

# How Do I Know the Bible is True?

## *Seven reasons to trust the Scriptures*

Muslims claim *The Koran* is the perfect revelation of Allah given to the prophet Muhammad by the angel Gabriel. It corrects corrupted Jewish and Christian scriptures and supersedes all other religious writings.

Members of the Unification Church say *Divine Principle* is their written authority, coming from the Rev. Sun Myung Moon, “the Lord of the Second Advent” who completed the work Jesus left unfinished when Jesus died on the cross rather than marrying and having children.

Mormons profess belief in four standard works: *The Book of Mormon*, *Doctrine and Covenants*, *Pearl of Great Price*, and the Bible (“as far as it is translated correctly”). *The Book of Mormon* is especially important, recording Jesus’ appearance in America to the descendants of a Jewish prophet; it is, in Mormon teaching, “Another Testament of Jesus Christ.”

Adherents to the Church of Scientology study *Dianetics*, a book by one-time science fiction writer L. Ron Hubbard, who claimed that people are eternal beings who go through a series of rebirths and must shed the negative baggage from past lives in order to become “operating thetans.”

Then, of course, there’s the Bible, which most Christians agree is the Word of God.

Add to these the sacred writings of countless other belief systems – from Buddhism to Baha’ism – and the claims to truth are astounding in their number and variety.

But which of these books is really true? Is it possible that all of them contain *some* truth – or that all of them are true for the people who choose to believe them? Is it narrow-minded, arrogant, or even bigoted to say that any of these writings is false? Why do Christians insist that the Bible is *the* Word of God? Can’t we all just get along?

Most Christians believe in the veracity of Scripture. That is, we trust the Bible to be the inerrant, infallible, and inspired Word of God and the authoritative source of all we believe and practice. By inerrant, we mean the original autographs are without error. By infallible, we mean the Bible is incapable of error because God, as its author, does not lie or make mistakes. By inspired, we mean the Bible is “God breathed.” And by authoritative, we mean that the Bible, as God’s Word, is His written revelation to us and must therefore guide our thoughts, words and deeds.

But many people – including some professing Christians – do not share such a high view of Scripture. They raise serious objections to the church’s claims about the Bible’s truthfulness and reliability. For example, some critics charge:

- “No one really knows what Bible says because we don’t have the original manuscripts.”
- “It’s silly to assume that one book – the Bible – contains all of God’s truth and that other great writings, from the *Vedas* to *The Book of Mormon*, do not come from God.”
- “The Bible is full of contradictions.”

Responding to these objections is a daunting task – in part because critics raise some valid points. For example, it’s true that we do not have the “autographs,” or the original documents written by the Bible’s human authors. At the same time, the Bible soars above other ancient documents in many convincing ways, giving us good reasons to trust it as the Word of God. In the paragraphs below we offer seven reasons to trust the Scriptures.

### Reason 1: The documents

While the autographs, or original manuscripts, of the Bible have not survived the ravages of time, no other book from the ancient world has more, earlier, or more accurately copied manuscripts than the Bible. For example, we have 25,000 – 30,000 handwritten copies of the New Testament, 5,700 of them in Greek. This is astounding when you consider that the average Greek author has fewer than 20 copies of his works – and no originals – still in existence. Even if there were no copies of these biblical texts, we could reconstruct the entire New Testaments from the writings of the ancient church fathers, who quoted from the New Testament more than one million times. In addition, the existing Bible manuscripts are relatively older than other ancient documents, dating closer to the time of the originals, thus lending credence to their reliability. Finally, while these documents vary somewhat as they have been copied over the years, nearly all of the variants are minor, and none of them challenges a single doctrine of the Christian faith.

### Reason 2: The scribes

The 40 men who penned the Scriptures over a period of 1,500 years insisted that their message came from God. Many were persecuted, or even martyred, for their faith. The authors of the Bible claimed to be under the direction of the Holy Spirit (2 Sam. 23:2; 2 Peter 1:20-21). The prophets ascribed their message to God. Phrases such as “Thus saith the Lord,” “God said,” and “the Word of the Lord came to me” are found hundreds of times in the Bible. The apostle Paul declared that “All Scripture is inspired by God” (2 Tim. 3:16). Peter referred to the writings of Paul as “Scriptures” (2 Peter 3:16). Even non-Christian ancient writings attest to the truthfulness of the eyewitness accounts of Christ. For example, the Jewish historian Josephus, in his *Jewish Antiquities*, written

in the last third of the first century, corroborates the claims of the New Testament writers that Jesus was more than a man; He was the Messiah, and rose from the dead on the third day (18:63-64, quoted in “The Historical Reliability of the New Testament,” Craig L. Blomberg, *Reasonable Faith: Christian Truth and Apologetics*, p. 215).

### Reason 3: Fulfilled prophecy

The Old Testament features nearly 300 prophecies of the Messiah, the latest of which dates to more than 200 years before the birth of Jesus, who fulfilled every Messianic prophecy except those pertaining to His glorious return one day. Many of these ancient prophecies are highly detailed, making it impossible – apart from divine intervention – for one man to fulfill them all. Yet Jesus did, confirming His identity as the Messiah (or Christ), and providing exceptional evidence for the reliability of Scripture. Among the Messianic prophecies fulfilled in Jesus are:

- His virgin birth (Isa. 7:14; Matt. 1:21)
- His birthplace in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2; Matt. 2:1; Luke 2:4-7)
- His miracle-working authority (Isa. 35:5-6; Matt. 9:35)
- His rejection by the Jews (Ps. 118:22; 1 Peter 2:7)
- His suffering and death (Ps. 22; Isa. 53; Matt. 27:27ff)
- His resurrection (Ps. 16:10; Mark 16:6; Acts 2:31; 1 Cor. 15:3-8)
- His ascension into heaven (Ps. 68:18; Acts 1:9)
- His place today at the Father’s right hand (Ps. 110:1; Heb. 1:3)

In addition, the Bible gives us many supernatural confirmations of its divine origin. For example, Moses, Elijah and other prophets were given the authority to perform miracles to confirm God’s sovereign power and divine message through them. Jesus, were are told by Luke, was “a man accredited by God to you by miracles, wonders and signs, which God did among you through him, as you yourselves know” (Acts 2:22).

### Reason 4: Archaeology

The unearthing of ancient sites has confirmed the accuracy of the biblical record. Noted archaeologist Nelson Glueck states, “As a matter of fact ... it may be stated categorically that no archaeological discovery has ever controverted a biblical reference. Scores of archaeological findings have been made which confirm in clear outline or exact detail historical statements in the Bible” (*Rivers in the Desert*, p. 31, quoted in *Systematic Theology*, p. 557 ).

Examples of archaeological confirmations include the Tower of Babel (Gen. 11); Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen. 18-19); the fall of Jericho (Josh. 6); King David (2 Sam.); and the Assyrian Captivity (Isa. 20). In the New Testament book of Acts alone there are hundreds of archaeological confirmations. During decades of research, Sir William Ramsay wrote,

“I found myself often brought into contact with the book of Acts as an authority for the topography, antiquities, and society of Asia Minor. It was gradually borne in upon me that in various details the narrative showed marvelous truth” (*St. Paul the Traveler and the Roman Citizen*, p. 8, quoted in *Systematic Theology*, p. 558).

### Reason 5: Jesus

Jesus claimed to be the Messiah (or Christ), the Son of God and the Son of Man (Matt. 16:16-18; 26:63-64; John 8:58). He was confirmed by acts of God (John 3:2; Acts 2:22) and declared that He had been given all authority in heaven and earth to rule and to judge (Matt. 28:18; John 5:22). Therefore, His views on the Bible are extremely important. What did Jesus have to say?

Norman Geisler writes, “Jesus declared that the Old Testament was *divinely authoritative* (Matt. 4:4, 7, 10); *imperishable* (Matt. 5:17-18); *infallible* (John 10:35); *inerrant* (Matt. 22:29; John 17:17); historically reliable (Matt. 12:40; 24:37-38); scientifically accurate (Matt. 19:4-5; John 3:12); and ultimately supreme (Matt. 15:3, 6)” (*Systematic Theology*, p. 559).

In addition, Jesus promised that the New Testament would be God’s Word. He told the apostles that the Holy Spirit would teach them “all things” and lead them into “all truth” (John 14:26; 16:13). The apostles later claimed this divine authority for their words (John 20:31; 1 John 1:1-4; 4:1-6). Peter acknowledged Paul’s writings as “Scriptures” (2 Peter 3:15-16).

Jesus also personally affirmed many things that Bible critics deny, for example: 1) God created a literal Adam and Eve (Matt. 19:4); Jonah actually was swallowed by a great fish (Matt. 12:40); the whole world was destroyed by a flood in Noah’s day (Matt. 24:36-39); and there was one prophet (not two or three) who wrote all of Isaiah (Mark 7:6-7; Luke 4:17-21).

### Reason 6: The Holy Spirit

The same Holy Spirit who authored Scripture (2 Tim. 3:16-17) lives in believers’ hearts and “testifies together with our spirit that we are God’s children” (Rom. 8:16). This means the Holy Spirit confirms the truth of God’s Word to us. Jesus taught that the Holy Spirit would convince the lost of their sin of unbelief, of the righteousness of Christ, and of the judgment they will share with Satan if they persist in their unbelief – all clear teachings of Scripture (John 16:7-11).

## Reason 7: The redeemed

The Bible's life-changing power is widely known through the testimony of those who have come to know Christ. The apostle Paul, once known as a Christ-hating persecutor of the church, declared, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is God's power for salvation to everyone who believes, first to the Jew, and also to the Greek" (Rom. 1:16). Peter added, "... you have been born again – not of perishable seed but of imperishable – through the living and enduring word of God" (1 Peter 1:23).

The celebrated British archaeologist Sir William Ramsay, who began his studies as a skeptic, became a Christian after exploring the sites of Paul's journeys firsthand and comparing them with the testimony of Acts ("The Historical Reliability of the New Testament," Craig L. Blomberg, *Reasonable Faith: Christian Truth and Apologetics*, p. 220).

Millions of personal testimonies throughout the ages lend credence to the power of God's Word to convey truth, convict the spiritually dead of their sins and bring new life through faith in Jesus Christ. As the writer of Hebrews declares: "For the word of God is living and effective and sharper than any two-edged sword, penetrating as far as to divide soul, spirit, joints, and marrow; it is a judge of the ideas and thoughts of the heart" (Heb. 4:12).