eternal soul, then if it is true (as has been demonstrated here), it would be wise to heed its words.

The choice is yours, if you would rather go to heaven rather than hell pray the following, or something similar (prayer is just talking to God):

God, I believe in You and that Your Word is true. I believe that Jesus Christ is Your Son and that He died on the cross so that I may have forgiveness for my sins and eternal life. I believe in my heart that You God raised Him from the dead. Jesus please forgive me for every sin I have ever committed or done; please Lord Jesus come into my heart as my personal Lord and Savior today. I give you my life and ask You to take control of my life from this moment on; I pray this in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

Do this and the Bible says you will have eternal life. It is as simple as John 3:16 - *For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.* God wants us to know His Son, to go to heaven and live with Him forever! Don't delay, say this prayer today...none of us are granted tomorrow.

Salvation comes to us via what God did for us. As this 4 line poem expresses:

There aren't many ways into heaven,
God's Word says there is only one;
Confessing Christ Jesus as Savior,
Believing in God's only Son.

As one commentary I once read said: Perhaps the most deadly sin of the unbeliever is that of procrastination. Satisfied with his current life, the person neglects his spiritual need. If you can’t guarantee you’ll wake up in the morning, then you shouldn’t put your head on the pillow tonight, unless Christ is your Savior.

¹ Campbell, Charlie, *One Minute Answers to Skeptics' Top Forty Questions*, Aquintas Publishing, 2005, 46

² *The Quotable Lewis*; Tyndale; 1989

Appendix: Alternate Christianities

I want to address one more thing: Alternate Christianities! Every Easter we see shows or read some (supposedly) “new” discovery about Jesus. In 2007 it was The Discovery Channel’s *The Lost Tomb of Jesus*; in 2006 it was National Geographic’s *The Gospel of Judas*, as well as Dan Brown’s *The Da Vinci Code* (although Da Vinci code was fictional, it was supposedly based on fact); in 2005 it was ABC’s *The Search for the Real Jesus*; before that Dateline’s *From Jesus to Christ*. (Not to mention the news magazines and newspaper articles which appear this time of year). Next year who knows what it will be? But I can almost guaranty something will pop up. It has been going on now for about a decade.

Who was Jesus

Are these shows and books credible? Has the real nature of Christianity been obscured for centuries? Are recently discovered texts such as the *Gospel of Thomas*, the *Gospel of Judas*, the *Gospel of Mary*, *Secret Mark*, *Q* and others authoritative? The liberal views of the Jesus Seminar scholars and others would have you to believe this is the case. They claim to be Christians but they do not believe Jesus was God, nor do they believe that He rose from the dead; some are even saying that we need to rewrite Church history and redefine Christianity. What is common among them all is a belief that the Bible we hold in our hands is in error and cannot be trusted. They all present a ‘new and different’ Jesus. In *Hidden Gospels: How the Search for Jesus Lost Its Way*,¹ Philip Jenkins thoroughly and convincingly debunks such claims. Also, Gregory Boyd’s *Jesus Under Siege*² does an excellent job explaining that the Jesus portrayed in the Bible is the same as the Jesus of history. I highly recommend either of these books, as well as a very good article written by Ben Witherington in *Christianity Today* (see footnote).³ Most of these “new” views are nothing more than Gnostic beliefs which were around in the second through the fourth centuries, but are now reemerging,⁴ as we will see.

Nag Hammadi

Much of the reason for these revived beliefs is due to the discovery in 1945 of some manuscripts at Nag Hammadi, Egypt. These texts were hidden in the late fourth century by those who felt (reasonably so) that they would be destroyed by heresy-hunting vigilantes unless they were concealed. The best known text from this treasure trove is the *Gospel of Thomas*, and though only four bear the name “gospel,” dozens claim to record the words of Jesus. What is common among all these texts is that they all supply countless alternative views of Christianity.⁵

How many Gospels are there

In *The Da Vinci Code*, Dan Brown asserts that, at the Council of Nicaea (A.D. 325), Constantine selected the Gospels that were used in the New Testament from more than 80 available. This is patently false, and intentional deception.⁶ Twenty rulings were issued at the Council of Nicaea, the contents of all of them are still in existence and *not one of them involved issues regarding the Canon*. Constantine did not collect the books of the Bible: the Old Testament was in place long

¹ Oxford University Press, 2001.

² Victor, 1995.

³ “Why the Lost Gospels Lost Out,” 05/21/2004, <http://www.ctlibrary.com/ct/2004/june/7.26.html>

⁴ Jenkins; *Hidden Gospels: How the Search for Jesus Lost Its Way*; Ch 1.

⁵ Jenkins; pg 5.

⁶ Chuck Missler, *The Da Vinci Deception*, 2004

before Jesus' time, and the New Testament was compiled by the end of the 1st century—200 years before Constantine.¹

Similarly, Elaine Pagles, the writer of *The Gnostic Gospels* has written, "Today we now begin to see that what we call Christianity – and what we identify as Christian tradition - represents only a small selection of sources chosen among dozens of others," she continues, "who made that choice and for what reason?"² To answer her question, the choice was made because these alternate texts come from the 2nd and 3rd century and portray a completely alternate, unorthodox, heretical Jesus, and do not reflect what the rest of the New Testament (or the Bible for that matter) says. See: Ben Witherington, "*Why the Lost Gospels Lost Out*," for more.³

The Canon

There were good reasons these so-called 'lost books of the Bible' (*The Gospel of Thomas* et al) were not included in the Bible. Two of the qualifications for a book to be in the New Testament Canon (the accepted books) were: *first*, that it had to be written by an apostle or close associate of an apostle and *second*, it did not contradict already recognized scripture (the Old Testament). The Gnostic Nag Hammadi texts fail on both counts. Not only are they heretical and in opposition to other Biblical doctrine, they are pseudonymous, that is, they were written anonymously under an assumed name. *The Gospel of Thomas, Philip, Mary, Truth, Q*, and others were NOT written by the apostles who bore those names, they were not even written until the second to fourth century,⁴ the time when Gnosticism really took hold. See: Ben Witherington, "Why the Lost Gospels Lost Out" for more.⁵

In fact, the *Gospel of Thomas* is just a collection of 114 sayings without any historical narrative whatsoever (unlike the canonical Gospels: recall Luke's 15 geographical references in Luke 3:1 alone), so there is no way of verifying its authenticity. Plus, *The Gospel of Barnabas*, for example, is replete with provable 2nd and 3rd century references. For one thing, it mentions casks of wood or barrels washed and refilled with wine (GB 152), but in the days of Jesus, animal skins were used for wine; casks or barrels of wood were unknown in ancient Palestine. Also, according to *Barnabas*, Adam and Eve were commanded by God to do penance (GB 41), a practice established much later, not of New Testament times. There are many other errors too: GB 3, for example, says when Jesus was born 'Pilate was governor in the priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas,' yet these men did not come to office until later (Annas 6 AD, Caiaphas 8 AD, Pilate 26 AD). Additionally, GB 145 says, "...in the time of Elijah, friend and prophet of God, there were twelve mountains inhabited by seventeen thousand Pharisees..." but there were no Pharisees in the days of Elijah. History first knows about Pharisees seven centuries later in the period between 135-104 BC.

Additionally, there was no doubt that the early church fathers rejected these manuscripts. Eusebius of Caesarea said that *The Gospel of Thomas* should be "cast aside as absurd and impious."⁶

Moreover, Erwin Lutzer says that these 'lost books' were "recognized as legends from the beginning"; and that "these forgotten books are so obviously inferior that they cannot be taken seriously."⁷ Indeed, in *The Lost Books of The Bible*, the author, Frank Crane, admitted this point by saying that legends and great stories surround all great men such as Napoleon, Charlemagne, and Julius Caesar, so we can also expect tales would grow up around Jesus Christ. He also said that Christ appealed to the 'fictional minds' of His day. "These writers [the writers of the so-called

¹ Chuck Missler, *The Da Vinci Deception*, 2004; also see "Another Gospel," C Missler, at <http://www.khouse.org/articles/2004/538>

² Pagles, E.; *The Gnostic Gospels*; 1979; pg xxxv.

³ *Christianity Today*, 05/21/2004, <http://www.ctlibrary.com/ct/2004/june/7.26.html>

⁴ Chuck Missler, *The Da Vinci Deception*, 2004.

⁵ *Christianity Today*, 05/21/2004, <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2004/006/7.26.html>

⁶ Lutzer, Erwin; *Seven Reasons You Can Trust the Bible*; Moody Publishers; 1998; 190.

⁷ *ibid*, 188.

lost books of the Bible],” he says, “do not pretend to write down what is strictly true, but tinge, distort, and color all events with their imagination,”¹ so, by his own admission these books distort the truth and appeal to “fictional minds.”

These are just a couple examples, there are many more. Yet despite this fact, the liberal scholars accept these texts as authoritative but often reject the traditional Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John - first century documents written by eyewitnesses, which contain no errors.

NOTE: That no other alternate view of Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection was around before the year AD100-200 (when these Gnostic texts began) is itself a good indication for late dating these manuscripts. Everyone knew the basic facts regarding Jesus, they were public knowledge; these things happened before the community of Jerusalem and literally thousands of people were witnesses; it was a fact that could not be denied.

The Claims of The Nag Hammadi Manuscripts

If we can believe some of the claims about these Nag Hammadi manuscripts, the historical Jesus is utterly different from what the New Testament depicts. According to the *Gospel of Thomas*, for example, neither Jesus nor the early Christians were focusing on concepts such as sin, judgment, redemption and salvation; rather, they were seekers after mystical illumination. In the Nag Hammadi manuscripts Jesus is not the Messiah but a social radical: one who shuns materialism and directs his followers towards the simple life.² The Jesus of these non-canonical texts is that of a sage or spiritual teacher. Jesus Seminar member, Marcus Borg of Oregon State University, stated of Jesus, “We are making him [into] a Buddha-like figure, not just another philosopher but a really big one.”³ But, as we already saw, Jesus was not just a philosopher or “spiritual teacher.” He was the Son of God who died on a cross to forgive our sins. The Nag Hammadi texts teach that there is virtually no difference between Jesus, Buddha, Krishna, Moses and others: all of them are just messengers or prophets showing the way to God. According to these manuscripts, Jesus never said he was the only way to God. But this is completely contradictory to John 14:6 where Jesus Himself says, “*I am the way, the truth, and the life. No man comes to the Father except through me*” (see also Acts 4:12, 1 Tim 2:5, John 3:16, John 8:24 and many others as well). Some of these heretical texts have been used as evidence that a number of the early Christians practiced homosexuality and understood Christian baptism as a homosexual rite.⁴ But this is definitely not what the Bible teaches! In the Bible, homosexuality is a sin condemned by God (It is an abomination - Leviticus 18:22; Deuteronomy 23:17-18; I Kings 14:24 and is a sin that keeps people out of heaven: I Corinthians 6:9-10; Galatians 5:19-21, and, importantly, is a sin from which one can be delivered: I Corinthians 6:11).

The Gnostic Jesus

In Gnosticism, Jesus was not the Son of God who died on a cross to forgive the sins of mankind, rather he was a Light-being (one of several) who came from the higher levels of Light (the Aeons) to reveal the truth about man’s plight. He came as a bringer of *gnosis* (the Greek word for knowledge) and taught men how to “ignite the flame hidden within them.” The Gnostic *Gospel of Thomas* makes it clear that salvation is obtained through finding the knowledge hidden within the (so-called) ‘secret’ sayings of Jesus, and that those who experience this knowledge will have their “divine spark ignited” and will not see death. Gnostics also believe that the people who do not obtain this saving gnosis (knowledge) before they die will be reincarnated again and again until they do obtain it. Although this is standard belief in Gnosticism, it is directly opposite to the Bi-

¹ Cited in Lutzer, Erwin; *Seven Reasons You Can Trust the Bible*; Moody Publishers; 1998; p191.

² Philip Jenkins; *Hidden Gospels*; pg 9.

³ Arland Jacobson; *Vine and Branches*, Spring 1994, pg 1.

⁴ Dr. Gregory Boyd; *Jesus Under Siege*; Victor, 1995.

ble, which says, “*it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment*” (Hebrews 9:27); however, the concept of reincarnation is exactly what the Eastern religions teach.

In the television series and best-selling book, *The Power of Myth*, Joseph Campbell discussed the idea that “God was in Christ,” while doing so, Campbell affirmed that “the basic Gnostic and Buddhist idea is that that is true of you and me as well.” Basically, we are all gods we just do not know it; we need to be awakened to that fact.

To understand what is being said here, one needs to understand the Eastern religions’ concept of God. The Eastern mind tends to see God everywhere, in all things. The universe (including the life forms within it) is not so much a creation by God, but more an emanation or extension of God. For Christianity, God is the Creator but he is not part of his creation.

Additionally, even the Gnostic’s physical description of Jesus is foreign to the Bible. In *The Acts of John* (another Gnostic book), John says, “Sometimes when I meant to touch Jesus I met with a material and solid body; but at other times when I felt him, his substance was immaterial and incorporeal, as if it did not exist at all . . . and as I walked with him, I often wished to see his footprints, whether they appeared on the ground, and I never saw them.” This is because Gnostic doctrine holds that all material reality is evil, so they do not believe Jesus Christ was God in the flesh – hence the quote in *The Acts of John* about Jesus being incorporeal and not leaving footprints (a perfect God cannot inhabit imperfect flesh, they say). Yet this concept is in direct opposition to Biblical doctrine: “*Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world. By this you know the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God, and every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God. And this is the spirit of the Antichrist, which you have heard was coming, and is now already in the world*” (1 John 4:1-3, emphasis mine).

Why Gnosticism is so Popular

Regarding these Eastern and Gnostic ‘god-is-in-all-of-us’ views, Gregory Koukl says, a large part of the reason people hold many of the religious views they do (e.g. Gnosticism) is because they are appealing. They want God to be impersonal because an impersonal God cannot make the kind of demands on them that the God of the Bible can. An impersonal divine force does not cramp their style on Saturday night. Eastern religions, Koukl says, are high on individual liberty and low on individual responsibility, and that is appealing.¹

As Marcus Borg bluntly puts it: “There is a lot of interest in early Christian diversity because many people who have left the church—and some who are still in it—are looking for another way of being Christian. Also, the new texts feed America’s ever-sharpening appetite for mystical spirituality. For example, Madonna and Britney Spears are promoting Jewish mysticism, and, as a Zen priest said, ‘*Had I known about the Gospel of Thomas, I would not have had to become a Buddhist!*’”²

No, the Gnostics are not Christian, they do not hold to Christian doctrine, and they do not believe in the Jesus of the Bible. The Jesus and the “hidden” texts that they (as well as Jesus Seminar Fellows) cling to is completely heretical. There are many other differences between Gnosticism and Christianity but space does not permit elaboration (see footnote).³

Although complex and hard to define, to put in one sentence, Gnosticism is a combination of Greek philosophy, Eastern religious beliefs, and Christianity all mixed together.

¹ Koukl, Gregory; *Faith and Facts*; www.str.org

² “Time Goes Gnostic,” *Christianity Today*, 12/16/03, www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2003/150/22.0.html

³ See “Time Goes Gnostic,” *Christianity Today*, 12/16/03, www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2003/150/22.0.html; and “Why the Lost Gospels Lost Out,” 05/21/2004, <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2004/006/7.26.html>

The Jesus Seminar:

Gnostics do not acknowledge Jesus' humanity, and the Jesus Seminar members do not acknowledge His divinity. However, they both twist scripture and neither one follows the historical evidence.

The primary driving force behind the media's present preoccupation with liberal and Gnostic views of Jesus has been the Jesus Seminar. Despite the large amount of media attention the Seminar Fellows get, there are only about forty active members, and they really represent a vast minority of Bible scholars.¹ Greg Koukl, in a article I highly recommend (see reference), writes, "These preachers [the Jesus Seminar] practice evangelism in reverse, for they do not want you to commit your life to the Christ of the Gospels; they want you to surrender that commitment."² The Jesus Seminar meets twice a year to dissect biblical passages. Their goal, they say, is to separate historical fact from mythology. So far, they have rejected as myth the resurrection of Jesus from the dead, the virgin birth, all Gospel miracles, and a full 82% of the sayings normally attributed to Jesus—they are all dismissed as legendary accretions with no historical foundation whatsoever.³

To show you just how non-Christian the Jesus Seminar beliefs are, consider the following:

- Jesus did not ask us to believe that he was the messiah. He certainly never suggested that he was the second person of the trinity. In fact, he rarely referred to himself at all.
- Jesus did not call upon people to repent, or fast, or observe the Sabbath. He did not threaten with hell or promise heaven.
- Jesus did not ask us to believe that he would be raised from the dead.
- Jesus did not ask us to believe that he was born of a virgin.
- Jesus did not regard scripture as infallible or even inspired.⁴

Robert Funk calls Jesus a "secular sage who satirized the pious and championed the poor." He then adds, "Jesus was perhaps the first stand-up Jewish comic. Starting a new religion would have been the farthest thing from his mind."⁵ Furthermore, according to an article in the L.A. Times, there are two things the Jesus Seminar has to say about the resurrection of Jesus. *First*, it never happened...there is no historical evidence for it. In fact, according to the Seminar Fellows, Jesus was taken down from the cross, buried in a shallow grave and probably eaten by dogs.⁶ *Second*, it does not matter. Christians can still celebrate Easter with its symbolic message of hope and new life anyway.

Of course, all of this is completely heretical and in direct opposition to Christianity's teachings.

A Consensus of Scholarly Opinions:

One of the facets of the Jesus Seminar that has most irked scholars outside the Seminar, evangelical and non-evangelical alike, is the general way they represent themselves in their writings and in the media. One sees, for example, throughout the media, phrases like "*critical scholars have concluded*" and "*scholars now realize*" etc., giving the impression that these liberal scholars are representative of what most people who specialize in this field think. Well they're not! Indeed, the conclusions of the Jesus Seminar participants, the Gnostics, and others getting the bulk of the media attention today, are representative only of the left-most fringe of New Testament scholarship. In *The Real Jesus*, Luke Timothy Johnson says that the Jesus Seminar scholars are

¹ Johnson; *The Real Jesus: The Misguided Quest for the Historical Jesus and the Truth of the Traditional Gospels*, Harper; San Francisco; 1996, pg 3

² Greg Koukl; *The Jesus Seminar under Fire*, <http://www.str.org/site/News2?page=NewsArticle&id=5380>

³ ibid

⁴ Keynote Address to the Jesus Seminar Fellows' in the spring of 1994, by Robert W. Funk, Architect and Founder of the Jesus Seminar.

⁵ "Scholars Cite Lack of Resurrection Evidence," *L A Times*, March 11, 1995.

⁶ *Newsweek*, April 4, 1994.

vastly outnumbered (by about 200 to 1 or more), and reveals why they are the ones who get all the media attention: it is because they present, a very controversial, unorthodox, and untraditional Jesus, and the media just eats it up.¹ You need to know and remember this next Easter when you read about what “*scholars are saying*” in your newspaper or on television – or when you see shows such as ABC’s “*The Search For The Historical Jesus*” or Dateline’s “*From Jesus To Christ*,” or whatever show comes out next year.

What these shows say, and what these liberal scholars say does not hold up to the facts of history. In *Jesus Under Siege*, at the end of chapter two, Gregory Boyd writes, “the agenda behind many liberal scholars in the press these days must be judged as misguided, *if only for the simple reason it is not based of the facts*. As we shall show throughout the remainder of this book [which he does], the views of Jesus promoted by these critical scholars simply do not account for the available historical data. In contrast, the views expressed in the Bible are substantiated by a tremendous amount of evidence [*italics in original*].”² (I strongly urge every reader to get a copy of Gregory Boyd’s book, *Jesus Under Siege*).

The Job of a Historian

The liberal scholars distorted view of Jesus is not representative of what happened in history. A historian is supposed to look at history through the lens, if you will, of evidence. They uncover the data and then they report it. They do not reject something as history if all the evidence points to it just because they do not like what it may or may not reveal. As Historian Philip Schaff wrote, “the purpose of the historian is not to construct a history from preconceived notions and to adjust it to his own liking, but to reproduce it from the best evidence and to let it speak for itself.”³

Not Just Minor Differences

The Jesus Seminar, and those like them, do not like the Jesus of the Bible. They want a politically correct Jesus; a Jesus who does not make judgments between right and wrong, or who sets up boundaries between those who are saved and unsaved, or even defining or talking about what ‘sin’ is or isn’t. Their Jesus is just a Jewish prophet (he is not even divine) that goes around doing good deeds and preaching acceptance, tolerance, and concern for those who are oppressed, or, in the case of the Gnostics, someone who goes around imparting “hidden” secret knowledge to a few select individuals.

It is not just some minor squabbles among Christian intellectuals; this is a completely different theology. In *Jesus Under Siege*, Gregory Boyd reveals to us that these liberal and Gnostic scholars are suggesting that each denomination, even each church, be allowed to select their own canon. (*Hey, if you do not like what the Christian religion has been teaching for centuries, that’s okay, you can make up your own doctrine and still call yourselves Christians - sorry for the sarcasm, but I think it’s justified*).

Why They Have This Unorthodox Viewpoint

Elaine Pagels offers some insight as to why the Gnostics and Seminar members believe as they do. Some 20 years after writing *The Gnostic Gospels*, she wrote *Beyond Belief*. In a particularly candid and confessional part of the book, she talks about how she had been alienated from the Christian faith while in high school. Pagels was part of an evangelical church when a Jewish friend died, and her fellow Christians told her that since the friend was not born again, she was going to hell. Though this turned her off from the church, she maintained a lively interest in New

¹ *The Real Jesus: The Misguided Quest for the Historical Jesus and the Truth of the Traditional Gospels*, Harper; San Francisco; 1996, chap 1.

² Gregory Boyd; *Jesus Under Siege*; Victor, 1995; pg 30.

³ McDowell; Resurrection Factor; pg 75.

Testament studies and the early church. While doing doctoral work at Harvard, she had an epiphany. She was reading the Gnostic Gospel of Thomas when she came across this saying of Jesus: "If you bring forth what is within you, what you bring forth will save you." She comments: "The strength of this saying is that it does not tell us what to believe but challenges us to discover what lies hidden within ourselves; and with a shock of recognition, I realized that this perspective seemed to me self evidently true." Here we find the appeal to personal impressions or experience as the final authority. The believer is not asked to believe specific things that come from Scripture, nor to submit to any authority but the self. Instead, we are to be the measure of ourselves and to find our own truths within us. Thus, the (traditional) Bible is not the authority over us, we get to decide for ourselves what is and is not truth.¹

I do not intend to critique every position of the Jesus Seminar and liberal scholars, but will cover three: Jesus' divinity, the resurrection and the virgin birth.

Was Jesus God

Earlier, we already examined the hypothesis that Jesus was not divine (recall that He claimed to be God, and the three alternative choices: liar, lunatic, or Lord), so that Seminar position has already been demonstrated to be false. Following is information regarding the *importance* of the Resurrection to Christian theology:

The Importance of the Resurrection

We have already examined the evidence for the Resurrection in other areas. Here, I will address the Seminar's position that it does not matter.

The Seminar Fellows say, "The resurrection does not matter, Christians can still celebrate Easter with its symbolic message of hope and new life."² What planet do they live on! In 1 Corinthians 15:13-22 we read: *But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ is not risen. And if Christ is not risen, then our preaching is empty and your faith is also empty... if Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins...For in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive.*

If Jesus did not rise from the dead, but instead was buried in a shallow grave and later dug up and eaten by dogs, as Robert Funk asserts, then according to 1 Corinthians, Christians are liars and have nothing to celebrate. Pretty stories not grounded in fact save no one. Only a risen Savior can defeat death.

1 Corinthians 15:55-57 says: *O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin...but thanks be to God, which gives us the victory [over death] through our Lord Jesus Christ.*

Christians (the ones that follow the Bible) know that because Jesus overcame death and lives again, we will overcome death and live again. If the Resurrection is not history then we are still dead in our sins. What are they talking about, *Not important*, it is paramount!

The Virgin Birth

One more item: The Virgin birth. The Bible says that we are sinners in need of forgiveness, and we were born that way. If Jesus was not born of a virgin (as they contend), then He (specifically, His blood) was not sinless and could not have paid the price for our sins. Hebrews 9: 22 says, "Without shedding of blood there is no remission of sin," and 1 John 1:7 says that Christ's blood cleanses us from all sin. Moreover, in order to be able to forgive our sins, Jesus needed to be both fully God and fully man: Jesus endured birth in a manger and death on a Cross, He shared in our

¹ "Why the Lost Gospels Lost Out," *Christianity Today*, 05/21/2004, <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2004/006/7.26.html>

² Los Angeles Times, March 11, 1995.

humanity "so that by His death He might destroy him [Satan] who holds the power of death" (Heb. 2:14). As someone rather poetically once said, "The life of Jesus is bracketed by two impossibilities: a virgin's womb... and an empty tomb."¹

Another Jesus

The Apostle Paul warned the Corinthian Church that people would come and preach a different Jesus, and they shouldn't be listened to. "*But I am afraid that just as Eve was deceived by the serpent's cunning, your minds may somehow be led astray from your sincere and pure devotion to Christ. For if someone comes to you and preaches a Jesus other than the Jesus we preached, or if you receive a different spirit from the one you received, or a different gospel from the one you accepted, you put up with it easily enough*" (2 Cor 11:3-4). Additionally, in 2 Timothy 4:3 it says, "*For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables.*" The Bible is replete with other examples like this (see also 1 John 2:26, Matthew 24:5, 2 Peter 2:1, 1 Tim 4:1-2 and about half a dozen other places too). If these verses do not describe the Jesus Seminar and the Gnostics, I do not know what does.

The historical confirmation of Matthew, Mark, Luke, John and Acts (as well as Paul's writings) is overwhelming. Any attempt to reject their historicity even in minute matters is absurd. It is, however, just this absurdity that the liberal scholars, who are now trying to rewrite early Church history, require us to believe if we are to accept their radical revisionist views. They want us to believe that the canonical Gospels, (as well as Acts and the epistles of Paul) are all fundamentally incorrect in how they present Jesus and his disciples. Despite all the evidence that supports their reliability, we are supposed to believe that the traditional canon of scripture is, in fact, altogether untrustworthy. While the liberals' account of who Jesus was and what he did, even though most of it comes from unreliable 3rd or 4th century Gnostic manuscripts, is supposed to be accepted as factual.

I am afraid I have to agree with Gregory Boyd when he says that the Gnostic gospels are accepted not because of their historical trustworthiness but because of their ideology.² And with Gregory Koukl who says, Gnostics want God to be impersonal, because an impersonal God can't make the kind of demands on them that the God of the Bible can.

Who are you going to believe? A minority of liberal (so-called) scholars that are living 2000 years after Jesus Christ. Or are you going to believe the historical evidence, the archeological evidence, the prophetic and manuscript evidence; the eyewitness testimony of those who were alive when Jesus lived: people who were his friends, and who walked the streets of Galilee with Him (supported, by the way, by a vast majority of experts who have spent their entire lives examining the evidence)? Who are you going to believe? Your eternal soul rests upon this fact.

C.S. Lewis Sums it up Best

Author C.S. Lewis writes: "If Christianity were something we were making up, of course we could make it easier. But it's not. We cannot compete, in simplicity, with people who are inventing religions. How could we? We are dealing with Fact. Of course anybody can be simple if he has no facts to worry about."³ He says this after a long discussion about how and why orthodox Christianity, as revealed by God in the Bible, is the only means of salvation.

Many people want to redefine Christianity and redefine Jesus to conform to their own desire, but what we need to do is to let God tell us what He requires (not the other way around). Again,

¹ Chuck Missler

² Dr. Gregory Boyd; *Jesus Under Siege*; Victor, 1995

³ Lewis, C.S.; *Mere Christianity*; Macmillian publishing; Rev Ed 1984; pg 129.

the early church rejected these 'other' unorthodox texts for two reasons: 1) they were not written by eyewitnesses and 2) they contradicted the Old Testament.

Ever since the beginning of mankind's existence Satan has been distorting God's Word. He wants people to doubt God. He said to Eve in the garden," *Now the serpent was more subtle than any beast of the field that the LORD God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?* (Gen 3:1). You know the story. He got Eve to question God, and to doubt what God said. She ate the fruit and the rest, as they say, is history. Satan has been using this tactic for thousands of years and he is pretty good at it. He knows he cannot get rid of God or God's Word but he is good at casting doubt, deceiving, distorting, and twisting. This is what these alternate Christianities are. Distortions!

Perhaps more now than any time in history, the purity of the gospel message is being attacked and challenged, and yet it is in that very message that salvation can be found. Jesus made that clear when he said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me." (John 14:6). If there were any other way of salvation then Jesus didn't have to die.

If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved (Rom 10:9). If you are not a Christian, please accept Jesus as your Savior today. Right now.

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