

# Why I Trust the Bible

## Introduction

**"The question of authenticity [of the Bible] is not really a religious concern at all; it's an academic one. It can be answered in an academic way totally unrelated to spiritual convictions by a simple appeal to facts, an apologetic technique..."<sup>1</sup>**

The above statement by **Greg Koukl** accurately reflects a portion of **my academic position** on **"biblical reliability"**. Indeed, there is **extant evidence** to the **validity of the Bible** that many scholars (and even "enlightened" individuals) readily dismiss as legend, myth, literary fantasy or politically-motivated positioning. I propose to present the **"evidences"** I have found **most convincing**, so the reader's **personal study** and **subsequent decision** is **unencumbered** by the **"common barrage"** of both **modern media** and **many liberal arts institutions**. These "evidences" are readily verifiable and fully researchable through a vast array of sources, (some of which I list in this article).

Although I will **NOT take a strong position** that **ALL information** presented in the Bible **MUST be corroborated by contemporary evidence**, there does exist a **sufficient body of evidence** substantiating significant Biblical narratives, places and peoples. Educational Institutions have long used very similar (if not the same) Historical and Archaeological discoveries, along with exhaustive Textual Criticism as justification to **reject** Biblical narratives. I intend to use the evidence to **help the Biblically-uninitiated make a determination as to Biblical Legitimacy for themselves**.

## Position Statement

I do not expect any reader to take this, or any of my teachings, on **blind (uneducated, without evidence)** faith. The Bible itself provides its own accounts as evidence to its acceptability. As a practice, Faith is indeed inseparable from a proper application of Biblical principles, should one decide to embark on a life-long application of Biblical teaching to their own lives (which constitutes **"personal empirical proof"**).

However, this article is about **concrete evidences** that you may use to determine **"initial-applicability"** of **Biblical principles** to your life (**or not**). **God Himself affords humans the basic freedom of choice**, and who am I to go against that **very fundamental and gracious gift**.

Just keep in mind, **good logic** starts with **good evidence**.<sup>2</sup>

## Proof Points

Below, is a list (somewhat long) of the **"evidence"** that I have found most convincing relative to Biblical reliability. This is **NOT** an exhaustive list, and it may not represent some of the latest discoveries or

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<sup>1</sup> **"Is the New Testament Text Reliable?"**, Greg Koukl, <http://www.str.org/articles/is-the-new-testament-text-reliable#.VqIQuOaKLIU>, Christian apologist, author speaker and founder of the Christian apologetics organization, "Stand To Reason".

<sup>2</sup> See the various articles on Logic, Reasoning and associated Evidence at [people.umass.edu/klement/100/logic.html](http://people.umass.edu/klement/100/logic.html)

archeological finds. It is presented as a simple “List of Evidences” that the Reader can study for themselves. What the Reader does beyond this point is fully up to them.

All I request is that you approach the study of the list with the “open-mindedness” and the normal enthusiasm you would afford any new course of study that you have elected. In Short:

- research the references for yourself ...
- study the evidence, along with the Biblical passages the evidence relates to,
- and DECIDE FOR YOURSELF whether you can trust such an old book of Teachings.

### Manuscript Evidence:<sup>3</sup>

These evidences are a compilation of the most ancient of the manuscripts (copies) that shaped all modern translations of the Bible. These manuscripts were the “available evidences” used by the Early Church Fathers<sup>4</sup> and later Textual Experts for some 1800 + years, prior to the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls (discussed in the section, “Archeological Evidence”, below). These manuscripts provide far greater textual accuracy of the Bible than what is commonly accepted by Historians for other secular historical works.<sup>5</sup>

- **FACT:** “There is more evidence for the Bible’s authenticity than for any literature of antiquity”<sup>6</sup>
- **FACT:** “More extant copies of both Old and New Testament portions exist than any other classical writing”<sup>7,8</sup>
  - 5,000 Greek Manuscripts
  - 10,000 Latin Manuscripts
  - 9,000 other Manuscripts
  - The above manuscripts are dated from 100-300 years after the originals
  - The number and similarity of the [extant] copies allow scholars to reconstruct the originals
  - Some 86,000 quotations from the early church fathers and several Lectionaries exist in vast libraries.
  - “There is not a body of ancient literature in the world that enjoys such a wealth of good textual attestation as the New Testament”<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> “**Fragment of Ancient Parchment Given to Jewish Scholars**”, <http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/spages/920915.html>

<sup>4</sup> By 700 CE, all the Early Church Fathers, recognized by both Western and Eastern Churches, had died, reference: “*Reading Scripture with the Church Fathers*”, Christopher A. Hall, 1998, InterVarsity Press, Pg. 55

<sup>5</sup> Louis Gottschalk “*Understanding History: A Primer of Historical Method* 2d ed.”, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1969, pp.53-54. For a good discussion of the concept of an original autograph in terms of the distinction between types and tokens, see Greg L. Bahnsen, “The Inerrancy of the Autographs” in *Inerrancy* ed. Norman L. Geisler, Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1980, pp.151-93

<sup>6</sup> Institute for Creation Research, [www.icr.org/bible-manuscripts](http://www.icr.org/bible-manuscripts)

<sup>7</sup> “Faith Facts”, [www.faithfacts.org](http://www.faithfacts.org)

<sup>8</sup> “*Manuscript Support for the Bible’s Reliability*”, Ron Rhodes

<sup>9</sup> F.F. Bruce, “*The New Testament Documents: Are they Reliable?*”

- “There are way more copies of the biblical manuscripts, with remarkable consistency between them, than there are for any of the classics like Plato, Aristotle and Socrates”<sup>10</sup>
- **Old & New Testament Manuscripts:**
  - **The Septuagint** (denoted by the Roman Numeral, “**LXX**”) <sup>11</sup>
    - Written c. 247 BCE ~ 117 BCE
    - Legendarily translated from Hebrew to Greek by 70-72 Jewish Scholars, hence the name “70”
      - translated during the reign of Ptolemy Philadelphus, in Alexandria, Egypt.
    - “Was” and currently “Is” the Primary Greek Old Testament
    - LXX is quoted several times in the New Testament, particularly:
      - Pauline Epistles
      - Apostolic Fathers
      - Later Greek Church Fathers (e.g. Hebrews)
    - When compared to both Masoretic and earliest Hebrew texts, only **minor variations** occur.
  - **Freer Greek Manuscript V** <sup>12</sup>
    - c. ~ 3’rd to 6’th century CE
    - A collection of 6 Biblical manuscripts from the work of Charles Freer (1854-1919)
    - All purchased by Freer in Egypt at the beginning of the 20’th Century CE.
      - Most written in Greek
      - One written in Coptic
  - **Origen’s Hexapla** <sup>13</sup>
    - ~ 240 CE
    - “Hexapla” means “6 versions” in parallel of the Bible
    - An immense and complex, word-for-word comparison of the LXX (Greek) with the original Hebrew Scriptures, plus other Greek translations
    - The title is especially applied to the edition of the Old Testament compiled by Origen around 240 CE.
      - Origen’s recension (a revised edition of a text) of LXX **significantly influenced the development of Codex Sinaiticus** (below).
    - The original text is said to have had some 6000 pages in 15 volumes, but was partially destroyed in the Muslim invasion of 638 CE.
      - The surviving fragments are today being re-published as part of the **Hexapla Project**, under the auspices of The International

<sup>10</sup> “The Top Ten Reasons the Bible is True”, Whitney T. Kuniholm, [www.essentialbibleblog.com](http://www.essentialbibleblog.com)

<sup>11</sup> [www.septuagint.net](http://www.septuagint.net)

<sup>12</sup> “The Old Testament Manuscripts in the Freer Collection”, Henry A. Sanders, New York, 1917

<sup>13</sup> “Catholic Encyclopedia: Hexapla” and “Origen: His Hexapla”, Jewish Encyclopedia

Organization for The Septuagint and Cognate Studies, under the direction of:

- Peter J. Gentry, **Southern Baptist Theological Seminary**
- Alison G. Salvesen, **Oxford University**
- Bas ter Haar Romeny, **Leiden University**
- **Lucian Recension**<sup>14</sup>
  - A critical Greek recension of the text of LXX & the Greek New Testament
  - from Lucian of Antioch (a Biblical Textual Critic)
  - late 3<sup>rd</sup> century CE
  - Later used by the Church Fathers, Chrysostom and others as the **basis** for the **Textus Receptus** (Received Text, see below)
  - Lucian believed in a **“Literal” sense of biblical text**, and tried to keep his work on the recension as “pure” (consistent with then-extant manuscripts) as possible
- **Samaritan Pentateuch**,
  - a.k.a, “Samaritan Torah”
  - manuscript of the first five books of the Hebrew Bible (a.k.a. Pentateuch), written in the Samaritan Alphabet (a Semitic derivative of the Northern Split of ancient Hebrew).
  - Some **6000 differences exist between** the **Samaritan Pentateuch** and the **Hebrew Torah, most being different word spelling**.
    - Other differences involve significant semantic changes
    - Some 2000 of these variations agree with:
      - LXX and
      - the Latin Vulgate
  - Some Pentateuchal manuscripts were **found among the Dead Sea Scrolls**, and use a **“pre-Samaritan text type”**<sup>15</sup> (**much more ancient**)
  - Wide agreement among Textual Critics<sup>16</sup> that the Samaritan Pentateuch **represents an authentic ancient textual tradition**, despite the differences with the Hebrew Torah.<sup>17</sup>
  - **Agreements** among **this manuscript**, the **Hebrew Bible**, **LXX** and the **Latin Vulgate** suggest it **was written c. 122 BCE**<sup>18</sup>
- **Masoretic Texts:**<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> “Lucian of Antioch”, Catholic Encyclopedia and “Introduction and Append. To Westcott and Hort’s Greek Testament”, 1881, London and New York

<sup>15</sup> “The Canon Debate”, McDonald and Sanders, 2002, Chapter 6

<sup>16</sup> “...Textual criticism, properly speaking, is an ancillary academic discipline designed to lay the foundations for the so-called higher criticism, which deals with questions of authenticity and attribution, of interpretation, and of literary and historical evaluation...”, Encyclopedia Britannica

<sup>17</sup> “Samaritan Pentateuch”, J.D. Purvis, pgs. 772-775, 1976

<sup>18</sup> Buttrick, 1952, Pg. 35

<sup>19</sup> The Jewish Virtual Library, [www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org](http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org), which reference the works of: Ronald L. Eisenburg, “The JPS Guide to Jewish Tradition”, Jewish Publication Society, 2004, Alfred J. Kolatch, “The Jewish Book of Why”, Jonathan David Publishers, 1989, and Geoffrey Wigoder, “The New Standard Jewish Encyclopedia”, Facts on File, 1992

- written between c. 600 CE ~ 1425 CE,
  - **many meticulously-copied** (i.e., according to a defined process) Old Testament Books and other Works
  - The “**meticulous process**” was believed necessary **to preserve the Hebrew History and Sacred Writings** as the Jewish Diaspora grew, and the Jewish community scattered worldwide, following Roman conquest of Jerusalem in 70 CE.
- **Very specific Scholars and Scribes were chosen** to complete the task of preserving Hebrew History and Cannon, known as the Masoretes.
  - The Hebrew word “Masorah” means “fetter”, as taken from a passage in Ezekiel 20:37
  - The result of these scholarly efforts was **a system of critical notes on the external form of the Biblical Text.**
    - Since the Hebrew language was originally recorded with only Consonants, different pronunciations of a specific word was possible.
    - These differing pronunciations could alter the meaning of the written-word
    - Therefore, the Masoretes devised **a system of vowel, stress and cantillation marks** that **precisely fixed the word-pronunciation** and therefore its **definition** (known as the “nikud”).
      - These cantillation marks (nikudim) were listed in the margin of the text (like notes), because the Masoretes refused to “alter” the original Text.
- Relative to this “process” **2 schools of thought (and therefore textual-tranmission-processes)** arose:
  - Eastern or Babylonian
  - Western or Palestinian
    - it was the efforts of Ben Asher that produced **the first, complete Bible using Western processes**, the **Aleppo Codex** in 930 CE
- **Aleppo Codex (a Masoretic Text):**
  - Completed 930 CE
  - Endorsed for its accuracy by Maimonides (Hebrew, *Rabbineu Moshe ben Maimon*), a **preeminent medieval Sephardic Jewish Philosopher** and **Astronomer**
  - In combination with **Codex Leningradensis, the entire Ben-Asher Masoretic tradition is represented**
  - Less complete than **Leningradensis** :
    - Lacks most of the Torah and other sections

- **Codex Leningradensis<sup>20</sup> (another Masoretic Text)**
  - dated ~1010 CE by its colophon (a publisher's emblem or imprint especially on the Title Page or the spine of the book)
  - the **oldest, complete** manuscript of the Hebrew Old Testament (Tanakh)
- From this codex were produced the modern :
  - "Biblia Hebraica (BHK)" and
  - 1977 "Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia (BHS)" German Translations of the Old Testament, using the Masoretic tradition.
- **The extant** (still in existence) **Great Uncial Codices**:<sup>21</sup>
  - **Sinaiticus**, [denoted by the **Aleph** Hebrew Symbol]<sup>22</sup>
    - The Bible in Greek
    - written 330 CE to 360 CE on parchment
    - discovered by Tischendorf in 1844 in St. Catherine's Monastery, with additional material discovered in the 20'th and 21'st centuries CE
    - originally contained the whole of both Testaments
  - **Vaticanus**, [denoted by the "**B**" Latin Symbol]<sup>23</sup>
    - LXX plus New Testament portions
    - written 325 CE to 350 CE on 759 leaves of vellum
      - dated paleographically
    - has the most archaic style of writing, and has been housed at the Vatican Library since the 15'th century CE
    - was utilized heavily by Wescott and Hort in their 1881 "**The New Testament in Greek**"
  - **Alexandrinus**, [denoted by the "**A**" Latin symbol]<sup>24</sup>
    - The entire Bible in Greek
    - written 400 CE to 440 CE
    - the first of the Great Codices to be made available to scholars
    - contains the *majority* of the LXX and the New Testament
  - **Ephraemi**, [denoted by the "**C**" Latin Symbol]<sup>25</sup>
    - Greek Manuscript of the whole Bible
    - Written ~ 450 CE
    - Named for *Ephrem the Syrian*
    - About the 12'th century CE, it was broken up, washed, and rewritten upon with the works of *Ephrem the Syrian* (hence the name)
    - 208 leaves still remain

<sup>20</sup> F.F. Bruce, "The Last Thirty Years", *Story of the Bible*. Retrieved June 19, 2007

<sup>21</sup> Uncial, "a handwriting used especially in Greek and Latin manuscripts of the fourth to the eighth centuries AD and made with somewhat rounded separated majuscules but having cursive forms for some letters, from which modern capital letters are derived.", Merriam-Webster Dictionary, 2016

<sup>22</sup> Codexsinaiticus.org

<sup>23</sup> [http://www.csntm.org/manuscript/View/GA\\_03](http://www.csntm.org/manuscript/View/GA_03)

<sup>24</sup> <http://www.bl.uk/onlinegallery/sacredtexts/codexalex.html>

<sup>25</sup> <https://www.biblicaltraining.org/library/codex-ephraemi-syri-rescriptus-c>

- The manuscript is not intact, but contains:
  - Material from every New Testament Book except:
    - II Thessalonians
    - II John
  - Only 6 books of the Greek Old Testament are represented
- the most neglected of the codices
- currently resides in the Bibliotheque Nationale de France in Paris.
- **Incomplete Manuscripts (that still shed light on Biblical translation accuracy):**
  - **Codex Bezae**, [denoted by the “D” Latin Symbol]
    - Dated to the 5<sup>th</sup> century CE
    - added to the Great Codices in the late 19<sup>th</sup> Century CE
    - a codex of the New Testament in both:
      - Greek
      - Latin
    - Contains:
      - most of the 4 Gospels
      - Acts
      - small fragment of III John.
    - Currently resides at the Cambridge University Library in England
  - **Textus Receptus** <sup>26</sup>
    - A Greek New Testament produce by Erasmus in 1516 published by “Froben and Basel”
    - Erasmus worked on 2 projects:
      - A collection of Greek Texts & manuscripts and ...
      - A fresh, Latin New Testament translation he personally believed to be more “pure”.
    - His original work became the basis of:
      - German Luther Bible
      - William Tyndale’s English Translation of the Bible
      - King James Version
      - Spanish Reina-Valera
      - And most other Reformation-era New Testament Translations.
    - Erasmus edition **differed markedly from the classic form of the text**, and **included some missing parts that were “back translated” from the Latin Vulgate**.
    - The overwhelming success of his Greek New Testament completely overshadowed his second project, the Latin Translation, intended to be “purified” (as to translation errors).
  - **Cairo Genizah:**
    - discovered ~ 1752

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<sup>26</sup> “*The Text of the New Testament: Its Transmission, Corruption, and Restoration*”, Bruce M. Metzger and Bart D. Ehrman, 2005, Oxford University Press

- a collection of some 300,000 religious and secular Jewish manuscript fragments
- found in the **Ben Ezra Synagogue storeroom** (known as a “**genizah**” in Hebrew)
- providing a 1000-year outline of Jewish-Middle Eastern and North African history
- written between 870 CE – late 19<sup>th</sup> century CE

### Archeological Data:

- **Dead Sea Scrolls** (1947)<sup>27</sup>
  - **Qumran Caves Scrolls** contain significant religious manuscripts from the Second Temple Era
    - About 230 Biblical Manuscripts (copies) of works that are today part of the Hebrew Bible:
      - Contain both partial and complete copies of every book of the Hebrew Bible, except the Book of Esther
      - About a dozen copies of some of the books are written in **ancient Paleo Hebrew, the script of the First Temple Era**
      - Many manuscripts closely resemble the Masoretic Text (created from the 6<sup>th</sup> century CE to the 10<sup>th</sup> century CE)
        - **This similarity is quite remarkable, considering the Qumran Scrolls are over a thousand years OLDER than previously identified biblical manuscripts (described above).**
- **Additional Archeological Discoveries** that corroborate the Biblical record:<sup>28</sup>
  - **The Ebla Archive:**
    - Discovered in northern Syria in the 1970s
      - Documents written on clay tablets, dated c. 2300 BCE
      - Provides documented evidence of personal names and places that are mentioned in the Patriarchal Accounts
        - Proves these places and individuals from the Biblical narrative did exist (Note, previous to this find, Biblical critics claimed there was no evidence for the Biblical locations)
        - Some Examples:
          - Canaan
          - the word “*tehom*”, meaning “the deep” (from Genesis 1:2) was thought by critics to be a late word, thereby proving the later writing of Genesis. The Ebla discoveries provide proof this word

<sup>27</sup> “The Dead Sea Scrolls; Introduction”, from [www.deadseascrolls.org.il](http://www.deadseascrolls.org.il)

<sup>28</sup> “Biblical Archaeology: Factual Evidence to Support the Historicity of The Bible”, Paul L. Maier, Christian Research Journal, Vol. 27, Num. 2, 2004



- Ancient customs of the Patriarchs have also been cited in both the Ebla Archives and the Nuzi and Mari Tablets (more below).
- Hititte capital city records were discovered at Bogazkoy, Turkey.

- Excavations at Khorsabad, Iraq:

- A Common Flood Story:

- The Code of Hammurabi:

- <sup>29</sup> *"Excavations at Khorsabad"*, The Oriental Institute, The University of Chicago, 2014, Chicago, Ill.

- This “law” is clearly reflected in the Pentateuch (Torah) in Exodus 21:23-25.
- **The Nuzi Tablets:**
  - Some 20,000 cuneiform clay tablets discovered at the ruins of Nuzi, east of the Tigris River
  - Datable to c. 1500 BCE
  - Reveal institutions, practices and customs remarkably congruent with those described in Genesis
  - Tablets include:
    - Treaties, Marriage Arrangements, Inheritance and Adoption Rules
- **The Existence of “Hittites”:**
  - As recent as a century ago, the “Hittites” were unknown outside the “Old Testament”. Therefore, critics claimed they were a figment of biblical imagination.
  - 1906, Archaeologists digging east of Ankara, Turkey discovered the ruins of “Hattusas”, the ancient Hittite Capital at what is today called “Boghazkoy”.
    - Within the ruins was discovered a vast collection of Hittite Historical Records, which indicate a flourishing empire in the mid 2<sup>nd</sup> millennium BCE.
  - This rendered the above listed “critical challenge” (to Biblical historicity) moot, along with other challenges.
- **The Merneptah Stele:**
  - A 7-foot slab engraved with hieroglyphs (a.k.a. “*The Israel Stele*”)
  - It boasts of an Egyptian Pharaoh’s conquest of:
    - Libyans
    - Peoples of Palestine
      - Including the Israelites:
        - A quote from the Stele: “*Israel- his seed is not*”
  - ***This is the earliest reference to Israel***
  - It clearly demonstrates that c. 1230 BCE, the Hebrews *were already living in the Promised Land.*
- **Biblical Cities Attested Archaeologically:**
  - Many excavations in Jerusalem and ancient Babylonian sites plus the following, separate, unrelated excavations at the following sites:
    - Jericho
    - Haran
    - Hazor
    - Dan
    - Megiddo
    - Shechem
    - Samaria
    - Shiloh
    - Gezer
    - Gibeah

- Beth Shemesh
  - Beth Shean
  - Beersheba
  - Lachish
  - (others too numerous to list in this short article)
- Such lengthy Geographical Markers *demonstrate* that the Biblical narratives are based on factual locations, of the time. In short, these Biblical places *did exist*.
- **Shishak's Invasion of Judah:**
  - CONTEXT: The Biblical account of the conquest of Judah, during the reign of King Solomon's son, Rehoboam, by the Egyptian Pharaoh. In this account the conquering Pharaoh plundered Solomon's Temple in "... the fifth year..." of Rehoboam's reign.
  - This conquest is *corroborated* by hieroglyphic wall-carvings on the Temple Amon at Thebes, Egypt.
- **The Moabite Stone:**
  - CONTEXT: In the Biblical account of 2 Kings 3, King Mesha of Moab rebelled against the Kind of Israel, following the death of Ahab.
  - A 3-foot stone slab, also known as the "*Mesha Stele*" *confirms the revolt* by claiming triumph over Ahab's Family, c. 850 BCE.
- **Obelisk of Shalmaneser III:**
  - CONTEXT: In 2 Kings 9-10, King Jehu is mentioned as King of Israel, c. 841 – 814 BCE.
  - A 6.5-foot black obelisk discovered in the ruins of Nimrud (in 1846 CE) shows King Jehu of the northern kingdom of Israel (not Judah) kneeling before Shalmaneser III, the conquering Assyrian King.
  - This is the only relief we have to date of a Hebrew Monarch.
- **Burial Plaque of King Uzziah:**
  - CONTEXT: Judah's King Uzziah ruled from 792-740 BCE, during the time of the prophets Amos, Hosea, and Isaiah.
  - Like Solomon before him, he began his reign well, but ended rather badly.
  - In 2 Chronicles 26, we read that his sin resulted in contracting leprosy, later in life. When he died, he was interred in a "... field of burial that belonged to the Kings..."
  - His stone burial plaque was discovered on the Mount of Olives, and reads, "*Here, the bones of Uzziah, King of Judah, were brought. Do not open.*"
- **Hezekiah's Siloam Tunnel Inscription:**
  - CONTEXT: Fearing a siege by the Assyrian King, Sennacherib, King Hezekiah preserved Jerusalem's water supply by cutting a tunnel through 1,750 feet of solid rock from the Gihon Spring to the Pool of Siloam inside the City walls (2 Kings 20, 2 Chronicles 32).
  - At the Siloam-end of the Tunnel, an inscription celebrated this accomplishment

- Today, this inscription resides at the archaeology museum in Istanbul, Turkey
- This Tunnel is the only biblical site that has not appreciably changed its appearance in some 2700 years.
- **The Sennacherib Prism:**
  - CONTEXT: After conquering the 10 northern Tribes of Israel (all but Judah and Benjamin, in the south), the Assyrians moved south to conquer Judah (which included the Tribe of Benjamin), as recorded in 2 Kings 18-19.
    - The Prophet Isaiah told Hezekiah that God would protect Judah and its capital, Jerusalem against Sennacherib (2 Chronicles 32; Isaiah 36-37)
  - Assyrian Records confirm this in cuneiform on a hexagonal, 15-inch baked clay prism found at the Assyrian Capital of Nineveh.
    - It reports:
      - Sennacherib's invasion in 701 BCE
      - The Assyrian King shut Hezekiah inside Jerusalem "...like a caged bird..."
      - Both the Biblical account and the Prism account do NOT state that Sennacherib *conquered* Jerusalem, which the Prism would certainly have declared, had that event occurred.
      - Sennacherib continued on to Egypt. Later, he returned to Nineveh, where his own Sons murdered him.
      - Jerusalem would not fall until the neo-Babylonian King, Nebuchadnezzar, invaded in 586 BCE.
- **The Cylinder of Cyrus the Great:**
  - CONTEXT: 2 Chronicles 36:23 and Ezra 1 report that Cyrus the Great of Persia, after conquering Babylon c. 539 BCE, permitted the Hebrew captives to return to Jerusalem and rebuild their Temple, c. 537 BCE.
  - The above Biblical accounts are corroborated on a 9-inch clay cylinder that reports Cyrus victory and his subsequent, tolerant policy that permitted captured peoples to return to their homelands, and rebuild their temples.

## The Bible's Internal Evidence:

*"This topic concerns the coherence and textual integrity of the biblical scriptures."<sup>30</sup> Additionally, "Disputes regarding biblical consistency have a long history... Classic texts that discuss questions of inconsistency, from a critical secular perspective, include [\*The Age of Reason\*](#) by [Thomas Paine](#) the [\*Tractatus Theologico-Politicus\*](#) by [Baruch Spinoza](#), the [\*Encyclopédie\*](#) of [Denis Diderot](#), and the [\*Dictionnaire philosophique\*](#) of [Voltaire](#)."*

However, for the purposes of this category, “internal evidence” means “*evidence derived from the contents of a work being discussed*”<sup>31</sup>. In other words, are the repetitive themes of the Biblical narratives consistent across the 66 books?

- **FACT: The Bible’s Unity of Message:**

*“Let me offer you a good illustration from apologist Josh McDowell. Take ten contemporary authors and ask them to write their viewpoints on one controversial subject. Would they all agree? No, we would have disagreements from one author to another. Now look at the authorship of the Bible. All these authors, from a span of fifteen hundred years, wrote on many controversial subjects, and they do not contradict one another.”<sup>32</sup>*

It appears the different authors, across time, had a common, motivating author for their works. 2 Peter 2:21 states, “... for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.”

*“The Bible covers hundreds of topics, yet it **does not contradict itself**. It remains united in its theme. “Well, what’s so amazing about that?” you may ask. Consider [the following list of] facts.”<sup>33</sup>:*

- **The Bible was written by some 40 different Authors ...**
  - Of vastly differing **occupations** and **backgrounds**:
    - Moses, although educated in Egypt, became a prophet over Israel
    - Peter was a simple fisherman
    - Solomon was a very successful King
    - Luke was a physician
    - Amos was a shepherd
    - Matthew was a tax collector
- **... Consisting of 66 different canonized books in the Biblical collection...**
- **... Written in 3 Languages...**
  - Hebrew
  - Aramaic
  - Greek
- **... Over a 1500+ Year time period in many different locations in:**
  - Asia
  - Africa
  - Europe
  - Moses wrote in the Desert of Sinai
  - Paul wrote in a prison in Rome
  - Daniel wrote in exile in Babylon
  - Ezra wrote in the ruined city of Jerusalem
- **The Bible was written under many different circumstances:**
  - David wrote during war time
  - Jeremiah wrote at the sorrowful time of Israel’s downfall

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<sup>31</sup> Oxford Dictionary, Oxford University Press, 2016

<sup>32</sup> “*Authority of the Bible*”, Pat Zuckeran Th.M. , Research Associate for Probe Ministries, 1991

<sup>33</sup> “*Authority of the Bible*”, Pat Zuckeran Th.M. , Research Associate for Probe Ministries, 1991

- Peter wrote while Israel was under Roman domination
  - Joshua wrote while invading the land of Canaan
- **The Bible Writers had different purposes for their works:**
  - Isaiah wrote to warn Israel of God's impending judgement for sin
  - Matthew wrote to prove to the Jews that Jesus was the promised Messiah (anointed one that delivers).
  - Zechariah wrote to encourage a disheartened Israel who had just returned from the Babylonian exile to the destroyed Jerusalem (now in ruins)
  - Paul wrote to address various problems that arose in different Asian and European churches.
- **The Bible has had Massive Circulation in most languages:**
  - An estimated (our best evidence from "The Bible Society") 2.5 – 5 billion copies were printed between 1815 and 1975:
  - According to "The Economist" over 100 million copies are sold annually, world-wide, today
- **Most of the 40 Authors focus on a consistent, Central Theme, that is uniformly reported throughout the entire collection of books** in the canonized Bible.
- **POINT – this "degree of corroboration" amongst the 66 books comprising the current Bible could not have resulted from mere clever contrivance of men over the millennia, given the:**
  - **Manuscript Evidence**
  - **Historical Evidence**
  - **Consistency of Message (Unity)**
- The **Individual Author's Accounts** are more **honest** and (in many cases) **self-criticizing** than any other publication.
  - **POINT – who writes a book about themselves and then makes themselves look bad, in that writing?**
    - A Few Biblical Examples:
      - **David**
      - **Solomon**
      - **Paul**
- **Predictions (Prophecies) that have been fulfilled:**
  - Approx. **2500 prophecies appear** in the Bible<sup>34</sup>
    - Some **2,000** have already been **fulfilled**.
      - The remaining 500 reach into the future
    - According to **Dr. Hugh Ross**:
      - **"Since the probability for any one of these prophecies having been fulfilled by chance averages less than one in ten (figured very conservatively) and since the prophecies are for the most part**

<sup>34</sup> "Fulfilled Prophecy: Evidence for the Reliability of the Bible", Dr. Hugh Ross, 2003, President and Founder of [www.reason.org](http://www.reason.org), M.S Physics-University of British Columbia, PhD Astronomer-University of Toronto, National Research Council of Canada Fellowship, Author, In 2012, Hugh, together with Dr. Gerald Schroeder, received the Ide P. Trotter Prize presented by Texas A&M University in recognition of his work in demonstrating connections between science and religion.

*independent of one another, the odds for all these prophecies having been fulfilled by chance without error is less than one in  $10^{2000}$  (that is 1 with 2,000 zeros written after it)!"*

- *"As economy does not permit an explanation of all the Biblical prophecies that have been fulfilled, what follows in a discussion of a few that exemplify the **high degree of specificity**, the **range of projection**, and/or the **"supernature"** of the predicted events. Readers are encouraged to select others, as well, and to carefully examine their historicity."*

- *"Some time **before 500 BC**, the prophet **Daniel** proclaimed that Israel's long-awaited Messiah would begin his public ministry **483 years after the issuing of a decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem (Daniel 9:25-26)**. He further predicted that the **Messiah would be "cut off," killed**, and that this event would take place **prior to a second destruction of Jerusalem**. Abundant documentation shows that these prophecies were perfectly fulfilled in the life (and crucifixion) of Jesus Christ. The decree regarding the restoration of Jerusalem was issued by **Persia's King Artaxerxes** to the Hebrew priest Ezra in **458 BC**, **483 years later the ministry of Jesus Christ began in Galilee**. (Remember that due to calendar changes, the date for the start of Christ's ministry is set by most historians at about AD 26. Also note that from 1 BC to AD 1 is just one year.) Jesus' crucifixion occurred only a few years later, and about four decades later, in AD 70 came the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus."*

- ***(Probability of chance fulfillment = 1 in  $10^5$ .)***

- *In approximately **700 BC**, the prophet **Micah** named the tiny village of **Bethlehem** as **the birthplace of Israel's Messiah** (Micah 5:2). The fulfillment of this prophecy in the birth of Christ is one of the most widely known and widely celebrated facts in history.*

- ***(Probability of chance fulfillment = 1 in  $10^5$ .)***

- *In the fifth century BC, a prophet named Zechariah declared that the Messiah would be betrayed for the price of a slave—thirty pieces of silver, according to Jewish law—and also that this money would be used to buy a burial ground for Jerusalem's poor foreigners (Zechariah 11:12-13). Bible writers and secular historians both record thirty pieces of silver as the sum paid to Judas Iscariot for betraying Jesus, and they indicate that the money went to purchase a "potter's field," used—just as predicted—for the burial of poor aliens (Matthew 27:3-10).*

- ***(Probability of chance fulfillment = 1 in  $10^{11}$ .)***

- *Some **400 years before crucifixion was invented**, both Israel's King David and the prophet Zechariah described the Messiah's*

death in words that perfectly depict that mode of execution. Further, they said that the body would be pierced and that none of the bones would be broken, contrary to customary procedure in cases of crucifixion (Psalm 22 and 34:20; Zechariah 12:10).

Again, historians and New Testament writers confirm the fulfillment: Jesus of Nazareth died on a Roman cross, and his extraordinarily quick death eliminated the need for the usual breaking of bones. A spear was thrust into his side to verify that he was, indeed, dead.

▪ **(Probability of chance fulfillment = 1 in  $10^{13}$ .)**

- The prophet Isaiah foretold that a conqueror named Cyrus would destroy seemingly impregnable Babylon and subdue Egypt along with most of the rest of the known world. This same man, said Isaiah, would decide to let the Jewish exiles in his territory go free without any payment of ransom (Isaiah 44:28; 45:1; and 45:13). Isaiah made this prophecy 150 years before Cyrus was born, 180 years before Cyrus performed any of these feats (and he did, eventually, perform them all), and 80 years before the Jews were taken into exile.

▪ **(Probability of chance fulfillment = 1 in  $10^{15}$ .)**

- Mighty Babylon, 196 miles square, was enclosed not only by a moat, but also by a double wall 330 feet high, each part 90 feet thick. It was said by unanimous popular opinion to be indestructible, yet two Bible prophets declared its doom. These prophets further claimed that the ruins would be avoided by travelers, that the city would never again be inhabited, and that its stones would not even be moved for use as building material (Isaiah 13:17-22 and Jeremiah 51:26, 43). Their description is, in fact, the well-documented history of the famous citadel.

▪ **(Probability of chance fulfillment = 1 in  $10^9$ .)**

- The exact location and construction sequence of Jerusalem's nine suburbs was predicted by Jeremiah about 2600 years ago. He referred to the time of this building project as "the last days," that is, the time period of Israel's second rebirth as a nation in the land of Palestine (Jeremiah 31:38-40). This rebirth became history in 1948, and the construction of the nine suburbs has gone forward precisely in the locations and in the sequence predicted.

▪ **(Probability of chance fulfillment = 1 in  $10^{18}$ .)**

- The prophet Moses foretold (with some additions by Jeremiah and Jesus) that the ancient Jewish nation would be conquered twice and that the people would be carried off as slaves each time, first by the Babylonians (for a period of 70 years), and then by a fourth world kingdom (which we know as Rome). The



*second conqueror, Moses said, would take the Jews captive to Egypt in ships, selling them or giving them away as slaves to all parts of the world. Both of these predictions were fulfilled to the letter, the first in 607 BC and the second in AD 70. God's spokesmen said, further, that the Jews would remain scattered throughout the entire world for many generations, but without becoming assimilated by the peoples or of other nations, and that the Jews would one day return to the land of Palestine to re-establish for a second time their nation (Deuteronomy 29; Isaiah 11:11-13; Jeremiah 25:11; Hosea 3:4-5 and Luke 21:23-24). This prophetic statement sweeps across 3,500 years of history to its complete fulfillment—in our lifetime.*

▪ **(Probability of chance fulfillment = 1 in  $10^{20}$ .)**

- *Jeremiah predicted that despite its fertility and despite the accessibility of its water supply, the land of Edom (today a part of Jordan) would become a barren, uninhabited wasteland (Jeremiah 49:15-20; Ezekiel 25:12-14). His description accurately tells the history of that now bleak region.*

▪ **(Probability of chance fulfillment = 1 in  $10^5$ .)**

- *Joshua prophesied that Jericho would be rebuilt by one man. He also said that the man's eldest son would die when the reconstruction began and that his youngest son would die when the work reached completion (Joshua 6:26). About five centuries later this prophecy found its fulfillment in the life and family of a man named Hiel (1 Kings 16:33-34).*

▪ **(Probability of chance fulfillment = 1 in  $10^7$ .)**

- *The day of Elijah's supernatural departure from Earth was predicted unanimously—and accurately, according to the eye-witness account—by a group of fifty prophets (2 Kings 2:3-11).*

▪ **(Probability of chance fulfillment = 1 in  $10^9$ .)**

- *Jahaziel prophesied that King Jehoshaphat and a tiny band of men would defeat an enormous, well-equipped, well-trained army without even having to fight. Just as predicted, the King and his troops stood looking on as their foes were supernaturally destroyed to the last man (2 Chronicles 20).*

▪ **(Probability of chance fulfillment = 1 in  $10^8$ )**

- *One prophet of God (unnamed, but probably Shemiah) said that a future king of Judah, named Josiah, would take the bones of all the occultic priests (priests of the "high places") of Israel's King Jeroboam and burn them on Jeroboam's altar (1 Kings 13:2 and 2 Kings 23:15-18). This event occurred approximately 300 years after it was foretold.*

▪ **(Probability of chance fulfillment = 1 in  $10^{13}$ .)**

- Since these thirteen prophecies cover mostly separate and independent events, the probability of chance occurrence for all thirteen is about 1 in 10<sup>138</sup> (138 equals the sum of all the exponents of 10 in the probability estimates above). For the sake of putting the figure into perspective, this probability can be compared to the statistical chance that the second law of thermodynamics will be reversed in a given situation (for example, that a gasoline engine will refrigerate itself during its combustion cycle or that heat will flow from a cold body to a hot body)—that chance = 1 in 10<sup>80</sup>. Stating it simply, based on these thirteen prophecies alone, the Bible record may be said to be vastly more reliable than the second law of thermodynamics. Each reader should feel free to make his own reasonable estimates of probability for the chance fulfillment of the prophecies cited here. In any case, the probabilities deduced still will be absurdly remote.
- 353 Messianic (about Jesus as Messiah) predictions<sup>35</sup>
  - Note: the statistical probability of just 8/300 predictions occurring in the life of a single man (Jesus or otherwise) is 1 in 10 to the 17<sup>th</sup> power
    - Or 1/100,000,000,000,000,000
    - To illustrate this incomprehensibly low probability, Peter Stoner<sup>36</sup> analogizes the State of Texas being entirely covered with Silver Dollars to a depth of 3 feet (over the entire surface of the State).
      - Next, blindfold a single individual and have him/her select a pre-determined, “1 correct coin” from the 3-foot pile over the entire State.

## Summary

In closing, and in the interest of full disclosure of my personal beliefs, I accept the Bible because of the following:

1. I have studied it since I was 12 (much in response to the diligent urging of my concerned and loving Parents and Grandparents)
  - a. Later, in my 30's, I viewed what I had studied (to that time) as “merely superficial” - a hand full of do's and don'ts, restricting my personal life-choices.
    - i. Therefore, I undertook a significantly deeper study that continues to present day.
      1. To see the process I have used for many decades to study the Bible, see the article, “An Approach to Bible Study” on our website, [www.loyfellowship.org](http://www.loyfellowship.org).
    - ii. In addition to the academic pursuit of Biblical study, I started using Biblical methods to “apply” its teachings to my own life to test their validity, at least for me.

<sup>35</sup> Accordingtoscripture.org, Noel Chartier, 2015

<sup>36</sup> “Science Speaks: Scientific Proof of the Accuracy of Prophecy and the Bible”, Peter W. Stoner M.S. and Robert C. Newman, S.T.M., PhD., Moody Press Chicago

- b. Thirdly, I endeavored to **develop a relationship with the Creator depicted in the Bible.** If such was possible, I was going to give it my best effort. That “work” (in my life) continues to this day.
2. As a contrast to the above life-summary, in my early 20’s, I put “Biblical Teachings” aside (for a few years) and found the person this departure produced was **NOT** what I wished to be (a situation not unlike most of my peers). After all, is it not a common understanding that we humans learn as much from our mistakes as our successes?
  - a. This was a time in my life of “**uninformed choices**”, “**blind acceptance of statements from peers and superiors**”, and “**open rebellion**” to the Bible’s teachings.
  - b. I am embarrassed and ashamed of many of those early events, but I know they too have helped (over time) **solidify my belief-system of today**, and have **strengthened my faith** more than my limited words could express. POINT: data from “experiments gone bad” can still be used to arrive at a rational conclusion; to “improve”!
3. Over the decades, **I continued to apply Biblical teachings to my life**, and observed changes that I found desirable.
  - a. I also unearthed so many characteristics and behaviors I found **distasteful** and counter to my desired persona.
4. And finally, in the interest of full disclosure on my part, I **have grown** (after decades of sufficient empirical proof for me) to **accept the Biblical record** as both **historically accurate** and **reliable**.
  - a. Even more importantly for me, I have come to view the Bible as the actual “**Love Letters from God**” (said in “Church Circles”, the **Word of God**).
  - b. In short, I accept the Bible by **faith**, as well as “**empirical evidence**” available.
5. **You must make your own determination from the evidence provided and any determined efforts at Biblical application, if any.**

Given the “**Body of Evidence**” **provided**, it seems nearly **irrational** (NOT good logic) to dismiss Biblical narratives as mere myth or fiction. It warrants the same consideration given to other ancient writings that the secular world accepts as “RELIABLE”.

That is not to say that every reader should immediately accept and apply Biblical teaching to their own lives. That decision (of life-applicability of the Bible to one’s life) should be **a later, subsequent decision following an in-depth study of Biblical Principles.**

Although **faith is inextricable from my persona**, **God Himself permits the freedom of choice.** I fully respect each individual’s right to exercise that freedom (which I recognize as a gift from God), and I hope the evidences of this article will help the Reader make a logical decision for themselves.

May God Himself teach you through the study of His Love Letters (The Bible), should that be a task you logically decide to undertake.