

IS THE BIBLE RELIABLE? ©

August 23, 2011

In this, and future articles, I will be referring to the Mormon Church as a sect instead of a cult, with the definition of a sect as, “a *religious group with beliefs typically regarded as heretical to Christianity.*” I am changing the terminology because the word “cult” dredges up pictures of extreme radicalism like the Jim Jones and Waco cults, which are defined as “destructive cults.” It is unfair to label benign cults as such.

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and send me your email address.*

(The previous article on “God and the Trinity” can now be located in the Newsletter Archives.)

Recommended. Since the subject of this article is the Bible’s reliability, I would like to recommend a website. It is www.adamsroadband.com. The Adams Road Band is a non-profit Christian band and ministry made up of former Mormons who share God’s word through their music, four of whom were full time missionaries. You will enjoy their music, but what I am specifically recommending is for you to scroll down to the U-tube video of their personal testimonies. In it they describe how they were led to study the Bible, and how it brought them out of Mormonism.

To watch the video, follow these directions: As soon as you are on the site, music automatically comes on. But, in order to hear the video you will have to turn off the home page’s music by clicking on the stop button at the very top of the screen (*the small square block*). Then, scroll down to the video, sit back and be impressed.

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*“Test and prove all things.”
(1 Thess. 5:21)*



Is it really “God-breathed?”

(2 Tim. 3:16)

The reliability of the Bible is a subject that a friend of mine suggested, and I’m glad she did, because the Mormon Church takes the view that it is inaccurate, therefore unreliable. But I’m also writing this article because there are Christians who will appreciate having their faith in the Bible confirmed for reasons presented further below.

1 Thess. 5:21 says to “*Test and prove all things; hold fast to that which is good.*” Testing means just that, and it applies to the Bible as well as to anything else. So, external proofs will be examined to determine whether the Bible is reliable or not via an objective approach—that is, as Detective Joe Friday said on the old Dragnet series, “Just the facts, ma’am . . . just the facts.”

I am excited about the subject, since I will be providing archaeological evidences, a subject that has fascinated and energized me for years. This is because I’m drawn to the study of things scientific, whether it is archaeology, astronomy, quantum physics, string theory, multiple universes, or whatever. This, however, does not mean I do not get as enthusiastic over the spiritual aspects of the Bible; but I do acknowledge this bent. Further, I have come to realize that this proclivity can prove a positive in religious matters. It motivates one to ask questions, dig for answers, and when found can establish the truth or falsehood of what one is investigating

My other motivation for writing, mentioned earlier, is that there are Christians who occasionally experience spikes of doubt, especially when they hear declarations from certain Bible scholars and academics as follows:

- The Bible is nothing more than a book of poetic mythology, comparable to Homer's *Iliad*.
- Adam and Eve, Noah, Moses, David, and some of the kings mentioned in the Bible, never existed.
- The JEPD theory proves that Moses did not write the first five books of the Bible.
- The Old Testament books are not contemporary records, but Jewish fables and folklore fabricated centuries after the events took place.
- The Bible is unreliable as a *historical* document.

One must not underestimate the impact the above had in the 20th century, and still does—not only on the general populace, but also on Christians. Today's culture, with its advancements in science, technology and intellectuality (*which by themselves are not bad*) has taken a negative toll on Christianity in general, and on Christians in particular under the guise of scientific and intellectual study. This has resulted in a gradual abandonment of the Bible's historical accuracy, its inspiration, miracles, prophecies, and divinity of Jesus Christ. This has left some Christians struggling with such perplexing questions as:

- Is the Bible reliable as a *historical* document? If hard evidence proves it isn't, this means the Bible contains serious flaws.
- Is the Bible reliable as the actual "Word of God?" How can we know for sure?
- Does the fact that the words of the Bible inspire people make it true?
- Were the Old Testament books written in the time period claimed, or centuries later by anonymous Jews?
- Has the Bible been preserved from corruption down through the centuries? If it hasn't, then how do we know that what we have today is accurate?
- Does the discovery of ancient manuscripts corroborate the accuracy of today's Old and New Testaments?
- Do the nearly four thousand year-old statements in the Old Testament about the universe match today's scientific facts? If not, this makes the rest of the Bible suspect.
- Do archaeological discoveries coincide or conflict with the Biblical accounts?
- Was Jesus really the Son of God, or simply an anointed teacher?

In view of all the above, I have geared this article for:

- Christians influenced by negative Bible critics, who need their faith confirmed.
- Christians who want to become better informed about the Bible from an intellectual standpoint.
- Christians desiring to be more effective witnesses in answering skeptics and critics.
- Non-Christians who need proof of the Bible's reliability.
- Mormons, who believe the Bible is unreliable.

The following are the major headings:

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| I. Does faith alone in the Bible make it true? | V. Do scientific statements about the universe in the Bible match today's scientific facts? |
| II. Are personal testimonies evidence of the truthfulness of a religion's sacred book? | VI. What is the Pseudepigrapha, or pseudonymous writings? |
| III. Do archaeological digs confirm the Bible as a reliable, historical document? | VII. What are the Apocryphal and Deuterocanonical books? Why weren't they included in the canon? |
| IV. Do ancient manuscripts verify the accuracy of today's Bible? | VIII. What are the missing books of the Bible? How important are they? |

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| IX. What is the JEDP theory? Should we believe it? | XI. Could Jesus have been other than the Son of God? |
| X. Are there fulfilled prophecies that bear out the divine inspiration of the Bible? | XII. Is the Bible actually the “Word of God?” |
| | XIII. What is the Mormon Church’s perspective on the Bible? |

Just a note of explanation before we start:

In the article I will be referring to “Bible critics.” This does not mean lay people who criticize the Bible, such as atheists or agnostic, or those who have a vicious hatred for the Bible; but, rather, Bible scholars and academics who specialize in certain fields of inquiry. Unfortunately, many of them become so engrossed in their academics, that they are not concerned how it will affect the faith of Christians. A good example are the theologians composing the “Jesus Seminar,” who analyze spirituality right out of the Bible.

When you come to the section on the JEPD Theory, I will be referring to a class of Bible critics, called “Higher Critics.” These are Biblical scholars whose field of inquiry is to check out origins of texts, diction and style, to see who really wrote a certain book in the Bible, if there were multiple authors, and how it should be chronologically ordered. (These are the critics who attribute the first five books of Moses to authors other than Moses.)

I. DOES FAITH ALONE IN THE BIBLE MAKE IT TRUE?

The answer is, “No.” Just because Christians exhibit faith in the Bible doesn’t necessarily make it true. The reason faith cannot be the whole criteria, is because sect members also exhibit faith in their book of scriptures—scriptures that contradict the Bible. For example, followers of Sun Myung Moon’s Unification Church have a fervent faith in their “Divine Principle,” Mormons, in the Book of Mormon; Muslims, in the Koran; Hindus, in the Upanishads; Chinese in the I Ching; Islam, in the Koran. There are many religious groups with sacred books claiming to be inspired. Therefore, faith can be attained in any religious book.

So, if both members of sects as well as Christians exhibit faith in their sacred books, what’s going on? What is faith? How do we define it?

The answer is, that rather than it being something supernatural, it is a human choice—a decision one makes. (*We’re not talking about the gift of faith mentioned in the Bible—that’s another subject.*) Once that decision is made, the human heart and emotions follow after it, and what results is a personal testimony.

II. ARE PERSONAL TESTIMONIES EVIDENCE OF THE TRUTHFULNESS OF A RELIGION’S SACRED BOOK?

Testimonies can be impressive. Many are influenced by these verbal declarations, and all religions use them as a witnessing tool. Whether one is a Christian or member of a sect, he or she is prone to think that a powerful personal testimony should be enough to validate their religion’s sacred literature and beliefs to others and to themselves. Unfortunately, testimonies are subjective (*an opinion influenced solely by personal bias and emotion that exists only in a person’s mind and heart*). Mormons declare strong testimonies and gain many converts; but many of these converts realize later that they should have made a more *objective* investigation, rather than let themselves be influenced by the subjective testimonies of Mormons. Testimonies may be a favorable “starting point,” but should not be the whole piece of cake. Even if ten people should give the same testimony about a religious book, it still doesn’t constitute evidence—even if what one hears makes them “feel good.”

In a court of law, where testimonies of witnesses are required, there is a lawful mechanism to test and assess these witnesses' so-called evidence for reliability or credibility via corroboration and substantiation. When a court lacks the means to do this, the testimony is considered as having "no weight." The same goes for personal religious testimonies. They are powerful convincers, but being subjective they have no weight unless there is strong corroboration and substantiation.

If Christians believe that God expects them to subjectively accept the Bible on blind faith, they are in the same company with Mormons who accept the Book of Mormon without investigating external proofs of the ancient culture who supposedly produced the writings. Both the Bible and the Book of Mormon claim to be historical documents, so evidences should exist. If there is no hard evidence to back up the Bible (or Book of Mormon), one's faith is in vain. Therefore, before one takes any sacred book, lock, stock and barrel, objectivity is critical.

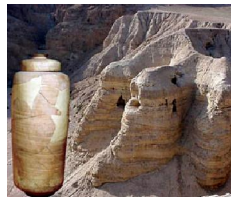
What does objectivity mean? *"An opinion based strictly on observable phenomena, not influenced by personal bias or emotion."*

So, when it comes to the Bible, this means examining evidence found in archaeology, ancient manuscripts and other historical records. We can also throw in whether Biblical prophecies have been fulfilled, since this would demonstrate whether the Old Testament prophets were really inspired. Therefore, the admonition, *"Distrust testimony without evidence"* is an imperative, and applies to Mormons, other sects, and to Christians.

Some Christians may say, *"I don't need these proofs to believe the Bible is factual!"* Nevertheless, it is a valuable tool for witnessing to members of sects who need to be convinced one way or the other between their religion's sacred book and the Bible. In the process of that dialogue, it should boil down to: "Which is more verifiable?" (See endnote for LDS scholars' attempt to validate the Book of Mormon with no archaeological evidence, ancient manuscripts, or historical evidence.)¹

What are the external evidences that could demonstrate the reliability of the Bible?

III. DO ARCHAEOLOGICAL DIGS CONFIRM THE BIBLE AS A RELIABLE HISTORICAL DOCUMENT?



If archaeological findings establish the historicity of the Bible, it should cause a severe shaking among the critics. And it has—although there are still some die-hards out there who refuse to give up.

The section below shows the negative claims against the Bible by certain scholars and skeptics, and the discoveries that have invalidated their assessments. It is a somewhat lengthy list; nevertheless, important:

- **King David never existed.** Archaeologist uncovered the Tel Dan Stele, dating to 900-850 BC. (*Steles are upright stones that are inscribed and used as monuments marking an important event or achievement by kings and rulers.*) Carved upon its face was "House of David," affirming that the united monarchy under King David really did exist in history, flatly contradicting long-held opinions of skeptics.
- **No written language existed at the time of Moses, only hieroglyphics; therefore, Moses could not have written the Pentateuch** (first five books of the Bible.) The ancient art of writing sacred literature

was confirmed with the discovery of the Ebla tablets in Abraham's homeland. They date as far back as 3000 BC, long before Moses was born, and exhibit written language, not hieroglyphics.

- **No inscriptions with the name of God (JHWH) have been found in Jerusalem.** In 1979, two small silver scrolls were discovered in a burial tomb near Jerusalem that date to the seventh century BC, the first temple period. Its contents predate the famous Dead Sea Scrolls' contents by approximately four centuries, providing evidence of the Bible's antiquity. Etched upon the scrolls was the word, 'YHWH'. It was the first find of Jehovah's name in Jerusalem up to that time. It also contained the priestly blessing recorded in Numbers 6:24-26 and Psalms 67:2: "*The Lord bless you and keep you; The Lord make His face shine upon you,*" etc. The significance of this is that critics insisted that this particular verse was not written during Moses' time, but after the Babylonian exile. (See <http://www.crystalinks.com/scrollsilver.html>)
- **The nation of the Hittites in Gen. 15:20 and elsewhere, is a fable.** In 1906, archaeologists unearthed the ruins of the Hittites' chief city in the ruins of Hattusa (Lion Gate) in Bogazkoy, Turkey, along with 10,000 cuneiform tablets, showing they ruled as early as 1,900 BC!
- **The Assyrians were a mythological people.** In the 19th century the capital city and palace of Sargon (*Assyrian King mentioned in Isa. 20:1*) was unearthed on the plains of Northern Iraq.
- **No verification of Old Testament kings.**
 - (1) *The Meesha Stele* (846 BC) records the revolt of Meesha, *King of Moab*, against Israel. It also mentions *Omri, King of Israel*, and *David of the United Monarchy*. It even refers to Yahweh, the unique name of the God of Israel. This, and other steles provide a powerful external witness that the Bible recorded the true history of the kings of Israel, as well as their interactions with other foreign kings.
 - (2) *The King Nabonidus Cylinder* (550 BC). Critics claim that the Book of Daniel was wrong—that Belshazzar was never a king in Babylon, Nabonidus was not his father, and is wrong in naming Daniel as the “third” ruler of the kingdom: “*Now if you (Daniel) can read the writing and make known to me its interpretation, you shall be clothed with purple and have a chain of gold around your neck, and shall be the THIRD ruler in the kingdom*” (Dan 5:16) However, the critics have been proved wrong again. On this cylinder, *King Nabonidus* mentions his elder son, Belshazzar by name, explaining that Nabonidus was in a co-regency with his son Belshazzar, who was the crown prince of Babylon, which would indeed make Daniel the “third” ruler in the kingdom. (For pictures of these steles, go to: <http://www.answersingenesis.org/articles/am/v6/n2/archaeological-finds>)
- **No evidence of ancient Israel as a people during the Exodus period.** The discovery of the granite *Merneptah Stele* (AKA, *Israel Stele* or *Victory Stele of Merneptah*), erected by King Amenhotep III, reveals an inscription on the reverse side by the ancient Egyptian King Merneptah (reign: 1213 to 1203 BC) that verifies Israel's existence. It is the earliest known attestation of the Israelite people. It is the only ancient Egyptian document generally accepted as mentioning "Isrir" or "Israel," referring to a people, not a place.
- **Caiaphas, the New Testament Jewish High Priest, didn't exist.** In 1990, the burial grounds for Caiaphas and his family, including the stone box containing his bones, were uncovered in Jerusalem.
- **Jesus was not nailed to the cross, but “tied” according to Roman Custom.** In 1999, the skeletal remains of a young man in his early twenties was found who was crucified in the first century according to the method described in John's Gospel. His arms had been nailed to a crossbar, and a large single nail driven through both heels (*one nail was still lodged in one heel*). The shinbones had also been broken.
- **No such person as Pontius Pilate.** In June 1961 an inscription on a limestone block found at a Roman amphitheater in Caesarea Maritima, reads: “Tiberieum, (Pon)tius Pilatus, (Praef)ectus Iuda(eae).” Translation: “Tiberium, Pontius Pilate, Prefect of Judea.” Critics were silenced.
- **No evidence of the existence of James, the brother of Jesus.** One of the greatest archaeological finds of the century was the 1970 discovery of the ossuary (bone box) of James, leader of the church at Jerusalem, and brother of Jesus. The box was inscribed: "Ya'akov bar Yosef akhui di Yeshua;" the translation: "*James, son of Joseph, brother of Jesus.*" While it was not uncommon for the name of the

deceased to include the name of a father on ossuaries, this is the only known case of a *brother* being mentioned, indicating the importance of that brother. The box's authenticity was hotly debated and even went to trial, but many of the experts who claimed it was a hoax recanted their findings under cross-examination. Not a single expert on Semitic inscriptions of the period has testified that the ossuary is a forgery, thus establishing the box's claim as valid. Some, however, would still like to dispute this. But, Prof. Krumbein, world-renowned expert on geology, geochemistry and microbiology, performed a detailed analysis of the box and its inscription, and concluded that identification of the ossuary as James' was at a 99.9997% confidence level. The box and inscription not only verify the existence of James, but of Jesus. (*See endnote for more detail.*)²

As early as 1960, Dr. Nelson Glueck, an outstanding Jewish archaeologist of this century, wrote the following: (*other scholars have since agreed with him*):

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 in exact detail historical statements in the Bible.³

U.S. News & World Report stated in 1981:

A wave of archaeological discoveries is altering old ideas about the roots of Christianity and Judaism – and affirming that the Bible is more historically accurate than many scholars thought.⁴

There are many more archaeological finds that verify the authenticity of the Bible as a historical document. I had hoped to list every one here, but it would take more space than this article allows for. Therefore, I have listed twenty-seven more in this endnote.⁵

The question, “Can we trust the Bible?” now appears unintelligent in light of the thousands of sites excavated throughout the Middle East. Pastor, Dr. Lon Solomon said: “*The more they dig out of the ground, the more the Bible proves to be right.*”⁶

IV. DO ANCIENT MANUSCRIPTS VERIFY THE ACCURACY OF TODAY'S BIBLE



I do not plan to cover how ancient manuscripts are dated, what they are made of, or the particulars of where they were found. Websites that provide this information are listed in this endnote.⁷

Anti-Bible critics, the Mormon Church and other sects, argue that the Bible is unreliable because the original manuscripts of the authors are no longer in existence—only corrupted copies that are often copies of copies of copies. The only way to answer this, is to verify the painstaking methods scribes and copyists took in their copying procedures.

Jewish scribes were professionally trained in the art of writing and bookmaking, and developed procedures to protect copies from error—especially because they believed they were dealing with the very Word of God. To show how meticulous they were to avoid mistakes, they copied all the texts in capital letters with no punctuation or paragraphs. When they were through, they would total up the number of letters. Then they would

find the middle letter of the book. If it was not the same as what they copied from, they laboriously started over and made a new copy . . . and these scrolls were sometimes 45 feet in length!

Nevertheless, considering the time-span and number of manuscripts involved (thousands), some scribal errors were bound to occur. But they more often consisted of accidental errors like an omitted word, a duplicate line, or a misspelling. In some instances, redactions (commentaries) were inserted in the margins or text when they felt they needed to clarify a matter. Scholars are easily able to identify these.

How old are the Bible manuscripts we presently have for the “Old” Testament?

The Septuagint. This 300-130 BC Greek translation of the Jewish scriptures (*often referred to as the LXX because it was done by seventy Jewish scholars in Alexandria around 200 BC*) is the oldest record of the complete text.

The Codex Sinaiticus. A handwritten copy of the above Septuagint that dates to the fourth century.

The Codex Vaticanus. Dating from the 4th century, it is thought to be the oldest, nearly complete, copy of the Greek Bible (*Septuagint*) in existence of both Old and New Testament.

Oldest surviving fragmentary Hebrew Bible manuscripts. These date to about the second century BC.

The Dead Sea Scrolls—the biggest archaeological discovery of the 20th century. These leather scrolls discovered in 1947 in clay jars at Qumran have verified that the OT writings are indeed ancient, not written centuries later, and that they have maintained nearly perfect accuracy in transmission. Out of the roughly 800 manuscripts found at Qumran, 220 are from the Tanakh (OT), although most fragmentary. But remarkably, there are two scrolls of the Book of Isaiah, one that is 100%, the other 75% complete, that date between 150BC to 70AD. The 75% scroll contains much of Isa. 38:6 and almost every book in the Old Testament (OT), including Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy; two complete chapters of Habakkuk, and a tattered copy of the books of Samuel.

The manuscripts predate the oldest Masoretic Hebrew texts and any of the other manuscripts by 1,000 years! When compared to the Masoretic text and our present KJV Bible, these scrolls of scripture verify the accuracy of conscientious scribes.

The Aleppo Codex. Once the oldest complete copy of the Masoretic Text, it is now missing its Torah (*first 5 books*). It dates from the 10th century.

The Masoretic text. This is the official Hebrew text of the Old Testament for Jews today. The oldest manuscripts in existence of the Masoretic text date between the 7th and 10th century AD. The King James Version was translated from this. The Dead Sea Scrolls have shown the Masoretic text to be almost identical to some of the texts of the whole Hebrew Bible (*the Tanach=OT*). Also, comparisons of the Masoretic text with earlier Latin and Greek versions have also revealed careful copying and little deviation during the thousand years from 100 B.C. to 900 A.D. (*The Masoretes were rabbis who made it their special work to correct the faults that had crept into the text of the OT during the Babylonian captivity, and to prevent any corruption or alterations.*) They took great pains in accuracy. This manuscript shows us that God divinely protected His Word through thousands of years of copying and translating.

I have to break in here, and mention something. It was the amazing accuracy between the KJV of the OT Book of Isaiah (*translated from the Masoretic text*), and the Isaiah scroll from the Dead Sea Scrolls, that first alerted me (*as a Mormon*) to realize that the Bible had been well preserved after all. When I learned that 95% of the words from the Isaiah scroll were identical with the King James Bible’s Book of Isaiah, and that the other 5% consisted only of minor slips of the pen and variations in spelling, I concluded that the Bible was not so unreliable as the LDS Church was stating. It was one of the first events that opened my eyes and that gradually led to a more thorough investigation of Mormonism.

In his book, *Can I Trust My Bible*, R. Laird Harris concluded:

We can now be sure that copyists worked with great care and accuracy on the Old Testament, even back to 225 B.C. . . . [I]ndeed, it would be rash skepticism that would now deny that we have our Old Testament in a form very close to that used by Ezra when he taught the word of the Lord to those who

had returned from the Babylonian captivity.⁸

The following are the dates of the Tanakh (OT) manuscripts that we now have (*Source for the below is in this endnote.*)⁹

<u>Name of manuscript</u>	<u>Language</u>	<u>Date of Composition</u>	<u>Oldest copy</u>
<u>Dead Sea Scrolls</u>	Hebrew, <u>Paleo Hebrew</u> and Greek(Septuagint)	c. 150 BC-70AD	c.150 BC-70 CE
<u>Septuagint</u> (Codex Vaticanus, Codex Sinaiticus and other earlier papyri)	Greek	c. 300-100BC	2 nd century BC fragments 4 th century
<u>Peshitta</u>	Syriac		early 5 th century AD
<u>Vulgate</u> (Codex <u>Amiatinus</u>)	Latin		early 5 th century AD early 8 th century AD (complete)
<u>Masoretic</u> (Aleppo codex, Leningrad codex, & other Incomplete manuscripts.)	Hebrew	c. 100 AD	10 th century AD
<u>Samaritan Pentateuch</u>	Samaritan alphabet	200-100 BC	oldest extant manuscripts c.11 th century AD, oldest manuscripts avail. to scholars 16 th century AD
<u>Targum</u>	Aramaic	500-1000 AD	5 th century AD

How old are the Bible manuscripts we have for the New Testament? There are over 24,000 manuscripts!

- **The earliest manuscript of the Gospel of John.** This is a fragment. There is some disagreement about the actual dating. Many say 117 AD, some 138 AD. The difficulty of fixing the date of a fragment based solely on paleography (*handwriting*) allows a wider range that could extend from before 100 AD past 150 AD. However, it is generally dated to c. A.D. 125, which proves that the original Gospel of John was written earlier, namely in the first century A.D. This throws cold water on critics who insist that someone else wrote it many years after.
- **Greek manuscripts.** There are over 5,800 complete or fragmented manuscripts consisting of all or portions of the New Testament (NT) that have survived to our time. In 2008, forty-seven new manuscripts were discovered in Albania, seventeen of them unknown to Western scholars.
- **Latin manuscripts:** There are over 10,000 manuscripts.
- **Other translations.** There are more than 1,000 copies and fragments of the NT in Ethiopic, Gothic, Armenian, Coptic, and Syria, plus 8,000 copies of the Latin Vulgate, some of which date back almost to the original translations that Jerome made in 384-400 AD.
- **Manuscripts of the early church fathers:** Many of their manuscripts quote heavily from scriptures they had at that time. It has been stated that . . . *“If all of the New Testament manuscripts and versions . . . were to disappear overnight, it would still be possible to reconstruct the entire New Testament with quotes from the Church Fathers, with the exception of fifteen to twenty verses!”*¹⁰ (See this endnote for interesting detail)¹¹

For almost all NT books there are manuscripts prior to the fourth century AD. The first complete copies of NT books appear around 200 AD. Here are their dates:

Book	Date	Condition¹²
Matthew	c. 200	fragments
Mark	c. 250	large fragments
Luke	c. 200	fragment
John	c. 125-160	fragment
Acts	early 3 rd century	fragment
Romans	c. 175-225	fragments
I Corinthians	c. 175-225	fragments
2 Corinthians	c. 175-225	fragments
Galatians	c. 175-225	fragments
Ephesians	c. 175-225	fragments
Philippians	c. 175-225	fragments
Colossians	c. 175-225	fragments
I Thess.	c. 175-225	fragments
2 Thess.	3 rd /4 th century	fragment
I Timothy	c. 350	complete
2 Timothy	c. 350	complete
Titus	c. 200	fragment
Philemon	3 rd century	fragment
Hebrews	c. 175-225	fragments
James	3 rd century	fragment
I Peter	3 rd century	fragments
2 Peter	3 rd /4 th century	fragments
I John	3 rd century	fragment
2 John	3 rd /4 th century	fragment
3 John	c. 350	complete
Jude	3 rd /4 th century	fragments
Revelation	2 nd /3 rd century	fragment

In his book, *The Bible and Archaeology*, Sir Frederic G. Kenyon, former director and principal Librarian of the British Museum, stated this about the NT manuscripts:

The interval, then, between the dates of original composition and the earliest extant [*in existence*] 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*.¹³ (*emphasis mine*)

New manuscripts are being discovered all the time. When compared with our present Bible, the Bible has not been found lacking.

What significant passage of the NT is verified? Since critics consistently try to prove that Jesus never existed, this section will take one event, the trial before Pontius Pilate. If evidence were found about *that*, it would certainly silence the critics! Well, we now have the oldest fragment (so far) dating from the first half of the second century of the Book of John, Chapter 18, that mentions the trial. Watch this excellent, but brief video by Dr. Dirk Jongkind, a Research Fellow at Tyndale House in Cambridge, England at:

<http://www.thepoachedegg.net/the-poached-egg/2011/04/the-oldest-known-new-testament-manuscript-what-does-it-say.html>.

Dr. William F. Albright, one of the world's most brilliant Biblical archaeologists concluded that since discoveries indicate the NT books were written some time between AD 50 and 75, any differences were "*too slight to permit any appreciable corruption of the essential center and even of the specific wording of the sayings of Jesus.*"¹⁴ (*emphasis mine*)

B. F. Westcott and F.J.A. Hort, creators* of *The New Testament in Original Greek*, also commented that all the small changes and variations in manuscripts change no major doctrine and do not affect Christianity in the least. (*emphasis mine*) *(See this endnote as to why Westcott and Hort are called "creators" instead of authors.)¹⁵

Even LDS, Dr. Stephen E. Robinson of BYU, stated that these variances are "*mostly minute and theologically insignificant.*"¹⁶ (Members would probably disagree.)

Dr. John A. T. Robinson, distinguished lecturer and scholar at Trinity College in Cambridge, once denied that the disciples and Paul wrote the New Testament. However, Time magazine (March 21, 1977) reported that after he decided to personally investigate this for himself, he was shocked to find the arguments against the New Testament *unsustainable*, and concluded that the apostles were the genuine writers of the NT books in the years prior to AD 64. He also suggested that Matthew wrote his Gospel within eight years of Christ, in AD 40.

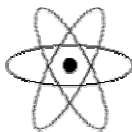
Could other writers have written the New Testament "Epistles?" Epistles are letters written by Jesus' apostles to the churches and fellow workers. Critical scholars would have us believe the books we presently have in the NT, e.g., Paul, Peter, James, etc., are not genuine, but the works of anonymous authors (*referred to as the Pseudepigrapha, discussed later in section VII*). They use the fact that during NT times, epistles were written by well-meaning individual who hoped to influence readers in the Christian faith, and who attached the names of the apostles to their works.

It is true that this practice was going on, but there is no evidence anywhere to show that any of these writings were authoritatively accepted. The fact that Paul and others sometimes dictated their letters and used a secretary no doubt accounts for some of the stylistic differences critics like to point out.

Paul, aware of these pseudonymous writings, criticized those who were claiming to write in his name, and ends his epistle by assuring the readers that he is the authentic writer of what he was sending. (*See 2 Thess 2:2, 1-2 Timothy and Titus.*) Peter did the same, purposely identifying himself at the beginning of his epistles and, so as to leave no doubt, stated that he was an eyewitness of the transfiguration. (*See 2 Peter 1:16-18; also 1 Cor. 16:21; Gal 6:11; Col 4:18*)

V.

DO SCIENTIFIC STATEMENTS IN THE BIBLE MATCH TODAY'S SCIENTIFIC FACTS?



The Bible is surprisingly filled with scientific data. And why not? God established the fixed laws of heaven and earth in Genesis, and reveals this information to Moses and others.

Thus says the LORD, if my covenant for *day and night* stand not, and the *fixed patterns* of heaven and earth I have not established . . . then I would reject the descendants of Jacob and David My servant . . . (Jer. 33:25-26 NAS.)

Amazingly, 3,400 years ago, the OT writers made statements about the heavens and the earth that contradicted the cultural beliefs of the day about the cosmos. Those cultures' *supposedly* inspired writings, can be found in the Confucian writings, Vedas, Upanishads, Buddhist canon, Taoist, Islamic scriptures and others. All of their perspectives were seriously flawed.

If the Biblical writers had written down their present human understanding of the scientific world, for example, that every day the Sun God drove the sun across the sky from east to west in a golden chariot drawn by fiery horses, and the earth was supported on the back of a world turtle, then one could clearly disqualify their writings as inspired or "God breathed" as 2 Tim 3:16 declares.

But Moses wrote in Genesis an amazing description, not only of pre-earth conditions, but the order of creation which science now agrees with. Other Bible writers also made statements that were scientifically unknown at the time. For example, in Job 26:7 we read: "*He hangeth the earth on nothing.*" Only the God of science could provide such startling information at that time as the earth being suspended in space.

Dr. Hugh Ross, in his article "Biblical Forecasts of Scientific Discoveries" at www.reasons.org (*excellent site*), notes:

The probability that Moses . . . would have guessed all these details is less than one in trillions.¹⁷ (*See endnote for direct link to the full article.*)

What are some of the other Biblical statements about the universe that science now confirms? Dr. Ross, in the above referenced article, [itemizes them](#).¹⁸

<u>Biblical Statement</u>	<u>Science Then</u>	<u>Science Now</u>
Earth is a sphere (Is. 40:22).	Earth's a flat disk.	Earth is a sphere
Number of stars exceeds a billion (Jer. 33:22).	Number of stars totals 1,100	Number of stars exceeds a billion
Every star is different (1 Cor 15:41).	All stars are the same.	Every star is different.
Light is in motion (Job 38:19-20).	Light is fixed in place.	Light is in motion.
Air has weight (Job 28:25).	Air is weightless.	Air has weight.
Winds blow in cyclones (Eccl. 1:6).	Winds blow straight.	Winds blow in cyclones.
Blood is a source of life and healing (Lev. 17:11).	Sick people must[be] bled.	Blood is a source of life and healing.

Dr. Ross further lists OT passages corroborated by today's scientific community:

- conservation of mass and energy (Eccl. 1:9; Eccl. 3:14-15).
- water cycle (Eccl. 1:7; Is. 55:10).
- gravity (Job 26:7; Job 38:31-33).
- Pleiades and Orion as gravitationally bound star groups (Job 38:31). NOTE: All other star groups visible to the naked eye are unbound, with the possible exception of the Hyades.
- effect of emotions on physical health (Prov. 16:24; Prov. 17:22).
- control of contagious diseases (Lev. 13:45-46).
- importance of sanitation to health (Lev.; Num. 19; Deut. 23:12-13). Control of cancer and heart disease (Lev. 7-19).¹⁹

How could the OT writers have known about all that? And what about these?

- That the earth was round and not flat, when it was not known until the 1500s? (Isa 40:22 and Prov. 8:27).
- That the sea had “paths?” (Ps 8:8). (This passage inspired Matthew Maury, the father of modern navigation in the 1800s, to write the first book on oceanography, establishing that there were paths or currents that were like rivers flowing through the sea, and that fish swam in those paths.)
- The water cycle—how the sun evaporates water from oceans, then becomes clouds, and then falls back to earth as rain? (Amos 9:6)

How did they know all this? Because God revealed it to them. It must have blown their minds! (*See the excellent article, “The God of Science” at www.bibletoday.com/archive/proof_text.htm*)

The OT writers’ amazing statements prove that their writings were indeed divinely inspired. And the closer modern science moves toward more discoveries about physical reality, the Biblical accuracy of the scriptures will be substantiated even more.

VI. WHAT IS THE PSEUDEPIGRAPHA, OR PSEUDONYMOUS WRITINGS?

These are works, fraudulent attributed to a notable figure, often an OT figure or NT apostle. They are not inspired by God, which accounts for their not being included in the official canon of scripture. The term comes from the Greek *pseudo* meaning “false” and *epigraphein* meaning “to inscribe.” Thus, “to write falsely.”

These counterfeit works were written from 200 BC to AD 300. The motive of most of these writers was that they loved the gospel, wanted to proclaim it, and using a Biblical writer’s name would garner more attention than using their own name.

While the practice was well known and perhaps accepted by the culture of the day, the Roman Catholic Church did not tolerate it. When it was discovered that a bishop wrote an apocryphal book, “Acts of Paul and Thecla” pretending to be Paul, the church removed him from his post, even though he claimed he did it out of love for Paul. (Tertullian, *On Baptism* 17)

Another book in this category is “The Gospel of Peter,” (*not to be confused with I and II Peter*). It was rejected by Serapion, Bishop of Antioch, in 180 AD, who said:

For our part, brethren, we both receive Peter and the other apostles as Christ, but the writings which falsely bear their names we reject, as men of experience, knowing that such were not handed down to us. (Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* 6.12.1-6)

There are many Pseudepigrapha (false) writings, such as:

Testament of Hezekiah	Psalter of Solomon
Vision of Isaiah	Testament of Adam
Books of Enoch	Testament of Job
Book of Noah	

Other forgeries can be found in two books published in 1926, “The Forgotten Books of Eden,” and “The Lost Books of the Bible,” which contain Old and New Testament Pseudepigrapha. They are as follows:

[The Forgotten Books of Eden](#)

- The Conflict of Adam and Eve with Satan (The First and Second Book of Adam and Eve)
- The Secrets of Enoch
- The Psalms of Solomon

- The Odes of Solomon
- The Letter of Aristeas
- The Fourth Book of Maccabees
- The Story of Ahikar
- Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs

The Lost Books of the Bible

- The Gospel of the Birth of Mary
- The Protevangelion
- The Gospel of the Infancy of Jesus Christ
- The Infancy Gospel of Thomas
- The Epistles of Jesus Christ and Abgarus King of Edessa
- The Gospel of Nicodemus (*Acts of Pilate*)
- The Apostles' Creed (throughout history)
- The Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Laodiceans
- The Epistles of Paul the Apostle to Seneca, with Seneca's to Paul
- The Acts of Paul and Thecla
- The Epistles of Clement (The First and Second Epistles of Clement to the Corinthians)

- The Epistle of Barnabas
- The Epistle of Ignatius to the Ephesians
- The Epistle of Ignatius to the Magnesians
- The Epistle of Ignatius to the Trallians
- The Epistle of Ignatius to the Romans
- The Epistle of Ignatius to the Philadelphians
- The Epistle of Ignatius to the Smyrneans
- The Epistle of Ignatius to Polycarp
- The Shepherd of Hermas (Visions, Commands, and Similitudes)
- Letter of Herod To Pilate the Governor
- Letter of Pilate to Herod
- The Lost Gospel of Peter
- The Epistle of Polycarp to the Philippians

VII.

WHAT ARE THE APOCRYPHAL AND DEUTEROCANONICAL BOOKS? WHY WEREN'T THEY INCLUDED IN THE CANON?

First, here are some definitions:

- **Canon:** The group of books decided upon by the early church to be authentically authored by the Bible writers, and of prime spiritual value in establishing the divine rule of faith and practice. The word itself comes from the Greek, *kanon*, designating a carpenter's rule, possibly, borrowed from the Hebrew term, *ganah*, referring to a measuring reed six cubits long. It is commonly accepted that the selection of the books that make up the canon transpired under the influence of the Spirit of God and is, thus, inerrant (*not liable to error in the matter of doctrine and instruction*) and infallible (*never failing, always effective*). While Protestant theology applies both "inerrancy" and "infallibility" to the Bible, Catholics ascribe inerrancy to the Bible, but infallibility to the church, particularly the teaching function of the Pope and Magisterium. (*Mormons consider the Book of Mormon, Doctrine and Covenants and Pearl of Great Price as inerrant and infallible, but do not apply the latter term to church leaders, although many do*).
- **Apocryphal books (or the Apocrypha):** Refers to texts that are left out of officially sanctioned versions (the canon) of the Bible's Old Testament. The Jews did not consider them inspired, but held them in high esteem. These Apocrypha was written both before and after Christ. (There is also NT Apocrypha.)
- **Deuterocanonical books:** Apocryphal books, although not considered spurious, are found in the Greek Septuagint, but not in the Hebrew Text. "Deuterocanonical" comes from the Greek, meaning "belonging to the second canon.")

Protestants in the Reformation rejected the Apocrypha/Deuterocanonical books as lacking divine authority, and also because no Hebrew version of these texts could be found. However, some Protestant Bibles include them

between the Old and New Testament. In the Roman Catholic Bible, they are interspersed with the rest of the text, except for *First and Second Esdras*, *Epistle of Jeremiah*, *Susanna*, *Bel and the Dragon*, *Prayer of Manasseh*, *Prayer of Azariah*, and a NT document, *Laodiceans*.

Jews, Protestants and Catholics have their own canon:

The Jewish canon: 39 books (the OT).

The Protestant canon: 66 books (Old and New Testament).

Catholic canon: 80 books. Their Bible includes the Apocrypha and Deuterocanonical books. An excellent list is provided at: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_Testament_apocrypha#Lost_works.

The Apocryphal/Deuterocanonical Books of the Old Testament

- Tobit
 - Judith
 - Additions to the Book of Esther
 - Wisdom of Solomon
 - Ecclesiasticus, or the Wisdom of Jesus Son of Sirach
 - Baruch
 - The Letter of Jeremiah
 - The Prayer of Azariah and the Song of the Three Jews
 - Susanna
 - Bel and the Dragon
 - 1 Maccabees
 - 2 Maccabees
 - 1 Esdras
 - Prayer of Manasseh
 - Psalm 151
 - 3 Maccabees
 - 1 & 2 Esdras
 - 4 Maccabees
- Additional documents:
- Odes of Solomon (*religious poems attributed to Solomon, but written during the first three centuries AD.*)
 - Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs (*supposedly containing the dying commands of Jacob's 12 sons, written and finalized in the 2nd century AD*)
 - Epistle of Jeremiah
 - Prayers of Azariah

New Testament books that are also apocryphal are:

The Gospel of Bartholomew
The Books of 1st and 2nd Jeu
The Kasr al-Wazz fragment
The Gospel of Thomas
The Pistis Sophia

Gospel of Mary of Magdala
Secret Book of John
The Acts of John
Gospel of Jesus

Books of the Savior
Laodiceans

(*More can be found at this endnote.*)²⁰

There are, however, some positives for the Apocryphal books. The “Maccabees” contain historical information to the period before Christ which can be useful. Another beneficial book is, “The Wisdom of Solomon” (aka The Wisdom Book), traditionally known to have been written by friends of Solomon in his honor, contain spiritual teachings. Nevertheless, these books are not the inspired, inerrant Word of God. (2 Tim 3:16-17), therefore, are to be treated as imperfect historical books.

VIII.

WHAT ARE THE MISSING BOOKS OF THE BIBLE? HOW IMPORTANT ARE THEY?



The seven missing books of the New Testament, referenced in the scriptures, are the epistles of Paul, Jude and John:

<u>Missing books</u>	<u>Reference</u>
• The First Epistle to Corinth	<i>1 Cor. 5:9</i>
• The Third Epistle to Corinth, called the Severe Letter, or Letter of Tears**	<i>2 Cor. 2:4 and 2 Cor. 7:8-9</i>
• The Corinthian letter to Paul	<i>1 Cor. 7:1</i>
• The Earlier Epistle to the Ephesians	<i>Eph. 3:3-4</i>
• The Epistle to the Laodiceans	<i>Col. 4:16</i>
• The Earlier Epistle of Jude	<i>Jude 1:3</i>
• The Earlier Epistle of John	<i>3 Jn 1:9</i>

** Since the description does not match 1st Cor., there are two theories: (1) the letter is lost; or (2) this letter is preserved in 2 Cor. 10-13. (See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Severe_Letter)

The Mormon Church uses these missing books as an excuse to declare the Bible unreliable. This, then, enables them to prioritize the Book of Mormon as God's pure word. (*Discussed later*)

But since the Biblical writers were apostles of Christ, they would not have written anything in the missing books contrary to what they had already said in the writings that we are now in possession of. Therefore, they are not that serious. It's not like those epistles revealed some humongous revelation, foreign to what we have in our present Bible. It is especially absurd to think that Paul, John or Jude would have introduced new doctrines, such as men becoming gods, plural marriage in heaven, salvation having to be earned through temple rituals, or that the shed blood of Jesus is insufficient to save a believer in the highest heaven. This would contradict everything they said in the writings we have. Mormons, however, would like to think so, for it would then back up their claim that Jesus, out of necessity, *had* to come to Joseph Smith and reveal those missing doctrines.

There are also a few missing Old Testament books. One is "The Book of the War of the Lords." Mormons like to refer to this one. However, it is an unnecessary book and does not belong to the official canon. Here is the scripture that mentions it:

From there they set out and camped on the other side of the [Arnon](#), which is in the [desert](#) and bounding the [Amorite](#) territory. For Arnon is the border of [Moab](#), between Moab and the Amorites. That is why the Book of the Wars of the Lord says: "... Waheb in Suphah and the ravines of Arnon, and at the stream of the ravines that lead to the dwelling of Ar, which lies along the border of Moab." (*Num 21:14-15*)

Scholars believe that individuals wrote books during Biblical times to record the historical happenings of ancient Israel, but were not necessarily inspired. The scripture in Numbers, for example, simply acknowledges that that book was in existence, so mentions it. It is believed to be a collection of victory songs or poems; others suggest a prose military history.

IX. WHAT IS THE JEPD THEORY? SHOULD WE BELIEVE IT?

This theory is also known as the “Documentary Hypothesis;” also, the “Graf-Wellhausen theory,” and “Developmental theory.” Used by Higher Bible Critics, the theory demeans the authorship of the Old Testament, specifically attributing the first five books of Moses to other writers who wrote them hundreds of years later. There are many complexities to the theory, and to present everything here would be too laborious. But, I offer enough to give you an idea.

Higher Biblical criticism started in the 17th Century AD, claiming that the Pentateuch (*first five books of OT*) was the work of many hands, certainly not Moses’, and that its final form could be attributed to the middle of the 1st millennium BC. According to Oswald T. Allis, author of *The Five Books of Moses*, there were four criteria used to support the theory:²¹

1. Variations in the divine names in Genesis (*example: Elohim versus Jehovah*).
2. Secondary variations in diction and style.
3. Continuity of the various sources.
4. Parallel or duplicate accounts (or doublets). (*Example: (1) Both Abraham and Jacob passed their wives off as sisters. (2) The creation story in Gen. 1 repeats itself in Gen. 2, indicating to theorists that there must be a different author for Genesis 2.*)

The major critic, Thomas Hobbes (1651), pointed out a Biblical comment about Moses’ death in Gen. 12:6 that says, “*No man knoweth of his sepulcher to this day.*” This had to mean that an author who lived way after Moses’ death had to have written Genesis. The response is, whoever was in charge of Moses’ writings no doubt inserted it as information for readers, knowing the books was to be handed down.

In addition, critics decided that Moses was too primitive to have known how to write. This, of course, has been disproved. Writing existed long before Moses, and even before Abraham. (*See Archaeological section III*)

In 1876, Julius Wellhausen continued Hobbes’ critical work of rejecting Moses as the author, and narrowed the supposed authors of the OT down to four unknown writers, or sources, who wrote centuries later. They were known as JEPD:

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| J = The Yahwist (Jahwist) source. | Written c. 950 BCE in the southern Kingdom of Judah . |
| E = The Elohist source. | Written c. 850 BCE in the northern Kingdom of Israel . |
| P = The Priestly source. | Written c. 500 BCE by Kohens (Jewish priests) in exile in Babylon, and then compiled by Ezra . |
| D = The Deuteronomist. | Written c. 600 BCE in Jerusalem during a period of religious reform. |

Later, these four writers, or sources, were combined by different redactors (editors), who joined J with E to form a combined JE, then JE with D to form a JED text, and finally JED with P to form JEDP, the finalized version of the Torah. More refinement continued by others, all of which won’t be covered here.

Should we believe the JEPD theory? The answer is, “No.”

Here are the JEPD theorists’ faulty claims and rebuttals:

1. **The Pentateuch not authored by Moses.** This would be contrary to Hebrew tradition.
2. **Repetition of material in Gen 1 and 2.** There is no contradiction or divergence in the creation account between these two chapters. Chapter 1 is a general overview of the creation of the universe, its creatures, and man, with chapter 2 focusing on more detail about Adam and Eve, Tree of Knowledge, test of obedience, etc.

3. **The use of two different names for God—Elohim and Yahweh.** This does not point to different authors, but to a single author using the various names God revealed that describe different aspects of His character.”²² (In Biblical times, names were significant and always designated the characteristics the person.)
3. **Use of Doublets indicate different authors.** Abraham passed Sarah off to Pharaoh as his sister in Gen. 12, and then the same thing happens in Gen. 20, but instead of to Pharaoh, it is King Abimelech. Then, in Gen. 26, Isaac (Abraham’s son) also passes off his wife, Rebekkah, as his sister to a King Abimelech. Two generations doing the same thing with the same King Abimelech? Critics say this has to indicate a different author. Nevertheless, it is plausible that Abraham’s son Isaac would follow his father's example, especially since it worked for his father. Also, Isaac’s King Abimelech could have been Abimelech I, II or III—a different King Abimelech than Abraham’s. It was common practice in Egypt for kings to use their predecessor’s name, for example, Amenemhat I, II, III.
4. **Anachronisms** (*words that are chronologically out of context in a writing*). An example once pointed out by JEPD proponents is the use of “camel” in Gen. 11 and 12, and the “manufacture of iron” in Gen. 11 and 12, both of which they claim were not in existence at that time. But archaeological discoveries have now substantiated that camels were domesticated as far back as 2000 BC, and that furnaces date to the early second millennium. (In like manner, the mention of the word “Christian” in the *Book of Mormon*, the text of which was supposedly written in 73 BC, was historically before there were any Christians. In this case, however, it is obvious that Joseph Smith was the author, rather than it being the translation of a writer in 73 BC.)
5. **Variations in diction and style.** Critics claim this is proof of different writers. But I know that I don’t always write (or speak) in the same style. Sometimes I use terms with one group of people that I wouldn’t with another (*academic, versus casual-everyday*). In the novel I’m writing (*to be released in January 2012*), I certainly wouldn’t use the language I use in this article for my characters.

Pulitzer Prize-winning author, Herman Wouk (*The Caine Mutiny*) commented on the futility of judging variations in diction and style as evidence of other authors:

It is a hard thing for men who have given their lives to a theory . . . to see it fall apart . . . what the scholars have found out at long last, of course, was that literary analysis is not a scientific method. Literary style is a fluid, shifting thing, at best, a palimpsest or a potpourri. The hand of Shakespeare is in the pages of Dickens; Scott wrote chapters of Mark Twain; Spinoza is full of Hobbes and Descartes. Shakespeare was the greatest echoer of all, and the gratest stylist of all. Literary analysis has been used for generations by obsessive men to prove that everybody but Shakespeare wrote Shakespeare. I believe literary analysis could be used to prove that I wrote both DAVID COPPERFIELD and A FAREWELL TO ARMS. I wish it were sound.²³ (*caps are the author’s*)

One of the most convincing factors to the antiquity of the Old Testament books that really silenced the critics, was the discovery of two tiny silver scrolls in a Jerusalem burial tomb in 1979, by Israeli archaeologist, Gabriel Barkay (see section III). One was three inches long and took three years to unroll; the smaller one was two inches. They were made of almost pure sheet-silver (99% silver, 1% copper), and were delicately incised with a sharp instrument comparable to what Jeremiah described, “a pen of iron, with the point of a diamond.” (Jer. 17:1)

These scrolls contained the oldest known copy of OT scripture, and dated to the 7th century BC, from the time of the kings of the House of David. They predated the Dead Sea Scrolls scriptures by approximately *four centuries*. You can imagine how excited they became when the first word they deciphered was “YHWH!” Until this time no inscriptions with the name of the Hebrew God had been found in Jerusalem, which was a point

made by critics. The scrolls also contained the priestly blessing found in Numbers 6:24-26 and Psalms 67:2. This verse existed all the way down to the time of the prophet Jeremiah and King Josiah. Other verses have since been recovered from the scrolls, firmly establishing the antiquity of the Bible and silencing the higher critics.

Steven Ortiz, Assistant Professor of Archaeology and Biblical Studies, and Director of the Center for Archaeological Research at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, served as field archaeologist at the site where the scrolls were found. He said:

“These scrolls are significant for the dating of the Old Testament. *They provide evidence of the antiquity of the Bible.*”²⁴ (*emphasis mine*)

The JEPD theory today could not stand up in a court of law, more especially since no J, E, D or P documents have ever been discovered. No Jewish or Christian scholar has even hinted that such documents existed, which is probably why the theory is not debated as much anymore in this century. It does, however, rear its head once in a while by those trying to take a last stab at destroying the reliability of the Bible and its claims.

The most powerful argument against the JEDP theory is the fact that Jesus and his disciples believed Moses wrote the first five books. Jesus said, in [Mark 12:26](#), “*Now about the dead rising—have you not read in the book of Moses, in the account of the bush, how God said to him, ‘I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob’?*” In Acts 3:22, Luke also credits Moses as the author of [Deut 18:15](#), and Paul, in [Romans 10:5](#), credits Moses as the author of [Leviticus 18:5](#).

As one author put it:

In order for the JEDP theory to be true, Jesus, Luke, and Paul must all either be liars or be in error in their understanding of the Old Testament.²⁵

There are other facts that refute the JEPD theory, all of which are too numerous to include here. You can see them at: <http://www.xenos.org/ministries/crossroads/papers/vol1no2/v1n2p13.html>.

X. ARE THERE FULFILLED PROPHECIES THAT BEAR OUT THE DIVINE INSPIRATION OF THE BIBLE?

Here are a few fulfilled OT prophecies:

- The foretelling of the Jews’ Babylonian captivity years before it happened.
- Isaiah (writing about 700 BC), predicted King Cyrus would help to rebuild the Jerusalem temple that was destroyed in 586 BC when the Israelites were taken into the Babylonian captivity. (The temple was standing in Isaiah’s time.) [*Isa. 44:28; 54:1*]
- Ezekiel (26), writing in 592-570 BC, gave seven detailed predictions that Nebuchadnezzar would lay siege to the city of Tyre. It happened three years later. There would have been only one chance in 75,000,000 of their all coming true, if Ezekiel had spoken out of his own humanness. They all came true in the minutest detail.”²⁶
- Ezekiel 28:22-23 (590-572 BC) predicted that the sword and blood would be in the streets of Sidon, and this happened.
- Hosea 13:16 and Micah 1:6 foretold the destruction of Samaria.
- Amos, Jeremiah and Zephaniah predicted the destruction of the Philistines, with Zephaniah stating that a remnant of the house of Judah would inhabit that city. This, because God had made a promise to Abraham 4,000 years ago (Gen. 13:14,15) that his descendants would be numerous and *given a land forever*. The reclaiming of Jerusalem happened despite the 1,900 years of wanderings, despite the Babylonian captivity of 586 BC, and despite the holocaust in which six million Jews were killed. Jews

returned from everywhere to the land God promised them, and the State of Israel was reborn on May 14, 1948.

- Other Bible prophecies portray the present situation occurring in the Far East, but are too numerous to list. For more, see <http://www.greatcom.org/resources/areadydefense/ch06/default.htm>; also <http://sunandshield.wordpress.com/2007/04/04/10-prophecies-predicted-in-the-bible-fulfilled-in-history/>

The few prophecies above show that the writers were inspired of God, and thus verify the reliability of the Bible.

Now, let's look at OT prophecies concerning the coming of the Messiah, and see whether they fit with the man, Jesus.

Critics of the Bible argue that:

- (1) Christians take scriptures out of context to try and prove Jesus is the Messiah.
- (2) Jesus purposely ordered his life and events so that it would *appear* that he fulfilled prophecy.

Can you imagine Jesus purposely trying to arrange his life and events to coincide with over *four hundred and twenty-five* Old Testament prophecies? Here are some of them (certainly not all) and their fulfillments:

<u>Prophecy</u>	<u>Scripture</u>	<u>When written</u>	<u>Fulfillment</u>
Born as a human male.	Isa. 9:6-7	700 BC.	Jn 1:1-3, 14
Born of a virgin.	Isa. 7:14	“	Mt 1:20-23
He will be from the House of Judah	Isa. 37:31	“	Mt. 1:1-2, 16
From the root and stump of Jesse	Isa. 11:1-5,10	“	Rom. 15:12; Mt 1:1-2a,5-6,16
From the House of David	Isa. 16:5	“	Mt. 1:1-2a,6,16
Born in Bethlehem Ephrathah	Micah 5:2	“	Mt. 2:1
Be from Nazareth of Galilee	Isa. 9:1-2	“	Mt. 2:22-23; 4:13-16
His birth will cause a massacre of infant boys	Jer. 31:15	625 BC	Mt. 2:16-18
He will come out of Egypt	Hos. 11:1	725 BC	Mt. 2:14-15
His mission would include Gentiles	Isa. 49:6;42:1-4,6	700 BC	Mt. 12:14-21
Ministry of miraculous healings	Isa. 29:18; 35:5-6a	700 BC	Lk 7:20-22
Ministry will deliver spiritual captives	Isa. 61:1-2	700 BC	Lk 4:16-21
Despised and rejected by men	Isa. 53:3	700 BC	Crucifixion narratives
Hated without cause	Ps. 69:4	1000 BC	Jn 7:48-49; 15:214-25
	Isa. 49:7	700 BC	
Rejected by rulers	Ps. 118:22	before 400 BC	Mt. 21:42; Jn 7:48-49
Rejected by his own brothers	Ps. 69:8	1000 BC	Mk 3:20-21; Jn 7:1-5
Betrayed for 30 pieces of silver	Zech. 11:12	500 BC	Mt. 26:14-15
Silver returned to buy Potters field	Zech. 11:12-13	500 BC	Mt. 27:3-10
His disciples would scatter	Zech. 13:7	500 BC	Mt. 26:31
Beaten with a rod	Micah 5:1	700 BC	Mk 15:19
Given vinegar and gall to drink	Ps. 69:21	1000 BC	Mt. 27:34; 27:48
Hands and feet nailed	Ps. 22:16	1000 BC	Jn 20:25
Crushed for our iniquities	Isa. 53:5-6	700 BC	Rom. 4:25; 1 Cor 15:3
Suffered for sins of others	Ps. 69:4; Isa. 53:5-6	1000 & 700 BC	Rom. 4:25; 1 Cor. 15:3
Pierced for our transgressions	Isa. 53:5; Zech 12:10	700 & 500 BC	Jn 19:33-34,36-37
No bones broken	Ps. 22:17; 34:20	1000 BC	Jn 19:33,36a
Soldiers gamble for his clothes	Ps. 22:18	1000 BC	Mt. 27:35
Brutally killed	Isa. 53:8	700 BC	All four gospels

Assigned a grave with the wicked	Isa. 53:9	700 BC	Crucifixion was reserved for wicked criminals
Buried in a rich man's tomb	Isa. 53:9	700 BC	Mt. 27:57, 59-60
Messiah would return from the dead	Isa. 53:8, 11	700 BC	Mt. 28:2, 5-7, 9

Considering that there are over four hundred twenty-five, it can be no mere coincidence that Jesus fulfilled OT prophecies. Those writers were obviously inspired. The odds of one person matching up to the above by accident, is one in ten with 100 zeroes after it!!!²⁷ Further, what man in his right mind would allow himself to go to the cross and suffer such an ignoble death in order to make himself appear to fulfill Old Testament prophecies? There would be SO many things Jesus would have had to conform to, that it simply would have been impossible.

XI. COULD JESUS HAVE BEEN OTHER THAN THE SON OF GOD?



One factor either clinches Jesus as the Son of God, or else reveals him as a fake—the resurrection. Jesus' claim of being the Son of God rises or falls with it.

Billy Graham once told Time magazine:

If I were an enemy of Christianity, I would aim right at the Resurrection, because that is the heart of Christianity.²⁸

How do we know that Jesus was really resurrected? . . . because of eye-witness testimonies. In a court of law, it is the reputable eye-witnesses who settle a case. There are six criteria to determine reliability of witnesses:

- | | |
|---|---|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The number of eyewitnesses, testimonials and claims. 2. The consistency of the observations and claims. 3. The credibility of the witnesses. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. The clarity of and proximity of the observation. 5. The state of mind of the witnesses. 6. What the witnesses stand to gain from their testimony or claim. |
|---|---|

So, how many eye-witnesses actually saw Jesus after he arose? And are they credible individuals?

Jesus made twelve appearances:

1. His first appearance was to Mary Magdalene, early Sunday morning. (Mk 16:9; Jn 20:10-18).
2. Jesus appeared to the women returning from the tomb. (Mt 28:9-10).
3. Jesus appeared to two disciples on the road to Emmaus. (Lk 24:13-32; Mk 16:12-13).
4. He appeared to Peter in Jerusalem. (Lk 24:34; 1 Cor 15:5).
5. He appeared to his disciples and other followers, and also a second time to the two men from Emmaus, in a locked room in Jerusalem. The apostle Thomas wasn't there at that time. (Lk. 24:36-43; Jn 20:19-23).
6. A week later, Jesus again appeared to his disciples. This time Thomas was present. (Jn 20:24-29).
7. Jesus appeared to seven of his disciples on the shore of the Sea of Galilee. (Jn 21:1-24).
8. Jesus was seen by 500 believers at one time. (1 Cor 15:6). At the Corinthian writing, Paul says that some of these believers had died, but some were still alive.
9. He appeared to James. (1 Cor 15:7).

10. He appeared to eleven disciples on a mountain in Galilee. (Mt. 28:18-20).
11. He walked with his disciples along the road to Bethany on the Mount of Olives, and then ascended into Heaven. (Lk 24:50-53).
12. He was seen by Paul on the road to Damascus. (Acts 9:3-6; 1 Cor 15:8).

The testimony of the above eyewitnesses later was: “*Take it from me. I was there, I heard Him, and I saw it all.*”²⁹ Peter, further testified that they told the truth:

For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty. (2 Pet. 1:16)

John declared:

That which we have seen and heard declare we to you. (1 Jn 1:1-3)

There is one more NT writer whose credibility we should examine . . . Luke, the evangelist and author of *Luke* and the book of *Acts*. How can his account of the resurrection be acceptable, since he was not an apostle nor an eye-witness to the resurrection? He was a disciple who became a Christian *after* Jesus died.

Nevertheless, he was *Paul’s* disciple, and Paul could testify to him that the resurrected Christ spoke to him on the Damascus road. Luke not only wrote what he heard from Paul, but because Paul knew the apostles who were eyewitnesses at the actual time of the resurrection, he received those testimonies as well. Luke also checked out all statements of eyewitnesses from documents that were in existence at that time, as well as from fellow workers such as Mark and others. How do we know this? Because Luke studied the facts of everything *before* he wrote about them. He was set on being accurate. The fact that he was a physician probably contributed to his studious bent.

He makes his accuracy evident in his opening statement in Luke 1:1 where he is writing to Theophilus, a gentile of high rank. He tells him that he has “*carefully investigated everything from the beginning,*” and is writing a “*careful account,*” so that Theophilus would know of the “*certainty of those things*” that he (Theophilus) had been taught. Therefore, Luke’s account is a testimony of the resurrection and Jesus being the Son of God (*and confirmed to him by the Holy Spirit after he had checked out all the facts*).

According to tradition, Luke was hanged for his testimony. He and the apostles would certainly not have gone through the trials they did unless convinced of the message they were declaring. Remember, that the political times insisted that Christians be tortured and sentenced to death. Except for John who died of old age, and Judas who hanged himself, Luke and the others died a martyr’s death. We have no official record, but tradition offers the following:

Matthew died in Ethiopia from a sword wound.

Mark died in Alexandria after being dragged by horses .

Luke hanged in Greece.

Peter was crucified upside down.

James (*brother of Jesus, and leader of the Jerusalem church*) was thrown from a temple pinnacle 100 feet, survived and then was beaten to death with a fuller’s club.

James (*son of Zebedee*), was beheaded in Jerusalem.

Bartholomew (Nathaniel) was whipped to death in Armenia.

Andrew was crucified in Greece.

Thomas died of a spear wound in India.

Jude was killed with arrows.

Matthias, was stoned and beheaded.

Paul was beheaded in Rome.

In response to criteria number 6 above—did the witnesses stand to gain anything from their testimony? The answer should be obvious. They were hunted down, persecuted and tortured for their testimony. These individuals would never have given their lives unless convinced of Jesus’ resurrection and divinity. No one dies for a lie.

XII. IS THE BIBLE ACTUALLY THE “WORD OF GOD?”

What does the phrase, “Word of God” mean? It means that the writers of the Bible were inspired by God’s special divine influence upon their minds as they spoke and wrote. God, however, left the writers free to write them down in their own styles of expression and arrangement, at the same time exercising supervision. They, themselves, claimed inspiration:

All scripture is given by inspiration of God (*Greek= God-breathed*), and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness. (2 Tim. 3:16)

To claim such a thing, if not true, would make them guilty of blasphemy, and as pious Jews they simply would not do this. Their inspired writings explain the deity of Christ, salvation and eternal life for believers, as well as rules of faith and practice. Moses also believed the Ten Commandments and words that he received were from God, for he placed them in the Ark for preservation. (See Exod. 17:14; 34:27; Deut. 31:9-26.) There is certainly no way he could have known on his own how the world was created or any facts about the cosmos contrary to the superstitious beliefs of his day. It had to be revelation. Peter says of the OT prophets:

For it was not through any human whim that men prophesied of old; men they were, but, impelled by the Holy Spirit, they spoke the words of God. (2 Pet 1:21 NEB)

Every writer of the Bible held the pen of God as they wrote. They were instruments in the hand of God as He breathed his word through them onto the written page.

XIII. WHAT IS THE MORMON PERSPECTIVE ON THE BIBLE? (All emphases in the quote below that are bolded, underlined or in italics, are mine.)

This is the Mormon position:

We believe the Bible to be the word of God as far as it is translated correctly; we also believe the Book of Mormon to be the word of God. (*8th Article of Faith*)

also:

The Bible is *not* the whole of the word of God.³⁰

Their first reason for this assessment is because scholars are not in possession of the *original* Bible manuscripts, only copies. Their second reason is that there are missing books of the Bible (*see section VIII*) and because of those missing books claim this made it necessary for Jesus to come back, appear to Joseph Smith, and restore the doctrines lost over the centuries that were, no doubt, in the original manuscripts. This belief gives them license to accept Joseph Smith’s revelations, along with the Book of Mormon, Doctrine and Covenants and Pearl of Great Price, as more pure than the Bible, since they have not gone through the hands of many copyists.

Joseph Smith explained the church’s position:

“I believe the Bible as it read when it came from the pen of the original writers. Ignorant translators, careless transcribers, or designing and corrupt priests have committed many errors.”(*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, p.327).

Other LDS apologists state:

“Mormons believe that in the intervening 2,000 years the essential gospel remained but several finer points of doctrine have been altered or omitted on occasion and interpreted to suit the desires of those in power.”³¹

“With the death of the Apostles there was no one on earth with the authority to receive revelation for the Church of Jesus Christ for many years. But starting in 1820 that authority was restored to Joseph Smith and exists in the Mormon Church. The leaders of the Mormon Church are sustained as prophets, seers, and revelators.”³²

LDS scholar, Dr. Hugh Nibley, commenting on the multitudinous copying and translations of the Bible, states:

The Bible is a very human document, of course it is. So is the Book of Mormon. It covers thousands of years. It has many authors; it was edited, etc. But it [Book of Mormon] was handed to us in a single passage. Bang, just like that, the whole thing – all edited, all in order, all translated. We don’t have to argue about any of that stuff. . . . It was translated directly by the gift and power of God. (*Dr. Hugh Nibley transcript published in the volume, “Teachings of the Book of Mormon.”*)³³

The Mormon Church has thrown the baby out with the dishwater with this perspective—although this does not mean they do not read the Bible. But in their eyes, the Book of Mormon and their extra-biblical scriptures rank higher than the Bible. They are:

The Book of Mormon (*record of Jesus’ appearance in the Americas after his resurrection*). The church can produce no archaeological evidences or ancient manuscripts. As far as the gold plates from which the Book of Mormon was supposedly translated, these are not available because Joseph Smith said the angel Moroni took them back to heaven.

The Pearl of Great Price (*The Book of Moses, via revelation to Joseph Smith; The Book of Abraham, a translation of a 4,000 year old Egyptian papyrus, and the Writings of Joseph Smith and Articles of Faith*)

The Doctrine and Covenants (hereinafter D&C) (*revelations to Joseph Smith and some of his successors*).

Part of Joseph Smith’s translation of the Bible. Smith never completed it due to his murder; therefore, the church only uses excerpts from his Matt. 24, and includes it in the back of the Pearl of Great Price. Smith felt that the Bible fell so short of perfection that he needed to correct it:

“Some time after completing the translation of the Book of Mormon, Joseph was commanded to perform a ‘translation’ of the Bible in which important missing or corrupted items would be restored. . . . [He] “clari[fied] unclear passages, or add[ed] revealed material completely missing.” (*See this endnote for list of changes to Bible, including additions of the visions of Moses and Enoch.*)³⁴

Mormons believe that the Joseph Smith translation of the Bible restored heavenly information and is a *more correct version* [of the Bible] than any other.³⁵

Space limitations prevent lengthy commentary on the above; but suffice it to say, Joseph Smith’s supposed translation of the Book of Abraham from a legitimate Egyptian papyrus has already been classified as fake—meaning the translation, not the papyrus. The papyrus Joseph Smith used had been thought to have burned in the 1871 Chicago fire, but was later discovered in 1967 by the Metropolitan Museum of Art, who then gave it to the church. LDS leaders were excited about their new possession, believing it would now prove to the world that the Book of Abraham did exist and was really translated by Joseph Smith under the power of God. But after being translated by professional Egyptologists, it turned out to be the “Book of breathings” from the Egyptian Book of the Dead—a funeral text.

The Church is against the admonition in 1 Thess.5:21 to “test and prove all things.” No matter what historical or other evidence Christians produce to show the fallacy of their scriptures and doctrines, it is the subjective, personal testimony that counts above all else. Members are to ignore any kind of facts, as LDS Apostle Dallin Oaks declared:

Our individual, personal testimonies are based on the witness of the Spirit, not on any combination or accumulation of historical facts. If we are so grounded, no alteration of historical facts can shake our testimonies.³⁶

Further, Mormons believe church leaders are prophets, like the Biblical prophets, and believe that their words are divinely inspired and will “*never contradict the Bible.*”³⁷

Whoa! We need to stop right here! It should be clear that Mormon beliefs *do* contradict the Bible. Take a look:

- Baptism for the dead
- Temple rituals for full salvation
- Marriage in heaven
- Plurality of gods
- Men may become gods (*only Mormons*)
- God was once a mortal man who earned his Godhood
- Jesus, prior to and after his incarnation is not equal with God
- Jesus’ mortal body was physically sired by God the Father, not the Holy Ghost
- All men lived prior to this earth life (*called the preexistence*)
- Jesus and Satan were spirit-brothers in the preexistence
- The Trinity is not three-in-one, but three separate and distinct Gods
- There is salvation ordinances only in the LDS church, because Peter, James, John, and John the Baptist appeared and restored the priesthood to Joseph Smith.
- The LDS church is the only true church God recognizes
- Universal salvation for all mankind (except for Sons of Perdition) in the two lower heavens, Telestial and Terrestrial. (*Christians and backslidden Mormons go to the latter.*)
- Highest degree of salvation (*Celestial Kingdom*) is only for those who are married in the temple
- Faith in Jesus Christ is not enough to gain the highest heaven (*Celestial Kingdom*)
- Creation was via an organization of preexisting, co-eternal materials, rather than the Biblical ex-nihilo.

New revelation beyond the Bible has always been the stance of the Mormon Church through leaders sustained as Prophets, Seers, and Revelators. Each new president, however, can change (*referred to as “clarifying”*) a previous revelation:

Through Joseph Smith and succeeding prophets of the Church many new revelations have been received in modern times and old revelations *clarified*. Mormons also believe there are yet things to be revealed concerning the kingdom of God.³⁸

The following is the “test” of inspiration for the words of church leaders:

A general test of inspiration of the words of the leaders of the Church . . . is whether they agree with the scriptures* that have been openly accepted by the body of the Church. In some rare cases, modern revelations will be officially added to the canon of LDS scripture, which is done through revelation to the combined First Presidency and by the common consent of the body of the Church at one of the semi-annual General Conferences.³⁹ *Note: “*Scriptures,*” mean *their scriptures: Book of Mormon, D&C, and Pearl of Great Price.*

The major problem of continued revelation, while it sounds nice, is that it leaves members wondering how they are to assess truth if it can be changed with every succeeding president. In earlier years of the church the definition of truth was established in the D&C 93:24. It was restated by President Harold B. Lee: “*Truth is knowledge of things as they are, and as they were, and as they are to come.*” In other words, truth is constant and not subject to change. But today, the church’s truth has become relative and can change. A modern-day president can change a previous president’s revelation, even though the previous president was also a Prophet,

Seer, and Revelator. If members are confused, they keep it to themselves and faithfully conform. Here's a good example of member conformance:

In 1978, President Spencer W. Kimball (*due to civil rights pressures*) changed and contradicted Joseph Smith's revelation about blacks not being able to hold the priesthood. (Joseph Smith's doctrine was based on a supposed revelation given him that in the preexistence blacks sat on the fence of neutrality refusing to take sides in a conflict between Jesus and Lucifer. Thus, they were cursed to be born into the black line of Cain.) Here's the conformance example:

Elder Bruce R. McConkie, both in his writings and speeches, had always upheld the earlier church revelation about refusing Blacks the priesthood, as did other leaders. But when the new revelation came out, he said:

Forget everything I have said, or what...Brigham Young...or whomsoever has said...that is contrary to the present revelation. We spoke with a limited understanding and without the light and knowledge that now has come into the world.⁴⁰

While the 1978 revelation in doing away with prejudice against blacks was good, it was, nevertheless, a revelation that contradicted the previous revelation claimed by Joseph Smith and preached by Brigham Young and later church presidents. Obviously, in Joseph Smith's time either God did not know what truth was, or Joseph Smith simply produced a revelation in keeping with the prejudices of the time and passed it off as the Word of God.

Truths, according to the Bible, are absolutes. Although Mormons see truth as constantly changing, Christians can say, "Thank goodness the truths contained in the Bible are eternal—the same yesterday, today, and forever. God will never switch them on us." Truths must be absolute and unchanging, because the Biblical God is absolute and unchanging. (Heb. 13:8)

So, the question of whether the LDS Church accepts the Bible as reliable and the final authoritative revelation, the answer is "no." LDS Apologist, Jeff Lindsay explains:

"While we love and cherish His word in the Bible, I believe that no single volume can contain all His revelations and instructions for all time and all situations, especially when that volume has been strongly influenced by human hands in selecting, editing, copying, translating, and typesetting those words."⁴¹

In view of the church's beliefs, what is its view on what happens to Christians who die believing they can trust the Bible and base their salvation on it? A Mormon Elder responds:

All Christian churches are based on faith in Jesus Christ but Mormons believe that God grants authority to administer the gospel. This is the priesthood. Without that authority, the ordinances of salvation cannot be performed. Although other Christian churches have faith in Jesus and live His teachings, they have not received baptism by the proper authority to be able to receive salvation. Mormons believe the priesthood authority of God is found only in the Mormon Church.⁴²

Along with not receiving salvation, Christians also will not be "sanctified" (D&C 88:21), nor will they end up in heaven with God. They will be consigned to a lower heaven, the Terrestrial, along with backslidden Mormons who were not "valiant in the testimony of Jesus" (inactive Mormons). (See *D&C 76:79,82*)

#

IN SUMMARY:

Archaeology confirms that:

- The Bible is a reliable, historical document, based on discoveries of ancient cities, civilizations, cultures and kings described in the scriptures.
- Handwriting was in existence before Abraham; therefore Moses was equipped to write the first five books of the Bible.

- Israel, as a people (not the place), existed in ancient Egypt.
- New Testament figures like Caiaphas, Pontius Pilate, and Jesus' brother, James existed.
- The method used for Jesus' crucifixion, at one time in dispute, now is authentic.

Ancient manuscripts confirm the accuracy of Bible passages:

- Thousands of Old and New Testament manuscripts have been discovered, and any variances between manuscripts are “mostly minute and theologically insignificant.”
 - There are 20,000 to 25,000 copies of the NT in Latin, Coptic, Syriac, Armenian, Georgian, Gothic and Arabic.
 - Over 5,700 Greek NT manuscripts, ranging from the second to the sixteenth century (ninety-nine produced before 400 AD.)
 - The Dead Sea Scrolls, 1,000 years older than any other Hebrew text, with the Isaiah scroll supporting the accuracy of the Book of Isaiah in the King James Version of the Bible.
 - Numerous sermons and quotes of the early church fathers also verify the accuracy of today's scriptures.
 - The Masoretic text, dating between the 7th and 10th century AD, today's official Hebrew text of the OT for Jews, supports the accuracy of the KJV.
 - The earliest manuscript fragment of the Gospel of John, dating from the first half of the second century, confirms Jesus' appearance before Pilate as recorded in Jn. 18:33ff. (*Be sure to watch the video mentioned earlier. Very fascinating!*)

Modern science:

- Today's science verifies the OT's statements about the universe and order of creation.

The missing books of the Old Testament:

- The “Book of the Wars of the Lord” and many others, were written by individuals who simply wrote about the events of their times. These books were not divinely inspired, and if we had them, would be treated as imperfect books providing historical information.

The missing books of the New Testament:

- The seven NT missing epistles are not that serious. They would not reveal any new truth not already contained in the epistles that we presently have.

Pseudonymous writings, the Apocrypha, and Deuterocanonical books:

- Pseudonymous writings, particularly prevalent from 200 BC to AD 300, were works by authors falsely using the name of a notable Biblical figure. Omitted from the official canon, they were judged fraudulent.
- The Apocrypha and Deuterocanonical books were also judged as uninspired and left out of the official canon's Old Testament. They are judged as imperfect historical books, not as the inspired, inerrant Word of God.

Biblical critics:

- Critics have been silenced in practically all matters, especially the JEPDTheory.

Bible prophecies confirm the inspiration of its writers:

- Old Testament prophecies made hundreds of years earlier, predicted the destruction of certain nations and cities. They have been fulfilled, although some yet remain to be fulfilled.
- OT Prophecies of the Messiah's coming were fulfilled in Jesus, with every one fitting his life perfectly.

The Mormon Church's perspective of the Bible:

- The Bible is unreliable.
- It elevates and ranks the *Book of Mormon*, *D&C*, and *Pearl of Great Price* higher than the Bible.
- Believes that having only “copies” of the Bible manuscripts, along with the fact there are missing books of the Bible, confirm it as untrustworthy and open for modern-day revelation. Members believe that the missing books contain doctrines that will support their unique beliefs.

The church instructs its members to ignore any historical facts that conflict with their beliefs. They are to depend only on what the church tells them, and by the “witness of the Spirit.” In other words, rely on a subjective testimony (*opinion influenced solely by personal bias and emotion that exists only in a person’s mind and heart*), rather than an objective one (*opinion based strictly on observable phenomena, not influenced by personal bias or emotion*).

- This way, their testimony of the LDS Church and its claims about Joseph Smith, the Book of Mormon and extra-Biblical scriptures, cannot be shaken.
- The church cannot produce any evidences for the Book of Mormon—no ancient manuscripts, no archaeological finds, no gold plates.
- Truth is no longer absolute as once believed (D&C 93:24), but is now relative—always subject to change—any doctrine of “God” declared in a previous generation can be superseded by a successor.
- When church leaders speak officially, it is believed that their words will never contradict the Bible, even though they may expound doctrines that are unbiblical.
- The church believes that Christians who trust the Bible and base their salvation on it, will not be saved, sanctified, nor see God in the hereafter. They will be relegated to a lower heaven with backslidden Mormons. Salvation rests only in the Mormon Church and its temple rituals.

CONCLUSION:

The Bible, as we have seen, has not suffered from scientific examination. In the last one hundred years much has been found to confirm Bible history as reliable, and more discoveries are being made all the time. While discoveries cannot *prove* that the Bible is the inspired Word of God, it is, nevertheless, able to prove whether the events and historical locations described in it are true or false. And so far, no archaeological discoveries have disproved the Bible.

It is a miracle that both Old and New Testament writers presented the same message, considering the time span involved. The only possible explanation is that God was in control of those human writers. If he had not been, we would find major contradictions in doctrines and beliefs throughout; but there simply aren’t any. Peter got it right when he declared:

“For prophecy [*both foretelling and forthtelling*] came not in old time by the will of man;
but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.”
(2 Pet. 1:21)

Before one takes a sacred book, lock, stock and barrel, (Bible included) objectivity is critical. God doesn’t expect Christians, or potential Christians, to base their belief in the Bible solely on blind faith, or how good it makes them “feel.” If they decide on the latter, they will be in the same category as Mormons who, if they “feel good” about the *Book of Mormon* and *Doctrine and Covenants*, it means it’s of God. That kind of subjectivity should be avoided.

It is not wrong to “*test and prove all things*.” Josh McDowell, once an agnostic who believed Christianity was worthless, was challenged to intellectually examine the claims of Christianity. He found overwhelming evidence of its reliability, and after that his life changed dramatically. In his book, *Evidence That Demands a Verdict*, he reiterates that we must incorporate our brains:

Decision making must utilize every avenue at one’s disposal. In other words,
God gave us a brain to use. *He doesn’t expect us to commit ‘intellectual suicide.’*⁴³

You have used your intellect to examine the evidences as presented in this article—evidences that confirm the reliability of the Bible and indicate that the writers of the Bible had to have been inspired by God. And contrary to what Mormons believe, the Bible contains eternal truths that are forever unchangeable. This sets it apart from all other books. It pulsates with life because its author is the creator of the universe who purposely saw to it that His Word was safeguarded down through the centuries—all for the purpose of revealing Himself to mankind, and to let them know what men and women have to do to receive *full* salvation.

But remember, it is not the Bible that will save a person. Dr. Thomas Lindberg clarifies this:

No one is saved by the Bible. But the Bible reveals the Lord Jesus to a person, and Jesus will save all who trust Him. A hospital cannot cure our diseases. But sick people can go to a hospital and meet a physician who is able to deliver a cure. The purpose of the Bible is to connect you with Jesus Christ who can save you. (*Dr. Thomas Lindberg, "You can Trust the Bible."*)⁴⁴

Until next time!

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ENDNOTES

¹ No verifiable evidences exist for the Book of Mormon, such as archaeological discoveries in the Americas. And while LDS scholars claim there are literary devices (Hebraisms) in the Book of Mormon showing Hebrew similarities that the "unlearned" Joseph Smith was incapable of, literary devices will not be covered in this article. It is a complex subject and would require too lengthy of a presentation. Suffice it to say here, that the LDS Church's claim that Joseph Smith was unlearned can only apply to him as a young boy. By the time of his death at age 38, he had laboriously studied Hebrew with a Jewish convert to Mormonism, Alexander Neibauer, who had an extensive Jewish library which Smith utilized. He was familiar with the *Zohar* (Jewish Kabbalah) and also had Latin, Hebrew, German and Greek New Testaments. LDS historians state that he could read the German text. Thus, Smith was certainly familiar with Hebraisms. See Lance S. Owens "Joseph Smith and Kabbalah: *Dialogue* 27, no. 3 [Fall 1994], 166); also, *The Mormon Hierarchy* by D. Michael Quinn (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1994) 183, 191, 643.

² The purpose of a bone box (ossuary) was to wait until the body decayed, then go into the tomb and remove the bones and place them in a stone box with the hope of an eventual resurrection for the person who passed away. Some critics have said that the name of Jesus (*Joshua/Yeshua in Hebrew*), including the name of James were common names in the time of Christ, so it may not have been the Biblical James or the Biblical Jesus. However, while it was not uncommon for the name of the deceased to include the name of the father on ossuaries, this is the only known case of a brother being mentioned with the name of the deceased. This fact, according to experts, is too much of a coincidence, and indicates that James' brother was well-known and a significant figure, meaning Jesus Christ. Therefore, it verifies the physical existence of Jesus Christ. As far as the inscription on the box, the following verifies that it is not a forgery:

- Testing by the Geological Society of Israel confirms that the limestone is from the Jerusalem area, and that it was quarried in the 1st or 2nd century CE.
- When a stone ossuary lies in a cave for hundreds (or thousands) of years, a "patina" (a thin film of chemicals) develops on the surface of the stone. Microscopic analysis of the ossuary and the inscription reveals that the very same patina on the surface of the ossuary is also the same patina that is embedded in the grooves of the inscription. This tells us that the ossuary and the inscription are the same age. If the inscription was made by a modern tool and done recently, then the patina would reflect this. The patina in the grooves of the inscription does not contain any metal shavings or evidence that it was done by a modern tool.
- Some critics have said that the first part of the inscription - "James, son of Joseph" - was written by one hand, while the second part - "brother of Jesus" - was by another hand. The problem with this objection is that it runs counter to many of the world renowned epigraphists who have examined the inscription - among them Professor Frank Cross of Harvard, Father Joseph Fitzmyer, formerly of the Catholic University of America, Dr. Ada Yardeni (author of *The Book of Hebrew Script*), Joseph Milik, a prominent Dead Sea Scrolls epigrapher, and Andre Lemaire. All of these experts see only one hand in the inscription.
- The Aramaic used in the inscription has been examined by the world's foremost experts in ancient Aramaic. The words used for son (bar), and brother (akhui) attest to the fact that the inscription is indeed the same ancient Aramaic spoken by Jesus and His apostles.
- The paleographic style of the letters inscribed on the stone places the writing in the 20 BCE - 70 CE timeframe. Furthermore, several of the letters - the shape of the dalet ("d"), yod ("y"), and aleph ("a") - **narrow the date of the ossuary to roughly 50 - 70 CE**, the very same time frame that James was recorded as being put to death!
- What are the chances that this could some other James? How many persons with the name James were also the son of Joseph, and a brother of a Jesus? Mathematical studies have been done to try to answer this question. The name James

appears in 2 percent of the inscriptions. Joseph, in 14 percent. And the name Jesus in 9 percent. The chances that all three names appear together? Only 1/40th of 1 percent (.02 x .14 x .09 = 0.000252).

- Most ossuaries are without inscriptions. The ones that are inscribed, and that date from the 1st century, are normally inscribed in the style "xxxx, son of yyy". There is only one other example of an ossuary out of thousands where there was a name appended. The primary reasons for doing this were only two: (1) to differentiate the person from others that they might be confused with, or (2) to associate the person with someone famous. Clearly the ossuary of James was being marked to differentiate it from the rest - as being the very special resting place of the Lord's brother.
- Skeptics **say** that if this *was* the James that was the brother of Jesus, the inscription would have read "the brother of the Lord", or "the brother of the Messiah". But is this so? If we read Josephus, the famous Jewish historian of the 1st century, he refers to James in just the same way: as "the brother of Jesus, who is called the Messiah". (See: <http://creation.com/james-ossuary-stands> and http://www.evidencetobelieve.net/james_ossuary.htm).

There are more, but the above should suffice. See also, http://www.harvardhouse.com/Luke_date-written.htm

³ Dr. Nelson Glueck, *Rivers in the Desert* [New York, Grove, 1960], p. 31.

⁴ (J. Mann 'New Finds Cast Fresh Light on the Bible' U.S. News & World Report' 8/24/81 p.34.)

⁵ The Pool of Siloam; Black Obelisk in the ruins of Nimrud mentioning Shalmaneser I and II; document seals of Biblical personalities, e.g., Baruch, servant of Jeremiah; Shemah, servant of Jeroboam; King Uzziah, Abdi, servant of Hoshea and others); Pool of Bethesda by the Sheep Gate; Jacob's well at Syhchar ; The "Pavement" (Gabbatha) where Pilate tried Jesus; Solomon's porch in temple precincts; King Hezekiah's tunnel; the shaft Joab climbed up to take the city of Jebus (Jerusalem) for King David; remains of Herod's fortress palace where Christ was mocked; The Sumerian king list, one of history's first mentions of a great flood; Home of the Patriarchs in Shechem, Pithom and Raamses; The Store Cities of the Pharaoh; the Philistines, and the temple of Rameses III;Canaanite Gods and Goddesses; Dan, Israel's Northernmost City; Megiddo; Shiloh, first home of the ark of the covenant; Shishak's Invasion Record; House of Yahweh Ostrakon (pieces of clay or shell with writing on them); seals from the royal courts of Israel and Judah; the moabite stone; the cyrus cylinder; Susa, royal city of queen Esther; Babylonian Seal confirming a clear Link between Babylonia And the Kingdom of Hyskos In Egypt Around 1600 BC, The Time Of Moses And The Exodus; A Clay Prism , the Hexagonal Prism Records Assyrian King Sennacherib's Military Campaigns Including His War Campaign Against King Hezekiah Whom He Claimed To Have Imprisoned Within His Own Royal City (Jerusalem) Like A "Caged Bird". The Prism Also Records Sennacherib's Miraculous Defeat.

⁶ **Lon Solomon** is an [American non-denominational Christian megachurch evangelist](#) and the [Senior Pastor](#) at the [McLean Bible Church](#) in [McLean, Virginia](#). Listen to his audio entitled, "The Critics vs. the Bible" at http://mcleanbible.org/media_player.asp?messageID=40403.

⁷ <http://scriptorium.lib.duke.edu/papyrus/texts/manuscripts.html>; also at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Biblical_manuscript. The Wikipedia presentation is especially interesting in the method of how monks and scribes at monasteries reused manuscripts by washing them and then rewriting texts on the same scrolls. Especially of interest is: <http://www.leaderu.com/orgs/probe/docs/bib-docu.html>. Wikipedia also offers excellent definitions of the Masoretic text, the Codex Sinaiticus and Vaticanus, and the Septuagint.

⁸ R. Laird Harris, *Can I Trust My Bible?* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1963), 129-30. (underlining mine) Cited at <http://www.leaderu.com/orgs/probe/docs/bib-docu.html#text4> in article, "Are the Biblical Documents Reliable?" by Jimmy Williams.

⁹ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Biblical_manuscript)

¹⁰ A statement made on various Christian websites as a general statement, giving no source.

¹¹ "Another remarkable means for preserving and verifying the New Testament writings are the early church fathers' copious quotations. Origen, who wrote in the early part of the third century, quotes 5745 passages from all the books in the New Testament; Tertullian (A.D. 200) makes more than 3000 quotations from the N.T. books; Clement (A.D. 194) quotes 380 passages; Irenaeus (A.D. 178) quotes 767 passages; Polycarp, who was martyred A.D. 165, after serving Christ 86 years, quoted 36 passages in a single epistle; Justin Martyr (A.D. 140) also quotes from the N.T. These were all Christian writers; and in addition to these, the Scriptures were largely quoted by heathen and infidel writers, among them Celsus (A.D. 150) and Porphyry (A.D. 304). Indeed the entire New Testament, with the exception of about a dozen verses, has been found scattered as quotations through various writings that are still extant." <http://www.bibletoday.com/htstb/credibility.htm>. Spring/Summer 2011 -- Volume 12, No. 1. No author's name provided for this quote.

¹² http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Biblical_manuscript

¹³ Sir Fredric Kenyon, *The Bible and Archaeology* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1940), 288ff.(emphasis mine) Cited at <http://www.leaderu.com/orgs/probe/docs/bib-docu.html#text8> in an article “Are the Biblical Documents Reliable?” by Jimmy Williams at Probe Ministries.

¹⁴ Grant Jeffrey, “The Handwriting of God” at: <http://www.grantjeffrey.com/article/hisevid.htm>.

¹⁵ B.F. Westcott, and F.J.A. Hort, eds., *New Testament in Original Greek*, 1881, vol. II, 2. Cited at <http://www.leaderu.com/orgs/probe/docs/bib-docu.html#text9> in article, “**Are the Biblical Documents Reliable?**” by Jimmy Williams at Probe Ministries. Wikipedia explains why Westcott and Hort are called creators instead of authors: *The New Testament in the Original Greek* is the name of a Greek language version of the *New Testament* published in 1881. It is also known as the **Westcott and Hort** text, after its editors **Brooke Foss Westcott** (1825–1901) and **Fenton John Anthony Hort** (1828–1892). It is a **critical text**, compiled from some of the oldest New Testament fragments and texts that had been discovered at the time. They worked together for 28 years. See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_New_Testament_in_the_Original_Greek#Reception

¹⁶ *How Wide the Divide* by Craig L. Blomberg and Stephen E. Robinson (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1997; cited at www.jefflindsay.com/ldsfaq/fq_bible.shtml#all. (emphasis mine)

¹⁷ <http://www.reasons.org/theology/two-books/biblical-forecasts-scientific-discoveries>

¹⁸ <http://www.reasons.org/theology/two-books/biblical-forecasts-scientific-discoveries>. Quoted with permission.

¹⁹ <http://www.reasons.org/theology/two-books/biblical-forecasts-scientific-discoveries>

²⁰ See <http://www.gnosis.org/library/pistis-sophia/index.htm>; also, <http://www.gnosis.org/library>

²¹ Allis, Oswald T. *The Five Books of Moses*. Phillipsburg, New Jersey: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1949. p. 22.

²² <http://www.gotquestions.org/JEDP-theory.html>

²³ *This is My God*. (New York: Doubleday and Co. 1959, p. 317.)

²⁴ “Silver Scrolls’ Are Oldest OT Scripture, Archaeologist Says” by Gary D. Myers, Feb 27, 2004. (underlining mine) at <http://www.freerepublic.com/focus/f-news/1087478/posts>

²⁵ <http://www.gotquestions.org/JEDP-theory.html>. No author cited.

²⁶ <http://www.greatcom.org/resources/areadydefense/ch06/default.htm>

²⁷ <http://www.kingdavid8.com>. Scroll down to “contradictions.”

²⁸ Crosswalk.com. “A World Without Easter,” by Dr. James Merritt, April 8, 2004.

²⁹ “You can Trust the Bible” by Thomas Lindberg. Pentecostal Evangel, July 17, 2011. Gospel Publishing House, p. 10.)

³⁰ www.dearelder.com/index/inc_name/Mormon/title2/What_Do_Mormons_Believe.

³¹ www.dearelder.com/index/inc_name/Mormon/title2/What_Do_Mormons_Believe

³² www.dearelder.com/index/inc_name/Mormon/title2/What_Do_Mormons_Believe

³³ Dr. Hugh Nibley transcript published in the volume, *Teachings of the Book of Mormon, Semester 1, p. 3*. Cited at www.jefflindsay.com/ldsfaq/fq_bible.shtml#all

³⁴ www.jefflindsay.com/ldsfaq/fq_bible.shtml#all Philip Barlow observes that Joseph Smith made six basic types of changes and additions of Moses’ and Enoch’s visions in the Pearl of Great Price as follows:

- Long revealed additions that have little or no biblical parallel, such as the visions of Moses and Enoch, and the passage on Melchizedek
- “Common-sense” changes (e.g., Genesis 6:6 “And it repented the Lord that he had made man” is revised in Moses 8:25 to read: “And it repented Noah, and his heart was pained that the Lord had made man”. God, who is perfect, needs no repentance)

- “Interpretive additions,” often signaled by the phrase “or in other words,” which Smith appended to a passage he wished to clarify
- “Harmonization”, in which Smith reconciled passages that seemed to conflict with other passages
- Many changes Smith made are not easily classified; one can observe only that frequently the meaning of a given text has been changed, often idiosyncratically
- Grammatical improvements, technical clarifications, and modernization of terms, which were by far the most common type of change Smith made in the Bible (Phillip Barlow, *Mormons and the Bible: The Place of the Latter-day Saints in American Religion*, New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1991. Cited on Wikipedia.org.)

³⁵ www.dearelder.com/index/inc_name/Mormon/title2/What_Do_Mormons_Believe

³⁶ Mormon Apostle Dallin Oaks. "Reading Church History," 1985 CES Doctrine and Covenants Symposium, BYU, Aug. 16, 1985, pages 1, 2, 5, 16, 24-26. Cited at <http://www.utlm.org/newsletters/no59.htm#BENSON>

³⁷ www.dearelder.com/index/inc_name/Mormon/title2/What_Do_Mormons_Believe. (emphasis mine)

³⁸ www.dearelder.com/index/inc_name/Mormon/title2/What_Do_Mormons_Believe

³⁹ www.jefflindsay.com/ldsfaq/fq_bible.shtml#all.

⁴⁰“ Challenging Issues and Keeping the Faith” by Michael R. Ash in the Deseret News, Aug. 31, 2009. He references Bruce R. McConkie’s, “All Are Like Unto God.” <http://www.deseretnews.com/article/705378687/Challenging-issues-and-keeping-the-faith-Part-16.html>.

⁴¹ www.jefflindsay.com/ldsfaq/fq_bible.shtml#all.

⁴² www.dearelder.com/index/inc_name/Mormon/title2/What_Do_Mormons_Believe

⁴³ Josh McDowell, *Evidence that Demands a Verdict*. (page unknown)

⁴⁴ “You can Trust the Bible” by Thomas Lindberg, pastor in Cordova, TN. Pentecostal Evangel, July 17, 2011. Gospel Publishing House. p. 9.