

IS THE BIBLE IS TRUE?

“In the crucible of scientific investigation, the Bible has proven invariably to be correct. No other book, ancient or modern, can make this claim; but then, no other book has been written (through men) by God.”

Hugh Ross¹

“Through the wealth of data uncovered by historical and archaeological research, we are able to measure the Bible’s historical accuracy. In every case where its claim can be thus tested, the Bible proves to be accurate and reliable.”

Jack Cottrell²

“...there is a God in heaven who reveals mysteries.”

Daniel 2:28, NIV

The Bible gets a huge vote of confidence from several surprising sources.

¹ Hugh Ross, *www.Reasons.org*

² Jack Cottrell, *The Authority of the Bible*, Baker: Grand Rapids, 1979, pp. 48-49.

I have some friends who just have an insatiable need for evidence. Theories and hypotheses and even logic don't move these "show me" types. What they need is factual evidence. God knew that.

After all, God was the One who wired them up this way. So, for my friends and others like them, there exists tangible evidence for the veracity of the Bible. This evidence comes to us not just from one source, but from three: *science, archaeology, and prophecy.*

Evidence from Science

The Bible is not a scientific textbook. But it does describe how the universe works. Consider the following:³

<u>What the Bible says:</u>	<u>What people thought:</u>	<u>What we now know:</u>
Earth is a sphere. ⁴	Earth is a flat disk.	Earth is a sphere.
Number of stars = more than a billion. ⁵	Number of stars = 1,100.	Number of stars = more than a billion.
Every star is different. ⁶	All stars are the same.	Every star is different.
Light is in motion. ⁷	Light is fixed in place.	Light is in motion.
Air has weight. ⁸	Air is weightless.	Air has weight.
Winds blow in cyclones. ⁹	Winds blow straight.	Winds blow in cyclones.
Blood is a source of life and healing. ¹⁰	Sick people must be bled.	Blood is a source of life and healing.

For centuries, scientific theory was at odds with the Genesis 1 description of the physical and biological development of the Earth. Today scientists are in substantial agreement with the initial conditions of Genesis 1, as well as with

³ Source = Hugh Ross, *Reasons.org*.

⁴ Isaiah 40:22

⁵ Jeremiah 33:22

⁶ 1 Corinthians 15:41

⁷ Job 38:19-20

⁸ Job 28:25

⁹ Ecclesiastes 1:6

¹⁰ Leviticus 17:11

subsequent events, and the order in which they occurred.¹¹ The likelihood that Moses, writing 3400 years ago, could have guessed all these details is infinitesimal.

In addition to the phenomena just mentioned, the Bible describes:

- the conservation of mass and energy¹²,
- the hydraulic cycle of evaporation, condensation, and precipitation¹³,
- gravity¹⁴,
- the Pleiades and Orion as gravitationally-bound star groups¹⁵,
- the effect of emotions on physical health¹⁶,
- the spread of contagious disease by close contact¹⁷,
- the importance of sanitation to health¹⁸.

What grade would you give a book that could do this, and was completed 2000 years ago?

Astronomer Robert Jastrow sums it up this way. *“For the scientist who has lived by his faith in the power of reason, the story ends like a bad dream... he is about to conquer the highest peak [of scientific truth]; as he pulls himself over the final rock, he is greeted by a band of theologians who have been sitting there for centuries.”*¹⁹

Evidence from Archaeology

Starting in the late 19th century, western scholars began excavating locations throughout the ancient Near East. To date, more than 25,000 sites have been

¹¹ Source (and for more extensive descriptions, consult) *Reasons.org*.

¹² Ecclesiastes 1:9; 3:14-15.

¹³ Job 36:27-29; Ecclesiastes 1:7; Isaiah 55:10.

¹⁴ Job 26:7; Job 38:31-33.

¹⁵ Job 38:31 (Note: According to Dr. Ross, “All other star groups visible to the naked eye are unbound, with the possible exception of the Hyades.”)

¹⁶ Proverbs 15:30; 16:24; 17:22.

¹⁷ Leviticus 13:45-46.

¹⁸ Numbers 19; Deuteronomy 23:12-13.

¹⁹ Robert Jastrow, *The Intellectuals Speak Out About God*, Lake Bluff, Ill.: Regnery Gateway, 1984, p. 21.

explored.²⁰ Discoveries from these sites provide a second piece of tangible evidence to support the trustworthiness of the Bible.

Excavations at the cities of Mari, Nuzi, and Alalakh verify that Abraham's customs were consistent with his 18th B.C. culture. Excavations at Hazor, Gezer, Megiddo, and Jerusalem confirm the account of Joshua's conquest of Canaan, David and Solomon's building of the United Kingdom, the demise of power during the Divided Kingdom, and the Babylonian Exile.

The Moabite Stone gives us information about the reign of King Omri.²¹ *The Black Obelisk* depicts Assyrian king Shalmaneser III's triumph over King Jehu.²² *The Taylor Prism* describes Sennacherib's siege of Jerusalem while Hezekiah was king.²³ *The Lachish Letters* refer to Nebuchadnezzar's invasion of Judah.²⁴

One of the more intriguing archeological finds is John Garstang's excavation of the city of Jericho in 1930. Joshua 6:20 indicates the walls of Jericho collapsed in a way that enabled the Israelites to charge straight into the city. For years, skeptics sighted this as an example of a biblical inaccuracy because city walls do not fall outward, they fall *inward* when they collapse, leaving the town in rubble. Guess what Garstang found? – The walls fell outward! This finding was so unexpected that he and two other colleagues signed a statement verifying it.²⁵

According to the book of John, one of Jesus' great miracles was the healing of the cripple at the Pool of Bethesda.²⁶ Outside of the New Testament, no evidence had ever been found for such a pool, so skeptics pronounced John's writing as inaccurate, "the obvious work of an imposter," rather than an eyewitness of

²⁰ Donald Wiseman (Director of the British Museum), "Archaeological Confirmation of the Old Testament," in *Revelation and the Bible*, Carl Henry, editor, Grand Rapids: Baker, 1958, pp. 301-2.

²¹ 1 Kings 16:23

²² 2 Kings 10:36

²³ 2 Chronicles 32:2-9

²⁴ 2 Kings 24:10; Ken Boa and Larry Moody, *I'm Glad You Asked*, *ibid.*, p. 97

²⁵ John Garstang, *Joshua Judges*, 1931, cited in McDowell, *Evidence*, *ibid.*, p. 71.

²⁶ John 5:1-15

Jesus' life. Until traces of the Pool were discovered near the Church of St. Anne in 1888.²⁷

Luke, in his gospel, gets very specific with the names of rulers, officials, and events, providing ample fodder for criticism. His description of an enrollment of taxpayers,²⁸ his listing of Quirinius as governor of Syria,²⁹ his identification of Lystra and Derbe as cities in the province of Lycaonia,³⁰ his reference to Lysanias as Tetrarch of Abilene,³¹ were all called into question by biblical skeptics. However, each of Luke's statements have been verified over time by archaeological findings.

Dr. Joseph Free writes, *"Archaeology has confirmed countless passages which were rejected by critics as unhistorical or contradictory to known facts."*³²

Evidence from Prophecy

From Moses to Malachi, the role of the prophet was so critical to the well-being of Israel that God wanted His people to be able to know conclusively that these men and women spoke for Him. The Bible lays out a simple test for the authenticity of anyone claiming to be a real prophet of God: 100% accuracy. *"If what a prophet proclaims in the name of the Lord does not take place or come true, that is a message the Lord has not spoken."*³³

*"A prophet who presumes to speak in my name anything I have not commanded... must be put to death."*³⁴

²⁷ F.F. Bruce, "Archaeological Confirmation of the New Testament," cited by McDowell, *Evidence*, *ibid.*, p. 75.

²⁸ Luke 2:1-2

²⁹ Luke 2:2

³⁰ Acts 14:6

³¹ Luke 3:1

³² Joseph Free, *Archaeology and Bible History*, Wheaton: Scripture Press, 1969, p. 1. (As cited in Kumar, *Christianity for Skeptics*, p. 109).

³³ Deuteronomy 18:21-22, NIV

³⁴ Deuteronomy 18:20, NIV

So one purpose for the Bible's prophetic predictions is to give people hard evidence that the message being delivered is true. The Bible contains approximately 2500 prophecies³⁵, over 2000 of which have already been fulfilled.

Can you imagine the boldness of predicting the name and foreign policy of a United States president 150 years from now? In 700 B.C., Isaiah did something similar. He predicted that Jerusalem would be surrounded and its people carried into captivity.³⁶ That prediction was fulfilled 100 years later. Then he went one step further. He prophesied that the Israelites would return to their homeland, and that the ruler who would set them free was named Cyrus. "*I will raise up Cyrus in my righteousness... He will rebuild my city and set my exiles free...*"³⁷ History verifies that Cyrus, the founder of the Persian empire, reigned from 559-530 B.C., and that he issued a decree in March, 538 B.C., which allowed the Jews to return to homeland.

Ezekiel made an equally startling prediction about the city state of Tyre (in modern day Lebanon). He prophesied that:

1. Many nations would come against Tyre (Ezek. 26:2).
2. Nebuchadnezzar would destroy the city (Ezek. 26:4).
3. The city would be scraped bare (Ezek. 26:4)
4. Fishing nets would be spread over the site (Ezek. 26:5).
5. The stones of the city would be thrown into the sea (Ezek. 26:12).
6. The city would never be rebuilt (Ezek. 26:14).

Here's what happened.

The Tyre was a city in two parts. Half the city lay on the coast, the other half on an island one half mile from shore. The historian Josephus tells us that

³⁵ <http://www.iclnet.org/pub/resources/text/rtg/rtg-evid/rtgevd04.txt>

³⁶ Isaiah 27-32

³⁷ Isaiah 45:13, NIV

Nebuchadnezzar besieged the coastal city for 13 years, and finally captured it³⁸. Many of its citizens escaped to the island, which remained unconquered.

240 years later, Alexander the Great attacked the island city.³⁹ Alexander built a causeway from the mainland to the island, using the stones and rubble from the old coastal city as his building material. He literally, “scraped away her rubble and made her a bare rock.”⁴⁰ He also used ships to attack from the sea, ships manned by people from the nations he had already conquered, including 80 from Sidon, Aradus, and Byblos; 10 from Rhodes; 10 from Lycia; and 120 from Cyprus.⁴¹ The city of Tyre has never been rebuilt. There is a small town on the island today. Fishermen from the town spread and cast their nets from the barren rocks⁴².

The Old Testament contains several hundred prophecies related to the coming Messiah, of which 332 were fulfilled in Christ’s first coming.⁴³ (We have listed 61 of them in the footnotes.)⁴⁴

³⁸ <http://ragz-international.com/chaldeansneb.htm>

³⁹ http://joseph_berrigan.tripod.com/ancientbabylon/id34.html

⁴⁰ Ezekiel 26:4

⁴¹ John Ankerberg and John Weldon, *Ready with an Answer*, Eugene, Ore.: Harvest House, 1997, p. 248.

⁴² Erwin Lutzer, *You Can Trust the Bible*, Chicago: Moody Press, 1998, p. 98.

⁴³ Floyd Hamilton, *The Basis of the Christian Faith*, New York: Harper and Row, 1964, p. 160, cited in McDowell, *Evidence*, p. 181.

⁴⁴ **Prophecy:**

1. Born of a woman, Gen. 3:15
2. Born of a virgin, Isaiah 7:14
3. Called, “The Son of God” Ps. 2:7
4. Seed of Abraham, Gen. 22:18
5. Son of Isaac, Gen. 21:12
6. Son of Jacob, Num. 24:17
7. Tribe of Judah, Gen. 49:10
8. Family Line of Jesse, Isaiah 11:1
9. House of David, Jer. 23:5, Ps. 132:11
10. Born at Bethlehem, Micah 5:2
11. Presented with gifts, Ps. 72:10
12. Herod kills children, Jer. 31:15
13. His pre-existence, Mic. 5:2, Is. 9:6
14. He will be called Lord, Ps. 110:1
15. He will be Immanuel, Isaiah 7:14
16. He will be a prophet, Deut. 18:18
17. He will be a priest, Ps. 110:4
18. He will be a judge, Isaiah 33:22
19. He will be a king, Ps. 2:6; Zech. 9:9

Fulfillment:

- Matt. 1:20; Gal. 4:4
Matt. 1:18; Luke 1:26-35
Matt. 3:17; 14:33; 16:16; 26:63
Matt. 1:1; Gal. 3:16
Luke 3:23; Matt. 1:2
Luke 3:23, Matt. 1:2
Matt. 1:2; Heb. 7:14
Luke 3:23; Matt. 1:6
Luke 3:23; Matt. 9:27
Matt. 2:1; Luke 2:4
Matt. 2:1, 11
Matt. 2:16
Col. 1:17; John 1:1; Rev. 1:17
Luke 2:11; Luke 20:41-44
Matt. 1:23; Luke 7:16
Matt. 21:11; Luke 7:16, John 4:19
Heb. 3:1; Heb. 5:5-6
John 5:30; 2 Tim. 4:1
Matt. 27:37, Matt. 21:5, John 18:33-38

Using the mathematical science of probability, Peter Stoner calculated the odds that any one person could fulfill 8 prophecies predicted of the Messiah. After doing his calculations, he said:

“...we find that the chance that any man might have lived down to the present time and fulfilled eight prophecies is 1 in 10¹⁷.”
 (1 in 100,000,000,000,000,000.)⁴⁵

To illustrate that probability in practical terms, Stoner used the following illustration:

20. Anointed by Holy Spirit, Is. 11:2	Matt. 3:16-17; Mark 1:10-11; John 1:32
21. His zeal for God, Ps. 69:9	John 2:15-17
22. Preceded by Messenger, Is. 40:3	Matt. 3:1-2; Matt. 11:10; John 1:23
23. Ministry begins in Galilee, Is. 9:1	Matt. 4:12, 13, 17
24. Ministry of miracles, Is. 35:5-6	Matt. 9:32-33; Mk. 7:33-35; John 5:5-9
25. Teacher of parables, Ps. 78:2	Matt. 13:34
26. Would enter the Temple, Mal. 3:1	Matt. 21:12
27. Would enter Jerusalem on donkey, Zech. 9:9	Luke 19:35-37, Matt. 21:6-11
28. “Stone of Stumbling” to Jews, Ps. 118:22	1 Pet. 2:7; Rom. 9:32-33
29. “Light” to Gentiles, Isaiah 60:3; 49:6	Acts 13:47-48
30. Resurrection, Ps. 16:10; 30:3; 41:10	Acts 2:31; Luke 24:46; Mk. 16:6
31. Ascension, Ps. 68:18	Acts 1:9
32. Seated at right hand of God, Ps. 110:1	Heb. 1:3, Mk. 16:19; Acts 2:34-35
33. Betrayed by a friend, Ps. 41:9; 55:12-14	Matt. 10:4; 26:49-50, John 13:21
34. Sold for 30 pieces of silver, Zech. 11:12	Matt. 26:15; 27:3
35. Money to be thrown in God’s house, Zech. 11:13	Matt. 27:5
36. Price given for potter’s field, Zech. 11:13	Matt. 27:7
37. Forsaken by his disciples, Zech. 13:7	Mark 14:50; 14:27; Matt. 26:31
38. Accused by false witnesses, Ps. 35:11	Matt. 26:59-61
39. Dumb before accusers, Isaiah 53:7	Matt. 27:12-19
40. Wounded and bruised, Is. 53:5; Zech. 13:6	Matt. 27:26
41. Smitten and spit upon, Is. 50:6; Mic. 5:1	Matt. 26:67; Luke 22:63
42. Mocked, Ps. 22:7-8	Matt. 27:31
43. Fell under the cross, Ps. 109:24-25	John 19:17; Luke 23:6, Matt. 27:31-32
44. Hands and feet pierced, Ps. 22:16; Zech. 12:10	Luke 23:33; John 20:25
45. Crucified with thieves, Is. 53:12	Matt. 27:38, Mark 15:27-28
46. Prayed for his persecutors, Is. 53:12	Luke 23:34
47. Rejected by his own people, Is. 53:3	John 7:5, 48; Matt. 21:42-43
48. Friends stood afar off, Ps. 38:11	Luke 23:49; Mk. 15:40; Matt. 27:55-56
49. People shook their heads, Ps. 109:25	Matt. 27:39
50. Stared upon, Ps. 22:17	Luke 23:35
51. Garments parted/lots cast, Ps. 22:18	John 19:23-24
52. To suffer thirst, Ps. 69:21; Ps. 22:15	John 19:28
53. Gall & vinegar offered to him, Ps. 69:21	Matt. 27:34; John 19:28-29
54. His forsaken cry, Ps. 22:1	Matt. 27:46
55. Committed himself to God, Ps. 31:5	Luke 23:46
56. Bones not broken, Ps. 34:20	John 19:33
57. Heart broken, Ps. 22:14	John 19:34
58. His side pierced, Zech. 12:10	John 19:34
59. Darkness over the land, Amos 8:9	Matt. 27:45
60. Buried in rich man’s tomb, Is. 53:9	Matt. 27:57-60

⁴⁵ Peter Stoner, *Science Speaks*, Chicago: Moody Press, 1963, sited in McDowell, *Evidence*, pp. 175-176.

