

BELIEFS ABOUT THE BIBLE

I. WHAT IT SAYS ABOUT ITSELF

1. It claims to be divinely inspired.

- **2 Timothy 3:16** “God-breathed”

The Greek word is *Theopneustos*. It is a compound word created by combining *Theos* (God) and *pneo* (to breath out). It literally means “breathed out by God”. It wasn’t the writer that was inspired but the writings themselves.

- **2 Peter 1:20-21** The Scriptures aren’t man’s thoughts and ideas but God’s.
- How does verse 21 say that this happened?
- Both of these passages are primarily referring to the Old Testament. What do the following passages say about the divine inspiration of the New Testament?

2 Peter 3:15-16

1 Timothy 5:18 (Luke 10:7)

- **There are two parts to divine inspiration:**

1) **It was God who spoke.**

-Where does Acts 1:16 say the scriptures that David wrote came from?

-In Romans 3:2 what does Paul call the Old Testament scriptures?

-According to 1 Thessalonians 2:13, what did the Thessalonians actually receive from Paul and his companions?

-Over and over in the Bible the scriptures are referred to as “God’s Word,” “the Word of God,” “the Word of the LORD,” etc.

-Time and time again the prophets began their messages with the words, “Thus says the Lord...”

-Jeremiah 1:4-5 describes God’s call. How does the prophet describe this call in v. 4? What does the Lord say that He has done in v. 9?

-The scriptures claim to be the words of God more than 4,000 times.

2) He spoke through men.

-2 Peter 1:21

In his book *Know What You Believe* Paul Little wrote this about how God spoke through the writers and inspired the scriptures:

Inspiration, in the biblical sense, means that God so superintended the writers of scripture that they wrote what He wanted them to write and were kept from error in so doing. . . . This does not mean that the human writers of scripture were practically machines through whom God dictated. Nor does it mean that they were human typewriters whom God punched. On the contrary, their full personalities entered into their writing. Their individual styles are evident, for instance. Their backgrounds are also apparent in what they wrote. But though their human capacities came into play, they were superintended and borne along in a unique way by the Holy Spirit. Because of this, the Bible is called "The Word of God."

It is clear that some material in the Bible came directly from God; it could not otherwise have been known by the human mind. Genesis 1 and 2 are an example of this sort of material, which must have been made known to Moses supernaturally. In other cases, men recorded events which they themselves witnessed; e.g., John wrote about his approach, with Peter, to the empty tomb on the first Easter morning (John 20:3-10). Some writers used records that were already in existence, as Luke did in writing his gospel (Luke 1:1-4). In other instances, God put into men's mouths the very words they should speak, or told them what to write (Jer. 30:1, 2).

When we say that the Bible was divinely inspired, we mean the original manuscripts, which were written in Greek, Hebrew, and Aramaic. It does not mean that latter translations such as the KJV, NASB, or NIV are inspired and free from error. Translations are the word of God only so far as they accurately reflect the original. Some translations are more accurate than others. A committee translation is always best.

- According to 2 Timothy 3:16, how much of the Bible was inspired by God?

-All 66 books of the Old and New Testaments.

-The Bible does not contain the Word of God. It is the Word of God from Genesis to Revelation.

- What does Jesus say about the law in Matthew 5:18? What does this tell us about the divine inspiration of the scriptures? How detailed was it?
- Other important theological words related to the inspiration of scripture:
 - 1) **Verbal Inspiration**- God inspired the words, not just ideas.
 - 2) **Inerrancy**- the original manuscripts were free from error and do not affirm anything that is not according to fact.
 - 3) **Plenary** (all or full)-Some say that the Bible is inspired and accurate when it comes to things like doctrine and ethics but not when it comes to things like history or science. Plenary inspiration means that everything contained in the scriptures is fully inspired and therefore inerrant and authoritative.

2. Bible claims to be true, accurate, and free from error:

- What word does Psalm 12:6 use to describe the scriptures?
- What does Psalm 18:30 say about God's Word?
- Read Psalm 19:7-11 and list each word that describes God's Word?
- How does Psalm 119:160 describe God's Word?
- What does Proverbs 30:5 tell us about the Bible?

3. The Bible claims to be relevant for all time:

- How long does Psalm 119:89 say it will be good for?
- According to Jesus, what is the expiration date on God's Word (Matthew 24:35)?

4. **The Bible says that God's Word is useful:**

- What word does 2 Timothy 3:16 use to describe the scriptures?
 - the Greek word translated "useful" is *ōphelimos* which means profitable, beneficial, or productive.
- According to 2 Timothy 3:16-17, what can the scriptures be used for?
- What four things does 2 Timothy 4:2 say it can be used for?
- Read Ps. 19:7-11. List all the things these verses say that the scriptures can do?
- What does Psalm 119:24 say that the scriptures will act as for us?
- What does Psalm 119:105 say that the Bible will do for us?
- What does Psalm 119:130 say it will do for us?

How did Jesus use the scriptures in the following situations?

- In explaining the difference between true and false worship? (Mark 7:6-9)
- In answering a tough question about the resurrection? (Mark 12:24-27)
- In avoiding a question from an insincere questioner? (Luke 10:25-28)
- Based on these scriptures how would you say that Jesus regarded the scriptures?

II. **EXTERNAL EVIDENCE THAT SUPPORTS THE BIBLE'S CLAIMS ABOUT ITSELF:**

- **Literary Evidence:**

Textual Criticism is the process by which scholars gather together all the existing copies of an ancient document and compare them. The degree to which the copies match determines how sure we can be of the content of the original. Throughout history, before the invention of the printing press, hand-copied books of the New Testament were carried throughout the known world. Today scholars have access to thousands of these manuscripts, which were found in various parts of the world including Africa,

Asia, and Europe. These documents were copied in various time periods over a span of 800 years. The oldest ones date back to the beginning of the second century. A textual critic will gather all the known copies of a manuscript and compare them to see if they agree or disagree.

If the copies vary widely, the textual critic will be uncertain of what the original said. If the copies are in agreement, the textual critic knows with a high degree of coincidence, what the original said.

The number of texts available is a key factor. There is a direct correlation between the number of texts available to the textual critic and the degree of certainty with which he can draw his conclusions. In 1925 A. T. Robertson, who was widely recognized as one of the greatest Greek scholars in the world, said that there were 8,000 manuscripts of the Latin Vulgate, at least 1,000 manuscripts of other earlier versions (such as Syriac and Coptic), 4,000 manuscripts of the Greek New Testament, and 13,000 manuscripts of portions of the Greek New Testament. That was 74 years ago and there are even more now. By comparison there are only 643 manuscripts of the *Iliad* by Homer. This is the next largest number of manuscripts for any ancient text after the New Testament! One authority wrote, "The Bible, compared with other ancient writings, has more manuscript evidence than any ten pieces of classical literature combined."

Another key factor the textual critic looks at in determining the certainty of the text is how large the time gap is between when the original manuscript was written and the dates of the earliest manuscripts we now have in our possession. When it comes to the New Testament, the gap is far smaller than with any other ancient text. With Homer's *Iliad* the gap is 500 years. By comparison, the New Testament's gap is only 25 years!

Textual critics, whether they are Christian, Jew, Muslim, or agnostic agree that the text of the Bible is certain!

Sir Frederick G. Kenyon, who was the director and principal librarian at the British Museum said, "Both the authenticity and the general integrity of the books of the New Testament may be regarded as firmly established."

- **Archaeological Evidence:**

Millar Burrows of Yale wrote, "Archaeology has in many cases refuted the views of modern critics [of the Bible]. It has shown in a number of instances that these views rest on false assumptions and unreal, artificial schemes of historical development... The excessive skepticism of many liberal theologians stems not from a careful evaluation of the available data, but from an enormous predisposition against the supernatural."

The great archaeologist, William F. Albright, said, "The excessive skepticism shown toward the Bible by the important historical schools of the eighteenth and nineteenth

centuries, certain phases of which still appear periodically, has been progressively discredited. Discovery after discovery has established the accuracy of innumerable details and has brought increased recognition to the value of the Bible as a source of history.... As critical study of the Bible is more and more influenced by the rich new material from the ancient Near East we shall see a steady rise in respect for the historical significance of now neglected or despised passages and details in the Old and New Testament.”

Over and over critics have claimed that different cities and individuals mentioned in the Bible never really existed, and time after time archeology has proven these charges to be false. Some examples:

Critics said that King David was fictional because the only references to him were found in the Bible. In 1993, Professor Avraham Biran discovered a 3,000 year old monumental inscription written on black basalt by one of Israel’s foreign enemies at ‘Tel Dan in northern Israel. It includes a reference to the “House of David”. Authorities regard this as strong evidence that David really was a King of Israel as the Bible says.

This is just one of the many examples that could be presented. In fact, discoveries are being made at such a rapid rate that by the time a book on them can get published it is already out-dated. **When it comes to history and geography the Bible is absolutely accurate!**

- **Fulfilled Prophecy:**

There are more than 300 Old Testament prophecies concerning the Messiah which were fulfilled by Jesus. In addition, there are an incredible number of prophecies concerning other future events that have been fulfilled.

One example: A prophecy concerning the destruction of Tyre (a Phoenician stronghold on the coast of modern-day Lebanon) is found in Ezekiel 26:1-15. The city was well fortified with walls about 150 feet high and 15 feet thick. Not long after Ezekiel’s prophecy was given, Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, laid a 13 year siege to Tyre (586-573 B.C.). His strategy was to cut off everything coming into the city so that the people would eventually be forced to surrender or starve. By the time he breached the walls of the city the people of Tyre had secretly relocated all their valuables and most of their citizens to a small island a half mile offshore. Although he destroyed the coastal city of Tyre, Nebuchadnezzar was unable to attack the island city because he didn’t have a navy. Consequently, he gained no spoils from his victory. Ezekiel’s prophecy remained partially fulfilled until about 250 years later when Alexander the great approached Tyre on his way to Egypt after defeating the Persians. When the people of Tyre refused to open their gates to him, he laid siege to the island. His strategy was to build a causeway from the mainland to the island by scraping the debris from the old city into the ocean (vv. 4-5, & 12). The island city was protected with huge walls that reached to the edge of

the sea. To scale the walls, Alexander built 160-foot high mobile siege towers that held artillery, troops, and a drop bridge. The artillery was shot at defenders on the city's wall from the towers as other soldiers slowly pushed the towers along the causeway. When they reached the wall, the bridges were lowered, thereby allowing Alexander's army to penetrate the city. The siege lasted seven months. Alexander's troops killed 8,000 people and sold 30,000 into slavery. The coastal city of Tyre has never been rebuilt, and today it is a place where fisherman dry their nets just as Ezekiel predicted in 26:5. Every detail of Ezekiel's prophecy has been fulfilled.

We could write a huge book documenting other biblical prophecies like this one that were fulfilled with incredible, historically documented detail. How could the scriptures predict future events with such accuracy? Its human authors wrote under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit!

- **Scientific Evidence**

The Bible isn't only accurate when it comes to history and geography, but also when it comes to science. Paul Little writes, "The Bible describes things as they appear to be rather than in precise scientific terms. We say that the sun rises in the east. Technically, we know that the sun does not really 'rise,' but even the *Naval Almanac* uses the term 'sunrise,' and we would not charge the Almanac with error. The Bible has been understood in many different cultures all throughout history because of the way it describes things. It does not claim to be a textbook on science, but where it touches scientific matters, it does not give misinformation."

Many of its scientifically accurate statements were made centuries before scientists made the same discoveries. Two examples concerning the earth are that it is round (Isaiah 40:22) and it is suspended on nothing (Job 26:7). These are only two of many examples that could be cited.

After the Scopes Trial many scoffed at the idea of creation. Naturalistic evolution was largely accepted as scientific fact. Many theologians worked hard at reconciling evolution and the Biblical record.

Today even some secular scientists are abandoning the theory of evolution because of lack of evidence. This is commonly referred to as the Intelligent Design Movement because they talk about evidence of design in the universe and say that it is too complex to have all just come about by chance. Most of these scientists are not Christians and contrary to what critics claim their views are not based on scripture. They are based on scientific evidence. For example, they point out that modern genetic research has given evolution a severe blow. Evolutionary scientist had constructed complex charts showing how one species evolved from another and how two species both evolved from a common ancestor. DNA has now proved that these charts and the supposed relationships between various species were totally wrong. Another problem faced by evolutionists is their inability to find *any* fossils documenting one species in transition to becoming another. If one animal slowly changed into another over billions of years, why are there

no fossils to prove it? There is evidence of small changes that take place within a species, but there is no evidence of one species changing into another. A good book written from this perspective is *Darwin on Trial* by Phillip Johnson. He teaches law at Berkley and is a recognized expert at analyzing arguments and determining their validity. For awhile he worked on staff at the U.S. Supreme Court where he analyzed the reasoning in the arguments that were presented to the justices. Today he travels around the country debating university professors who believe in evolution.

Unlike Intelligent Design, which provides a secular alternative to evolution, Creationism is a biblically based, Christian alternative. One of the best sources of information on Creationism is Answers in Genesis (www.AnswersInGenesis.org). Their scientists have produced numerous books and DVDs dealing with various scientific issues and effectively defending the biblical record.

- **Conclusion**

There is more than enough evidence out there if you want to take the time to study it. I have presented these examples to give you a small glimpse at what is available. Dr. Collins, a seminary professor and field archaeologist with a Ph.D. in anthropology, says that the evidence available today is more than enough to satisfy anyone who is genuinely searching for the truth.