FIGURE IT OUT

APOLOGETICS

BOOK 5 - IS THE BIBLE TRUE?

RELIABILITY CREDIBILITY INFALLIBILITY INERRANCY

Dr. David Newton

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Harbor View is committed to examining Biblical topics using a detailed framework of analysis with direct contemporary application.

"Be perpetually ready to make an 'apologia' [a legal defense or reasoned argument] *to everyone who asks you to give a 'logos'* [word] *for the hope that is within you, yet do this with gentleness and reverence"*

1st Peter 3:15

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

During the summer of 2023 I taught a 12-week series on Apologetics at Calvary Chapel Santa Barbara. Turning my notes into a book resulted in over 450 pages. Would potential readers readily take on a book of that size? Thanks to everyone who gave me feedback that it would be much preferred to have a series of 12 paperback books – one covering each of the 12 Apologetics topics. People could easily find the topic they have interest in, and the entire series could then fit on a desk or bookshelf as a ready-reference about foundational Apologetics issues.

Thanks to Bret Shellebarger who first approached me about teaching a series on Christian Worldview, which then turned into the Apologetics study. Thanks to senior pastor Tommy Schneider for his encouragement to go deep on each topic, and then inviting me to do the first teaching at the Calvary Wednesday midweek service. Thanks also to the 120+ who signed up online for the summer series and faithfully attended Monday evenings - and for all those challenging Q+A sessions after each topic.

Big thanks to Jef Richardson for video recording and editing the Monday night teachings, and to Kevin Hurtado and Sam Shellebarger who filled in and covered for Jef the two times he was unable to make it. Readers can view the 12 video-teachings that correspond to the 12 Apologetics books at my YouTube channel **Figure It Out** *@NewWaveDave1977*.

Special thanks once again to Jenny Yarbrough for another great job designing book covers for this Figure It Out series – just like her graphics work on my other FIO books and at the **NewtonFIO.com** website. Thanks also to all those who did proof-reading and editing. And many thanks always to my family for love, prayers, and support.

FOREWORD

We cannot teach, much less defend, what we do not know. Apologetics is for every Christian because it addresses the questions a typical skeptic uses to challenge the claims of Christianity. While speaking around the nation at secondary schools, churches, and college/university campuses one concern is obvious: Biblical literacy is rare, as increasing numbers of people are choosing to follow the ways of the world. Many who grew up in Christian environments do not know what they believe or why they believe it. At a time when God's Word and name are challenged and ridiculed [even in places founded upon Judeo-Christian values], many well-meaning believers struggle with how to articulate and defend their beliefs. For this reason, Dave Newton's book series on Apologetics is both timely and important. These excellent resources are packed with wisdom from Newton's decades of teaching the Bible and defending the faith. Each short book is well-researched, easy to follow, and provides logical, reasoned answers to one of the twelve most common objections to Christianity. Dr. Newton's use of compelling statistics, analogies, and stories prove why Christianity is true and has withstood the test of time. Whether you are new to the faith, a mature Christian, or still trying to answer life's biggest questions, this Apologetics series will further equip you to defend your faith with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength. I have no doubt you will return to this resource time and again to find great information to explain a reason for the hope within you.

There are many questions about whether the Bible is true. In this well-researched volume, Dr. Newton tackles these head on. When was it written? How do we deal with alleged errors and discrepancies? What were the criteria for accepting certain writings that are now considered

God's Word? Why is it important to know the historical context in which the manuscripts were written? What evidence exists that differentiates these from other ancient writings? Is it acceptable that many Biblical accounts were written years, decades, and even centuries after the actual events took place? At a time when only 20 percent of Americans believe the Bible is the inspired Word of God, Newton explains the historical contexts in which the Biblical manuscripts were written, as well as how to defend the infallibility and inerrancy of these *God-breathed* Scriptures against common critiques. In addition to describing how the abundance of archaeological discoveries have validated the people, places, events, and times recorded by eyewitnesses and close associates, he also covers how the Bible advanced over time, how the early church leaders openly recognized and accepted what writings were truly God's Word, and how archaeology continues to provide a wealth of tangible evidence that supports the narratives. Dr. Newton presents a sound case for believing the Bible is true, the credibility of the writers, and the consistent doctrine-content that validates that [while there may be some copying errors] it is without material errors and a wholly reliable source of God's truth.

Dr. Todd von Helms - Raleigh, North Carolina
Presidential Scholar for Christianity and Culture at Dallas Baptist University. Senior Fellow at Montreat College and Southeastern Seminary. Todd has degrees from: University of Texas, Duke University, and Southern Methodist University. He is the author of the best-selling book, ***Before You Leave: For College, Career, and Eternity*** *[2021]. His latest book [2024] is* ***Prayerful: How the Scriptures, History, and Experience Can Shape Our Prayers.***

INTRODUCTION *to* APOLOGETICS

What exactly is Apologetics? A great starting place is in Acts chapter 17 where Saul is on the Areopagus [Mars Hill] just below the Acropolis in Athens, Greece. There he had a dialogue with skeptical Epicurean and Stoic philosophers. I have been up on that rock outcropping many times over the years and always love to read Acts 17:16-34 out loud, which is also engraved right there on a large stone placard. It is Paul's teaching about the *Unknown God* and his defense of the Christian faith within the pantheism of that First Century Athenian culture. Apologetics comes from the Greek word ***apologia*** [ἀπολογία] meaning "a verbal defense, a reasoned argument". Peter used this [1st Peter 3:15] when encouraging his readers to ALWAYS be ready to give an ***apologia*** about the Logos, regarding the hope within you, to anyone who would ask.

The 12 booklets in this FIO Apologetics series each examine one topic in the context of the questions a typical skeptic asks about the Christian faith, and how to reply with a well-prepared, thoughtful, rational, logical, reasonable response – information to equip you for such conversations. The primary focus is to provide my readers with content that is easy to remember and easy to explain. However, there are three caveats. First, everything in these booklets faces significant challenges, concerns, and oftentimes outright ridicule because no matter what position you have there will always be those who oppose it. Challenges will come from outside the circles of Christian thinkers, but [sad to say] they also come from within the various circles of Christian thinkers. I can guarantee that all I present in these 12 volumes will have philosophers, theologians, pastors, and scholars who will thoroughly disagree with my position.

Second, rarely if ever does a great Apologetics response convince the skeptic to change a position. But reasonable-logical-rational-thoughtful responses can help remove the stereotypical way that people often think about conservative Christians - that they are unreasonable, illogical, irrational, close-minded, not very thoughtful. And third, the Bible will not be my primary source of defense because skeptics will say, "I don't believe the Bible, what else have you got?" I will utilize Scripture as I go deeper into each topic and cover solid evidence that aligns with facts.

My position for this entire series is that there are just two competing worldviews. This book introduces the **Naturalist Worldview** opposite the **Biblical Christian Worldview**. The former is inherently atheistic [there is no God, and everything happens by random accidental iterations over long periods of time]. The latter is inherently theistic [there is a God who designed-created everything]. But in today's Apologetics debates, there is also a **Theistic Evolutionary Worldview** that attempts to blend the prevailing scientific paradigm that everything in the universe results from billions of years of random evolution and natural selection – and this is the process God used after He provided the starting-point elements and chemical compounds. His process of evolution facilitated everything to iterate, mutate, transition, and survive or die out by random probability occurring over the course of billions of years. However, the same math that renders the Naturalist Worldview untenable, also undermines all the premises and processes of Theistic Evolution, so I have chosen to *not* treat this as a distinct, third Worldview worth examining more closely.

Providing sound, logical, and thoughtful ***apologia*** of the Christian faith reminds me of my work as an expert witness in legal cases, where I have been hired by various law firms to provide testimony for either a plaintiff's or defendant's legal case about negative economic impacts, business

valuations, financial loss from breach of contract, failure to perform, or outright fraud. My summary report lays out the logic of all the supporting evidence and rationales related to the issue that bitterly divides the two parties – to bring an unbiased and objective *verbal defense, a reasoned argument* - based on the evidence reviewed. That is my ***apologia.*** There are usually several other "expert witnesses" hired by the opposing legal counsel who submit perspectives that directly contradict my professional opinion. My "expert witness" approach is the same for this series on Christian Apologetics – to provide perspectives and evidence for anyone responding to the skeptics who challenge the credibility of Christianity.

The 12-volume series covers the most common questions asked about Christian faith – and how best to respond with confidence using rational, logical thought processes with reliable common-sense evidence. Each book tracks the on-going dialogue between a skeptic of Christianity and a well-informed, well-equipped believer who is able to confidently reply with a defense backed by sound logic and verifiable evidence. Each booklet concludes with a bibliography of Additional Resources where readers can find more information on each Apologetics topic. As you can imagine, it is virtually impossible to cover *every* topic or question that can be raised. But this series examines the twelve most popular issues you are likely to encounter and provides solid answers for the skeptics. May this series become a trusted resource you go back to time and again regarding the foundational rationales for the hope within you, with the page edges frayed and folded over from regular use as you dig in and learn to master the underlying Apologetics of your own Christian faith.

- Dr. Dave Newton
March 2024
Santa Barbara, California

BOOK 5

IS THE BIBLE TRUE?

The way the Bible describes the Exodus is not the way it happened - if it happened at all.

- Rabbi David Wolpe,
Sinai Temple, Westwood, California

The Gospel writers chose a suitable town name [Nazareth] to fit the title Nazorian, but Jesus [if he ever existed] probably had no connection to the place [if it even existed].

- Richard Carrier [author]
On the Historicity of Jesus [2014]

About this time Jesus, was a doer of wonderful works, a teacher of such men as receive the truth with pleasure - He drew over to him both many of the Jews and many of the Greeks.

- Flavius Josephus
Antiquities of the Jews, Book-18, Chap. 3

The question: *"Is the Bible True?"* is a hotly debated topic. If it is reliable that means its content has a substantive basis for belief that it is true. If it really is God's specific Word to mankind, then it absolutely has to be *reliable* in every way. A message that comes directly from the Creator-God must meet a high threshold for accuracy, because if God literally

created the entire physical universe, it would not make sense that such a Powerful Being who exists outside the physical world could somehow be unaware of what happens within the space-time of His creative order. God MUST *know everything*, so the Bible would have to demonstrate that exact same perspective. Skeptics state the Bible's narratives were most probably made up, and most of its content is unsubstantiated. How then it is possible to adequately defend the case for Biblical reliability? Are its names, places, events, and times entirely authentic? Did all of those events actually happen in the way the Bible recounts Earth history? The first component of reliability is to define *when the Bible was written*. The second component is to establish the *credibility* of the writers. The third involves the *authenticity* of its manuscripts. The fourth component is the *archaeological evidence* in support of the Bible's content. The fifth area is the tandem of ***Infallibility*** and ***Inerrancy*** – the capstones to the apologetics case for the reliability of the Bible. Is there a logical, rational way to demonstrate textual consistency and authenticity among the 40 Biblical writers that, when positioned alongside the ancient manuscripts and archaeological evidence, provides sufficient evidence the Bible is in fact wholly reliable [trustworthy] as a source of God's truth? The previous book in this series [number 4 out of 12 titles] presented the case for the Bible originating outside the temporal, physical world. This book segues directly from the position that the Bible DOES originate outside of space-time, so that an excellent case can be made that it is entirely reliable in its content: the names, places, events, and dates throughout its fully integrated narrative covering 66 separate books, composed by 40 different writers. The starting point is when the Bible was written. Next is the credibility of the writers. Then check the manuscripts and supporting archaeology. The final area is about the best ways to defend ***Infallibility*** and ***Inerrancy*** against multiple critiques coming from the skeptics.

When It Was Written

The initial foundation for the Bible's reliability is to establish when it was written. Skeptics love to point out that Moses was not present at the creation, so how could he have accurately written about it in the mid 2nd Millennium BC? Critics tend to concede that Moses wrote the majority of the Torah sometime after the 1447 BC Exodus from Egypt, but they ridicule Deuteronomy 34:5-7 and the death of Moses, because another writer [probably Joshua] would have had to complete that narrative. Many scholars make the case that the book of Job was written about 400 years before Genesis [closer to 1900 BC] based upon the much older form of Hebrew used and events that occurred prior to the life of Moses. Joshua is widely agreed to be the writer of the book that bears his name [most likely between 1400 and 1380 BC], although some scholars say Joshua only wrote the first 11 chapters, while the remainder was finished in the 7th Century BC prior to the Babylonian exile. Judges and Ruth were both written around 1000 BC, while the Song of Solomon, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and the two volumes of Samuel followed in the first half of the 10th Century BC. Psalms were compiled by several authors [including David, Solomon, Asaph] between 1400 and 400 BC. Obadiah and Joel were in the 9th Century, while Jonah, Amos, Hosea, Micah, and Isaiah were in the 8th Century BC. Nahum, Zephaniah, and Habakkuk are from the 600s BC - prior to the exile into Babylon. Ezekiel, Jeremiah, the two volumes of Kings, Lamentations, Daniel, and Haggai were each written between 590 and 520 BC [during the exile and just after]. Zechariah, Ezra, the two-volume Chronicles, Esther, and Nehemiah were written between 480 and 420 BC. Malachi is the last of the 39 books in the Old Testament, written at the start of the 4th Century BC [397], and is therefore final Word from God over the next 400 years - until John the Baptist is preaching repentance at the Jordan River in 29 AD. The 39 books of the Old

Testament are referred to in the New Testament as "Scriptures". They are called: the "Law" [5 books of the ***Torah*** in Hebrew], "Prophets" [plural ***nevi'im*** in Hebrew - including Joshua, Judges, Samuel as one book, Kings as one book, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and the 12 shorter prophecies as one book], and "Writings" [plural ***kethuvim*** in Hebrew] including Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Song of Solomon, Esther, Daniel, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, with Nehemiah + Ezra in one book. In the 1st Century AD, the "Scriptures" were most likely the Greek Septuagint version of the 39 Old Testament books, translated in the 3rd Century BC.

The 27 books in the New Testament are hotly debated regarding when they were written. Liberal theologians date most, if not all, to sometime after the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD by Titus Vespasian. However, conservative scholars [I agree with this position] define pre-70 AD dates for the Gospels and the Epistles. This is based on both the lack of any mention of Jerusalem and the Temple being destroyed, as well as the narratives being from direct eyewitnesses to the life of Jesus, and the growth of the church across the Mediterranean Basin during 32 to 65 AD. Jesus' brother James wrote his letter prior to his death, so it is the earliest book, probably written in the early-to-mid 40s AD. Matthew and Mark most likely penned their Gospels in the late 40s, while Luke and John wrote theirs in the early 50s. Also, in the early 50s [probably 51-52 AD] Paul wrote his two letters to Thessalonica. There is strong evidence that Paul wrote his first letter to Corinth in 54 AD while he was in Ephesus – when he also wrote to Galatia. He then wrote his second letter to Corinth in 55 while in Philippi of Macedonia and penned his letter to the Romans in 57 AD when he went back in Corinth. He wrote from house arrest in Rome [61-62 AD] to Ephesus, Philippi, and Colossae. In 63-64 he wrote Titus, Philemon, and twice to Timothy. Most likely, Paul's final letter [Hebrews] was written to his beloved nation of Israel while he was in the

Mamertine dungeon in Rome prior to his execution by Caesar Nero in 67 AD. Jude [another brother of Jesus] wrote his letter in the mid-late 60s before the destruction of Jerusalem in 70. The Apostle John was in exile [by Emperor Domitian] on the island of Patmos from 93-96 AD when he wrote the Revelation received from Jesus. He was released by Marcus Nerva and returned to Ephesus, then wrote three letters between 96-99, prior to his death in 100 AD at the age of 98. Of course, there remains much debate about these dates, but there is overwhelming evidence from dozens of excellent sources to support this position to the skeptics.

Credibility of the Writers

The next core component that supports the reliability of the Bible is how well the writers stand up to scrutiny about the truthfulness of what they recorded. Their credibility is directly related to 1] whether they were an eyewitness of the people, places, events, and times they wrote about, or had associations with others who were eyewitnesses, and 2] the level of acceptance by near contemporaries to their time. These two factors either reduce the credibility of Biblical writers, or further enhance their authenticity as honest, trustworthy, ***credible*** sources of true content.

Eyewitnesses and Associates

Virtually all of the Old Testament writers wrote directly about what they personally saw and heard. Moses is noted in multiple sources within and outside the Bible as the writer of the Torah. But the skeptic questions how Moses could write about the creation, the lives of Adam through to Noah and his three sons, and their descendants, including Cush, Nimrod the ruler of Babel, then Shem's ancestry to Nahor, Terah, and Abraham – from whom came Isaac, Jacob, Levi, Kohath, and then Amram the father of Moses. The logical, rational reply to the skeptic is that the entire genealogy was passed down via the longstanding and well-documented oral tradition from grandfathers and fathers to sons. When Moses wrote

the Torah, he was simply recounting what he had been instructed in by his forefathers. The events of his birth he no doubt received from his birth mother and the Egyptian family that raised him. He then personally lived through the events in Midian, his rise to power in Egypt, his call by God, the Exodus from Goshen, receiving the Law on Mount Sinai, and the times of the Hebrews in the wilderness leading up to his death. From that point forward, the Old Testament writers are contemporaneous with the times in which they lived and about which they wrote.

In the New Testament, Matthew and John were two of the original 12 disciples of Jesus. They saw firsthand all He did and heard Him speak. Peter was also one of the original 12 and he recounted everything he experienced firsthand with Jesus to his good friend John Mark who also wrote a Gospel. Luke was a Gentile physician born in Antioch. There is evidence he was living in Troas when Saul first sailed from that city to Macedonia. His Gospel was written to his Greek colleague Theophilus based upon him speaking with many eyewitnesses to Jesus, including Peter, as well as drawing from John Mark's Gospel account, which was also based upon Peter's eyewitness testimony. Luke's second volume recorded the Acts of the Apostles in establishing the 1st Century church. He was both an eyewitness of Saul's ministry [he accompanied Saul, Titus, Silas, Barnabas, and very likely met Epaphroditus, Aquila, Priscilla, Onesiphorus, Timotheus, and Lydia, among others] and recorded other actions and events recounted to him by contemporary eyewitnesses.

Acceptance By Contemporaries

While the skeptic argues that there was no such thing as a complete Bible until Roman Emperor Constantine convened various Christian church leaders to the city of Nicaea in the Asia province of Bithynia [from May until July of 325 AD], there is a wealth of written evidence from the late 1st Century and all through the 2nd and 3rd Centuries AD confirming the

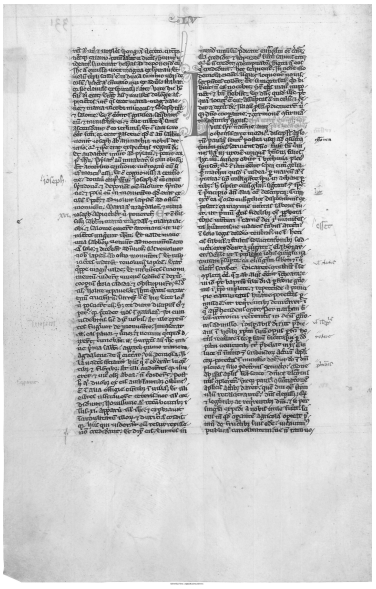
credibility of the Biblical writers. Remember that 300 years before Jesus, there were hundreds of copies of the complete Old Testament translated into Greek all throughout the Roman Empire. Jesus most likely read from a Septuagint when he began His ministry at age 30, reading from the Isaiah scroll in the Nazareth synagogue. The list of well-connected, highly credible confirmers of the writers of the Gospels and the epistles is a veritable "who's who" of theologians, elders, scholars, historians, and church fathers from the ancient world. Polycarp of Smyrna [69-155 AD] knew the Apostle John personally. He wrote to his Greek colleague Irenaeus of Lyon [early in the 2nd Century AD] about *"my conversations with John and others who had seen the Lord and knew the words and reported all things"* – confirming John's eyewitness accounts. Clement of Rome [35-99 AD] was another contemporary of John the Apostle and wrote that Paul's letters to Christians in Corinth were entirely credible and authoritative in their content. Irenaeus later writes in about 180 AD, "*Luke, also a follower of Paul, put down in a book the Gospel that was preached by Paul".* Hippolytus, the lead elder of the Greek Christians in Rome, wrote in the early 3rd Century of the importance of the Trinity as a core doctrine throughout Paul's letters. He also advocated for consistent apologetics in defense of Christian faith, as well as sound exegesis and homiletics for those actively teaching God's Word. Origen of Alexandria wrote in the 3rd Century AD advocating that the Old Testament and the New Testament should always be read alongside one another, and their doctrines should be consistent and complementary throughout.

Papias was in Hierapolis [late 2nd Century AD] and wrote in Latin, clearly referring to John Mark as "*Peter's interpreter who wrote down all that Peter remembered about the sayings and doings of our Lord".* Justin the Philosopher [also known as the Martyr], writing around 150 AD, refers

to the Gospels of Matthew and Luke as *"the memoirs of our Apostles"*. Roman historian Tertullian, also writing from Alexandria [around 182 AD] included in his open rebuttal of Marcion's heresy the affirmation of *"Luke, the Gentile Gospel author"*. Marcion of Sinope [in modern day Turkey] was born in 85 AD, went to Rome around 136 AD, and introduced the heresy that the God of the Old Testament was not the same God the Father of Jesus Christ. He was thoroughly repudiated by contemporaries such as Polycarp, Justin, Irenaeus, Clement, Origen, and Tertullian – all who clearly confirmed that there was already in the early 2nd Century AD, well-defined Christian doctrine in widely-accepted texts that included the 4 Gospels and the letters of Paul, Peter, James, John, and Jude. Skeptics will often state it was not until a 1st Century AD council held at Yabneh [pronounced Jamnia] in western Judaea, that the books in the Bible were finalized. However, there is no solid evidence to support this. In fact, statements from Flavius Josephus and the Talmud say there was popular consensus about the authoritative Word of God [Greek Septuagint, the 4 Gospels, and the Epistles of Paul, James, Peter, John, and Jude] many years prior the fall of Jerusalem in 70 AD. Titus Flavius Clemens [also known as Clement of Alexandria, Egypt] wrote during the early 3rd Century AD that *"the Epistle to the Hebrews is Paul's written in the Hebrew language, but that Luke translated it into Greek"*. During the early 4th Century AD, amid the intense persecution by Roman Emperor Diocletian, church leaders showed support for the written Word [Old Testament Septuagint, the Gospels, and the letters of Paul, James, Peter, John, and Jude] keeping them preserved as *"the confirmed"* and *"the agreed upon"* texts that comprise all Scripture. From the 5th to the 10th Century AD, a group of Jewish scribes, theologians, and scholars called Masoretes [from the ancient Hebrew word "bond"] living in Jerusalem and Tiberius on the Sea of Galilee, focused on preserving the

integrity of the original Hebrew Old Testament. Over the centuries since the fall of Jerusalem in 70 AD, many Jews remained in Babylon after the exile, others were thoroughly immersed into the Greek, and then the Roman, culture and language, as Greek and Aramaic became their preferred spoken and written languages. They did not stay familiar with their ancient Hebrew, which did not use vowels in the written texts. The Masoretes meticulously copied the original content and added dot and dash marks just below and above the consonants to help with correct pronunciations. Because of their strict attention to the original Hebrew, the Masoretic Bible was known for its strong textual integrity.

Similar care for the original writings influenced historians and scholars like Jerome from Dalmatia [modern day Croatia], who was commissioned in 382 AD by *Damascus the 1st* to translate the Bible into Latin. We know this as the Vulgate, considered the core text for Catholic Bibles, including the *Sixtine* text [from 1590], Clementine [1590], and Nova Vulgata [from 1979]. Below is the oldest copy of his Latin work that dates to 1200 AD.



The Cervera Bible is written in Iberian-Hebrew paleography and contains the entire Old Testament, the Masorah textual criticism notes on writing, vocabulary, and pronunciation - and detailed grammatical commentary. The image below is the oldest surviving copy, dating to about 1300 AD.

The next example of the progression of the Bible over the centuries is the beautifully ornate and annotated Latin Vulgate version [see below] printed in the city of Mainz, Germany by Johannes Gutenberg in 1455. It was also the very first book ever printed using a moveable type press.

Just 60 years later in 1516, the Dutch theologian Desiderius Erasmus had his innovative Latin-Greek interlinear Bible, *Novum Instrumentum Omne*, [below] published for the common man to read and cross-reference.

ΠΑΥΛΟΥ ΤΟΥ ΑΠΟΣΤΟΛΟΥ Η
ΠΡΟΣ ΡΩΜΑΙΟΥΣ ΕΠΙΣΤΟΛΗ

ΑΓΑΛΟΣ ΔΟΥΛΟΣ ΙΗ
ΣΟΥ ΧΡΙΣΤΟΥ, ΚΛΗ
ΤΟΣ ΑΠΟΣΤΟΛΟΣ, ΑΦΩ
ΡΙΣΜΕΝΟΣ ΕΙΣ ΕΥΑΓΓΕΛΙ
ΟΝ ΘΕΟΥ, Ο ΠΡΟΕΠΗΓΓΕΙ
ΛΑΤΟ ΔΙΑ ΤΩΝ ΠΡΟΦΗ
ΤΩΝ ΑΥΤΟΥ ΕΝ ΓΡΑΦΑΙΣ ΑΓ
ΙΑΙΣ, ΠΕΡΙ ΤΟΥ ΥΙΟΥ ΑΥΤΟΥ,
ΤΟΥ ΓΕΝΟΜΕΝΟΥ ΕΚ ΣΠΕΡΜΑΤΟΣ ΔΑΒΙΔ, ΚΑΤΑ ΣΑΡΚΑ,
ΤΟΥ ΟΡΙΣΘΕΝΤΟΣ ΥΙΟΥ ΘΕΟΥ ΕΝ ΔΥΝΑΜΕΙ, ΚΑΤΑ ΠΝΕΥ
ΜΑ ΑΓΙΩΣΥΝΗΣ, ΕΞ ΑΝΑΣΤΑΣΕΩΣ ΝΕΚΡΩΝ, ΙΗΣΟΥ
ΧΡΙΣΤΟΥ ΤΟΥ ΚΥΡΙΟΥ ΗΜΩΝ, ΔΙ ΟΥ ΕΛΑΒΟΜΕΝ ΧΑ

STOLI AD ROMANOS.

PAVLVS SERVVS
Iesu Christi, uocat⁹ apl̄s, segregatus in euāgeliū dei, quod ante promiserat per ꝓphetas suos, in scripturis sanctis de filio suo, q̄ genit⁹ fuit ex semine Dauid, secūdū carnē, qui declarat⁹ fuit filius dei, in potētia, secūdū spiritū sanctificationis, ex eo q̄ resurrexit a mortuis Iesus christus dn̄s noster, per quē accepimus gratiā & muneris aplī functionē, ut

Rom. 1. 2. 3. de Dichotomia Oeconomiarum. V. annot. ad Hebr. 7. 1.

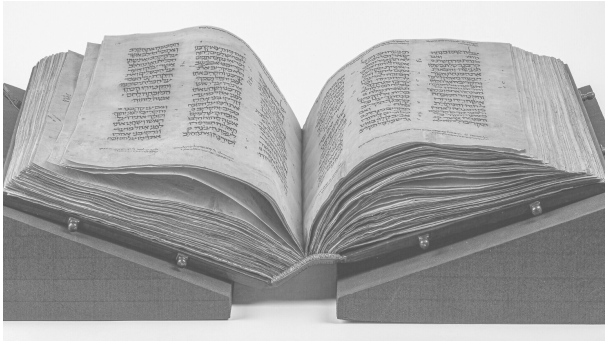
Rom. 1. 3. 4. Alex. M. Iul. Iulius, et alii utiliter et fraude e Politicis finxerunt de ex Deus vel Deorum progenie natos: quo populis haberent obedientiorem, et militem audaciorem. V. an-

With regard to credibility, it is also worth asking whether there was any motivation or incentive to lie, embellish, or fabricate their narratives. The writers did not personally gain anything because of their accounts about Jesus. They were recounting what they saw and heard firsthand or were relating the details of what had been told to them by other eyewitnesses that they knew. These became part of the basis for accepting or rejecting written accounts or letters for inclusion in the recognized Word of God. In addition to being a direct eyewitness [or associate of an eyewitness] it was also important whether the written work was widely accepted by all the churches, along with whether there was clear consistency regarding names, places, events, and dates, along with the exact same doctrine. As writings continued to circulate, these same criteria were applied to each. Many well-respected theologians, historians, and church leaders weighed in on the documents that were becoming widely recognized as the credible Word of God. Papias of Hierapolis [95-130 AD] an early contemporary of Polycarp and Irenaeus wrote in Latin, *"John Mark, Peter's interpreter, wrote down all that Peter remembered, the sayings and doings of the Lord"*. Irenaeus of Lyon [180 AD] wrote, "*Luke, a follower of Paul, put down in a book, the Gospel that was preached by*

Paul". Tertullian also wrote in 207 AD, "*We lay down our first position, the evangelical Testament has Apostles for its authors, to whom was assigned by the Lord this office of publishing the Gospel"*. Augustine [354-430 AD] of Hippo in Numidia [North Africa] writes in his memoirs "*Matthew was the first one to write a Gospel, then came Mark, Luke was after him, and John was last, the first was in Hebrew and three in Greek"*. Irenaeus from Lyon, wrote in 180 AD, "*Finally John the disciple of our Lord, who laid back on Jesus' chest at the Last Supper, published his Gospel while residing in Ephesus*". Eusebius wrote that he got the same information from Polycarp of Smyrna, who was one of John's disciples.

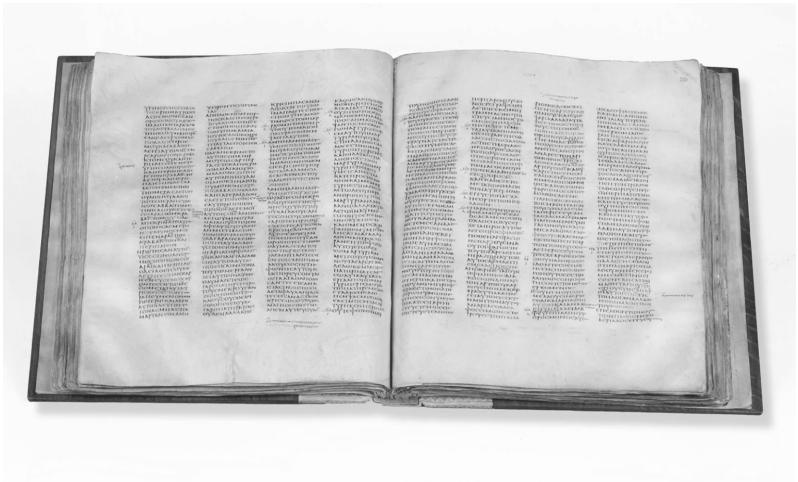
Authenticity of the Manuscripts

Any writings that met these standards of credibility, wide acceptance, and consistency of doctrine were copied dozens of times in order to disseminate the content to as many cities, congregations, and individuals as possible. The 1st Century had no radio, television, Internet, emails, newspapers, magazines, satellite news, or social media. Information was transferred into the population verbally or with copies of original writings from credible sources - circulated throughout the Mediterranean basin. That accounts for the thousands of manuscripts that range from the Iberian Peninsula [Spain and Portugal], to North Africa [Libya, Ethiopia, Egypt], southern Europe, and the Middle East. Consider this complete Hebrew Bible from the 10th Century AD. It is more than 1,000 years old.



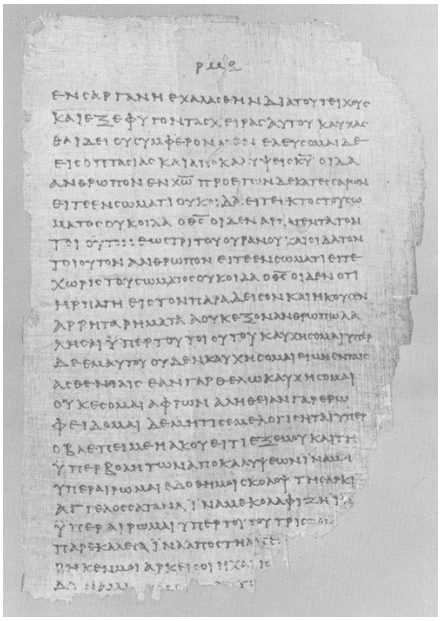
Review these three manuscripts side-by-side. On the left is the Masoretic Codex [dates to 1008 AD]. In the center is The Genesis Scroll [900 AD]. On the right is the Great Isaiah Scroll from Qumran, Israel – part of the Dead Sea scrolls - and dates to 100 AD. These are virtually identical in every way except for a few minor copying errors with some of the letters.

Below is the oldest complete Greek-Septuagint, Codex Sinaiticus. Found in the 1850s in Saint Catherine's monastery [at the base of the traditional site for Mount Sinai], it dates all the way back to the 4th Century AD.

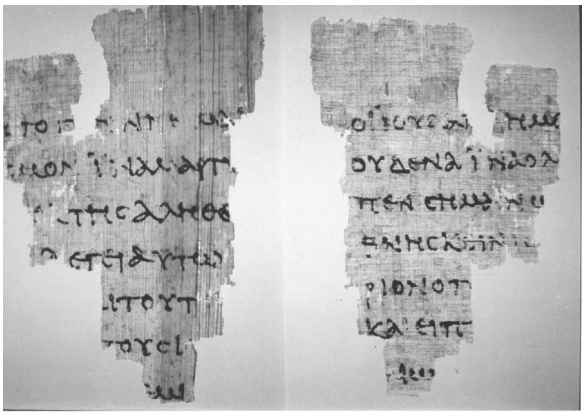


Below is Codex Vaticanus, a Septuagint with Greek New Testament that also dates to the same 4th Century - sometime between 300 and 350 AD.

The Chester Beatty Library in Dublin, Ireland houses *Papyrus-46* which is the exact wording of 2nd Corinthians 11:33 to 12:9 and dates to 200 AD.

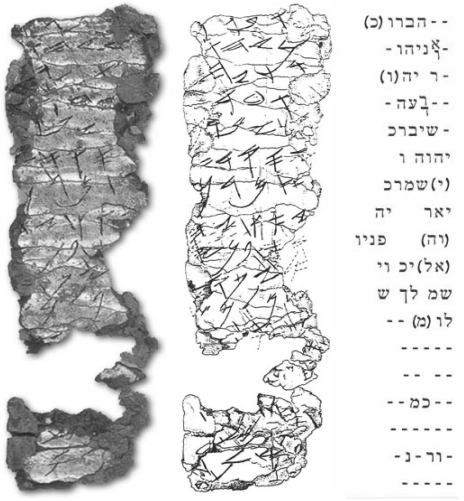


This Rylands *Papyrus-52* is housed at the University of Manchester [UK]. It is a portion of the Gospel of John and dates even earlier to 125 AD, just 75 years after the late 40s-to-early 50s when John penned his work.



This Nash Papyrus [from Egypt in 1902] has the Ten Commandments and the Great Shema from Deuteronomy. It also dates to the 2nd Century BC.

Below is the Silver Scrollwork of Ketef Hinnom, reportedly found in 1979 or 1980. It dates all the way back to the 7th Century BC [in the range of Jeremiah, Daniel, and Ezekiel]. The writing is etched into a thin silver layer quoting Numbers 6:24-26, "*May YHWH bless you and keep you, May YHWH cause His face to shine upon you and give you peace"* [on the left is the metal-etching, center is an exact transfer-representation of the markings from the silver, and on the right is the Hebrew translation].



The Dead Sea Scrolls were discovered in the caves of Qumran between 1947 and 1956. These include every book of the Old Testament except Nehemiah-Esther and date from 250 BC to 68 AD. Below is the Great Isaiah Scroll, a complete book that dates to between 125-100 BC.

Bible Archaeology

There are literally hundreds of archaeological sites/digs throughout Israel and the Middle East, Africa, and Europe that have unearthed tangible evidence to support the content-narratives within the Bible. Exhaustive review of the 'best' or 'top' finds can be done on the web. In this short book, I will introduce my favorite confirmations of Biblical accuracy that have been announced over the centuries - some in just the last few years.

House of David - Tel Dan

This stele inscription "BYTDWD" found at Tel Dan [Israel] in 1993 was translated, "*House of David*" and dates to the 9th Century BC, providing an excellent confirmation of Israel's King written about in the Bible.

Crucifixion Nail in Foot

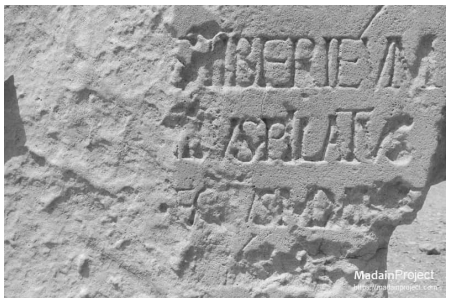
At the Israel Museum, Jerusalem I took this photo of a calcified human foot nailed through with an iron spike. Unearthed outside the city in Givat Hamivtar, it clearly demonstrates that crucifixion did occurr there.

James Ossuary

Great debate surrounds the 2002 announcement that a limestone box used to preserve burial bones, and dated to the 1st Century AD, had the Aramaic inscription "Jacob son of Joseph brother of Jesus" etched into the stone. Jacob is Aramaic for James. After a decade of analysis and a formal trial, no evidence found that it was not an authentic inscription.

Pontius Pilate Tablet

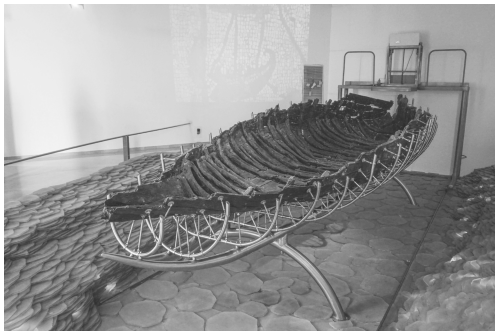
A block of carved limestone was unearthed at Caesarea Maritime in 1961 and had an inscription mentioning "Pontius Pilate", providing evidence he was in fact the governor of the Syrian Province at the time of Jesus.



Galilee Fishing Boat

On the next page is my photo of a 27-foot wooden boat that was found in 1986 when the Sea of Galilee experienced a big drop in its water level due to severe drought. It was independently dated to between 120 BC

and 40 AD, which means it could have been in use during the same time period when Jesus was in His Galilean ministry - between 29 and 32 AD.



Quirinius Governor of Syria

The tablet below has an inscription about *Publius Sulpicius Quirinius,* the governor of the Syrian Province during the time period [2 BC] when Jesus was born in Bethlehem-Ephrathah, confirming the other writers in his day - Josephus, Tacitus, Pliny, Strabo, and Caesar Augustus - who mentioned him by name in their own journals, memoirs, and historical records.

On the top of the next page is a papyrus manuscript fragment that describes a tax levied on the Jews during the time of Quirinius. This was found inside an embalmed crocodile in Egypt. This was among several

writings of the Jewish priests who were contemporary [30 BC to 40 AD] to the time just before Jesus' birth and during His lifetime [2 BC - 32 AD].

Other fascinating archaeological evidence includes Sir Leonard Woolley excavating Abraham's home city of Ur in the Chaldeas and finding it to be a very wealthy civilization, consistent with the Biblical record. The 5 kingdoms whom Abraham fought in Genesis 14 have all been found in the extra-biblical records, including: Shinar [Sumerian *Shumer*], Ellasar [*Lasar*], Chedorlaomer [Elamite name *Kudur-Lagomer*], and King Tidal of Goiim [*Tudhalia*], along with Sodom [identified as *Tall el-Hammam*]. The **Ebla Tablet** [below] cir. 2300 BC, is written in cuneiform about 300 years prior to Nimrod's Tower of Babel [1944 BC] and specifically mentions both Sodom and Gomorrah as the great, thriving cities on the plain.

Sanballat of Samaria

This papyrus was discovered on Elephant Island in Egypt and specifically says that Sanballat the Horonite was the Samarian governor during the time of Cyrus and the Persian Empire, confirming Nehemiah chapter 26 and how Sanballat actively resisted the rebuilding of Jerusalem's walls.

The **Pillar of Absalom** in the Kidron Valley] has been confirmed as having a unique architectural design consistent with what King Hiram of Tyre used for David's house of the exact same time period [around 1000 BC].

Gemariah Seal

This clay seal, found in Jerusalem in 1980, has the name *"Gemariah son of Shapan"*, confirming Jeremiah 36 when King Jehoiakim destroyed Jeremiah's prophecy scroll, but his scribe Gemariah advised against that.

Discovering an extensive library in ancient Ugarit [Ras Shamra, Syria] has confirmed the Psalms of David and Solomon correctly date to 1000 BC, rather than 800 years later to the times of the Maccabees, as critics say.

Asherah and Ba'al

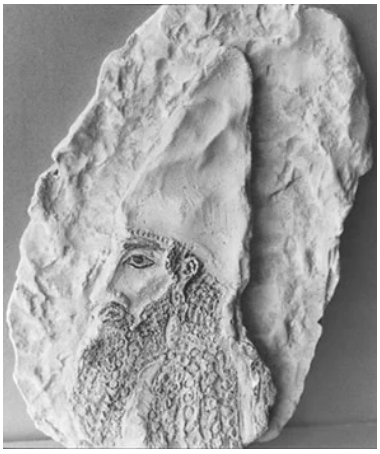
Metal idols and statuettes confirm the Biblical accounts of Canaanite pagan deities including: Asherah [on right], Dagan, and Ba'al [on left].

Sennacherib

The death of Assyrian King Sennacherib [Isaiah 37, 2nd Kings 19] is in the records of his son Esarhaddon, and his son Ashurbanipal. The Assyrian titles: *Rab-Mag* [given to Daniel], *Rab-Shakeh,* and *Tipsarru* match those in the Bible, even though Assyria had been defeated by Nebuchadnezzar at the Battle of Carchemish in 605 BC. Sennacherib's prism and the Lachish inscription reliefs [below] both date to 700 BC in support of the

Biblical record describing in detail how Assyria invaded Judah in 701 BC [recounted in Isaiah 36-37, 2nd Kings 18-19, and 2nd Chronicles 32].

King Sargon [from Isaiah 20] was always challenged by Bible critics as a fictitious person, until his palace was unearthed at Khorsabad [15 miles north of Mosul, Iraq], with his image inscribed on the wall [see below] and a library that described full support for the Assyrian battle against Ashdod in Philistia and capture of Gath in 711 BC [also in Isaiah 20]. The



City of David in the southeast corner of the Old City of Jerusalem dates to Canaanite-Jebusite times [1004 BC]. I have visited both the water shaft [from 2nd Samuel 5:8] and Hezekiah's secret tunnel [from 2nd Kings 20:20] that brought water from the Gihon Spring outside the city to the pool of Siloam inside the city. The pick and axe marks of Hezekiah's engineers can still be seen on the rock walls. It is amazing to review literally dozens and dozens of archaeological finds that provide strong support of the names, dates, events, and places recorded in the Bible. In this short book I was not able to cover an exhaustive list of every manuscript and all the archaeological evidence. However, you now have a great starting point from which to engage the skeptic, and you can do additional review on the web and in books referenced in **Additional Resources** on page 39.

Inerrancy & Infallibility

These two terms are far too often interchanged, as people wanting to talk about inerrancy are actually defining infallibility, or they are trying to deal with the infallibility issues, but are actually speaking about the core definition of what it means to be inerrant. Be sure to get them straight. ***Inerrancy*** says there are no material errors or internal contradictions in the original manuscripts. God cannot lie, so the manuscripts must be true. The skeptic argues there are obvious material errors AND numerous contradictions in the manuscripts, so the Bible is not inerrant. ***Infallibility*** refers to the Bible being trustworthy and consistent in all principles and doctrine. It is stated exactly the way God meant. I remember a 1970s bumper sticker with: "God said it, I believe it, that settles it". Chuck Smith was my Pastor in the 1980s at Calvary Chapel Costa Mesa. He always reminded his congregation that the best way to interpret the Scriptures is in its immediate context - then expand that further to its close context of more verses - and then go to the broadest context of other passages across the Bible that deal with the same topic to confirm the soundness of the principle and the consistency of the doctrine – because *"the best commentary on the Bible is the Bible"*. The Bible was designed to be read and understood. You don't need advanced degrees to comprehend it. Infallibility came under attack in the U.S. and Europe during the 19th and 20th Centuries, with a major shift toward "modernism" – based upon the heralded advances of science and the new Darwinian evolution. The modern scientific method was then applied to the Bible to challenge its reliability and underlying truths. Today we are in a "post-modern" age that rejects universal philosophical axioms, objectivity, rationalism, and absolute truth in favor of subjective, irrational, relative interpretations of what truth means to each person or group. As such, there is no room for a Bible that purports to be infallible in content and inerrant in its sources.

The skeptic's primary argument is that the Bible's principles, doctrines, and statements about the physical world are full of errors and do not hold to close scientific-oriented scrutiny. As such, the Bible is fallible and errant, so it is not a reliable source for truth in today's world. The church has pushed back against the onrush of the post-modern culture. One landmark conference happened in 1978 in Chicago, as 300 theologians, pastors, scholars, professors, and lay-people convened to develop a formal response to the skeptics and critics regarding the reliability of the Bible. The *Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy* [download the PDF at www.VES.edu] has this core statement, *"Scripture is without error or fault in its teaching in what it states about God's acts and creation, about events of world history, its own literary origins under God, and its witness to God's saving grace"*. The 2020 American Worldview Inventory [from Arizona Christian University] reported only 41 percent of people in the U.S. believe that the Bible is the Word of God and contains no factual or historical errors. Only 14 percent state they have a Biblical worldview and just 13 percent attend a church that believes the Bible is inerrant. A 2020 Gallup Poll found a record-low 20 percent of Americans say the Bible is the literal Word of God – half as many as 40 years ago in the 1980 survey. Almost one-in-three [29 percent] now say the Bible is simply a collection of "fables, legends, history, and moral precepts recorded by men".

Challenges from Skeptics

The first major argument typically attacks the original manuscripts, as if there cannot be one single difference in any hand-written parchment, papyrus, or velum. The response to that is straightforward. There were no laser printers, copiers, scanners, or digital cameras in ancient times. The original manuscripts were *definitely* hand-copied, over and over again, dozens [if not hundreds] of times. So, it is absolutely agreed there are many forms of *copying* errors from prior source documents. Perhaps

a scribe left off a letter, changed a word by accident, or used a shorthand technique to finish a line of text. After Saul's original letter to Corinth was read aloud to that church, it was hand-copied – perhaps the entire letter, or maybe just a few portions. As each copy was completed, they were circulated to a wider audience across the city. Then copies were made from those copies. In just a few months, the original letter was probably circulating to multiple communities, with copies of copies of copies of the full letter, or just portions of the original. Most of today's surviving manuscripts are just that. But remember, *copying* errors are not *content* errors. They do not materially change the message-intent or alter the substantive content. Copies [and copies of copies] are quite reliable.

A second typical challenge is that the four Gospels are inconsistent with each other. Content in Matthew and Luke is not found in Mark or John. John writes one thing, but Luke writes something different. If the four are laid side-by-side, there are clear differences in the sequences of events. But THAT is what makes the four Gospels' writers credible. Matthew and John were eyewitnesses of Jesus. Matthew was a Levite turned Roman tax-collector. Luke was a Greek physician who knew both Mark and Peter, and Mark knew Peter, an eyewitness. While the side-by-side sequence of events in the four Gospels is not perfectly aligned, the message and content are the same, and a reliable account of Jesus and His ministry. A similar situation is to consider there are over 16,000 biographies in print about Abraham Lincoln. I have personally read six of them. None of the writers were eyewitnesses, but they drew on primary documents [the President's hand-written notes and letters] and secondary material [other correspondences with Lincoln, newspaper articles, and legislative records]. Doris Kearns Goodwin's 2005 *Team of Rivals* is my favorite. She never met Lincoln or anyone who knew him. But her work is widely considered to be the best of the 16,000 Lincoln biographies in print. Yet

it came out *140 years* after his death. John-Mark and Luke wrote their Gospels based upon eyewitnesses they knew. Matthew and John *were* eyewitnesses of Jesus from 29-32 AD. All four wrote their Gospels within 20-30 years after Jesus' death and resurrection. They are *very credible* and were also widely acknowledged in their time as reliable accounts of the life of Jesus. But skeptics point to Matthew chapter 20 that says Jesus was outside Jericho and met two blind men. Mark 10 also says Jesus was outside Jericho and spoke to a blind man named Bartimaeus. Luke 18 says Jesus was outside Jericho and met a blind man. This is supposedly proof the Bible has material errors. But the content of these accounts is the same – Jesus restored sight to those who were blind. Matthew the eyewitness remembers "men" [plural], Mark and Luke got the account from Peter [an eyewitness], and Mark recalled the man's name. Another supposed error is the genealogy of Jesus. Matthew 1:1 says Jesus is the "son of David" and "son of Abraham". Wait! Jesus is not their biological son. However, the Jews did not use grandson or great-grandson in their ancestries – "son" was used regarding all their forefathers. It comes up again in Matthew 1:8 "Joram the father of Uzziah". 1st Chronicles 3:11 says "Joram the father of Ahaziah". Is that an error? It turns out Uzziah and Ahaziah are ways of writing the same name. It is the same person.

Matthew [14:14-16] includes Isaiah 9:1-2 about Jesus, but it is not word-for-word, so some consider it in error. His material intent is *"the people sitting in darkness saw a great light"* – probably written from his memory of that prophecy. This reminds me of my doctoral dissertation's chapter two – the review of prior literature about my research topic. Sometimes I referred to a previous work in my own words, other times it was an exact quote from the source. Or consider Genesis 1 - *"in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth, then God said let there be light"* [on

the first day of creation]. On the fourth day of creation, God sets one light to rule the day [sun] and another for the night [moon]. The skeptic retorts, "I thought the sun was made on the first day, this is an error". But the way it reads in the original Hebrew, the light on the first day was *already created* and in the overhead expanse, so God simply separated the sun and moon for special duty to mark days, nights, years, seasons. The Earth was already rotating on its axis, so light that marked the first, second, and third "days" could easily have been all the light from the expanse overhead, as our planet made its rotations every 24 hours.

Summary

The skeptics challenge the ***Philosophical*** bases for the Bible – a direct attack on your Worldview and whether God exists [refer to Book-1 in this series]. The second argument is the ***Scientific*** angle, "Does the Bible meet the standards of a science book?" The third challenge is ***Credibility*** – "Can the writers be trusted?" Next are ***Historical*** issues, but the Bible has proven time and again to be about REAL people, places, events, and times in Earth's history. The final challenge is ***Authorship*** – questioning the writers of each book, because their names are often not stated on the first page. Many skeptics argue that pen-to-page writing did not exist at the time of Moses [2nd Millennium BC], casting further doubt on his authorship. There are excellent responses to every challenge about infallibility and inerrancy. No other book in the world has this volume of supporting manuscripts [over 25,000 total] – and while there are *copying errors* since ancient times, the Bible today reads virtually the exact same way as the manuscripts. Substantive content is consistent and reliable. There are many excellent Additional Resources recommended on the next page. The web also has dozens of sound, well-researched, objective sites about these topics. Hopefully this book provides a starting point from which to continue your research, clearly showing the Bible is true.

Additional Resources from Dr. Newton's Library

R.A. Torrey	*Difficulties in The Bible: Alleged Errors and Contradictions* [1998]
Norman Geisler	*Inerrancy* [1980]
Richard Mohler, Ed.	*5 Views on Biblical Inerrancy* [2013]
John McArthur, Ed.	*Inerrant Word* [2020] Foreword by R.C. Sproul
John McArthur	*Is the Bible Reliable?* [www.GTY.org]
J. Warner Wallace	*Cold Case Christianity* [2013]
Andy McClurg	*Is the O.T. Trustworthy?* [www.GCU.edu]
Norman Geisler	*Defending Inerrancy* [2012]
Stephen Davis	*The Debate About the Bible: Inerrancy vs. Infallibility* [1977]
FocusOnTheFamily.com	*Is the Bible True? 5 Reasons for "Yes"*
F. D. Farnell, Ed.	*Vital Issues In the Inerrancy Debate* [2016]
S. Michael Houdmann	*www.GotQuestions.org*
Vern Poythress	*Inerrancy and The Gospels: Challenges of Harmonization* [2012]
F.F. Bruce	*New Testament Documents: Are They Reliable?* [1943]
F.F. Bruce	*History of the English Bible* [1978]
F.F. Bruce J.I. Packer Phil Comfort Carl Henry	*The Origin of the Bible* [2003]
CSLewisInstitute.org	*Are Biblical Manuscripts Reliable?*
GenesisApologetics.com	*How can We Trust the Bible?*

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