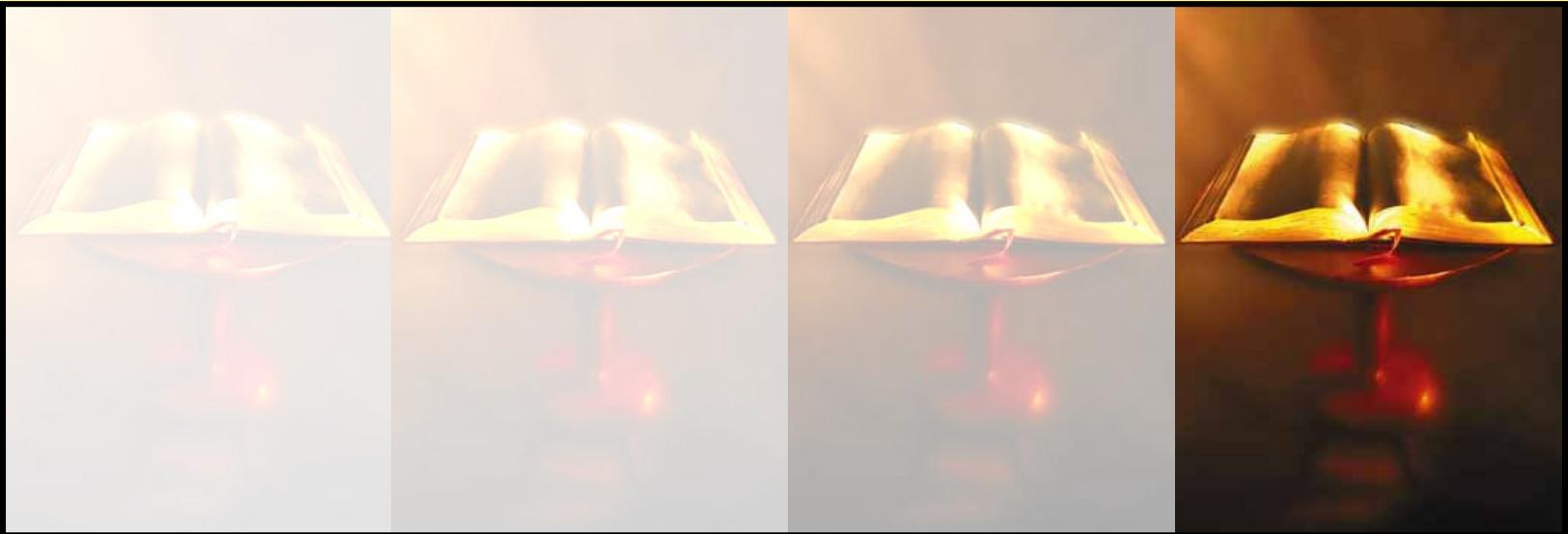


Reasons for Believing In The Bible



Ricki Lee Brooks

If the Bible is the best selling book of all time, why do so few people read it?

Well, some think the Bible is just too difficult. Others believe the Bible does not meet the practical needs of their lives. And, of course, there are those who say the Bible does not deserve our attention. According to them the Bible is filled with errors, myths, and contradictions.

So, how do we answer them. Well, let's start simple. Let's ask some questions...

Question #1: What is meant by "all Scripture is God-breathed?"

"All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work."
2 Timothy 3:16,17

The word scripture refers to the Bible. At the time Paul wrote this, he primarily had the Old Testament in mind, since the New Testament was as yet still in progress. However, this does not destroy the integrity of the New Testament. The Apostle Peter said of Paul's writings, *"Bear in mind that our Lord's patience means salvation, just as our dear brother Paul also wrote you with the wisdom that God gave him. He writes the same way in all his letters, speaking in them of these matters. His letters contain some things that are hard to understand, which ignorant and unstable people distort, as they do the other Scriptures, to their own destruction"* (2 Peter 3:15,16 NIV).

God-breathed is a compound word formed from the combination of theos (God) and pneu (to breathe). God, himself, brought about not only the ideas in the Bible, but the very words of the Bible. Again, Peter wrote, *"Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation. For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit"* (2 Peter 1:20,21 NIV).

Okay, the Bible says of itself that it is the Word of God, but is not that just a form of circular reasoning? In other words, we say the Bible is the Word of God and, when asked, "How do you know," we say because the Bible says so. No. There is no circular reasoning involved here since the Bible is actually a collection of sixty-six different books. These separate books verify one another.

Question #2: How do we know the Bible was authored by God?

Several directions of study provide answers to this question:

- the reliability of the Bible as a historical document;
- the cohesiveness of the Bible;
- the astonishing fulfillment of biblical prophecy;
- the teaching of Jesus;
- and the means of historical investigation.

We simply do not have space in this small tract to look at each, but we can take a brief look at a few of them.

A. The reliability of the Bible as a historical document.

1. Numbers and Time Intervals of Ancient Evidence for the N.T.

TEXT	NUMBER OF ANCIENT COPIES
The Iliad by Homer	643
Catullus	3
Herodotus	8
The New Testament	Greek Manuscripts: Appx. 5500 Translations: 18,000 – 25,000

TEXT	YEARS BETWEEN PRODUCTION and EARLIEST EVIDENCE
The Gallic Wars by Caesar	1000
Herodotus	1300
Catullus	1600
The Odyssey	2200
The New Testament	Earliest Fragment within 50 years Many Fragments within 150-200 years Complete Copies within 250 years

Point: Historians use, as one measure for reliability of ancient documents, the simple weight of evidence contained in the number of surviving manuscripts. The New Testament is unparalleled in this measure of reliability.

Point: Another measure of reliability deals with the time interval between the reported dates of actual authorship and the dates attached to the earliest known manuscript. Of course, an original document, from the very hand of its author, would be given extreme value. A copy of the original removed by a few years would rate just slightly lower. The further away a copy is removed by time the less valuable it becomes (historians figure it like this — more time = more copies = more mistakes). Using this measure of reliability the New Testament, once again, is far and away the most historically reliable ancient document known.

2. Dead Sea Scroll Evidence for the Old Testament.

Before the Dead Sea Scrolls were discovered, some argued that the copying process of the Old Testament must have resulted in many additions, deletions, and corruptions. Since a span of some 1400 years separated the oldest complete Hebrew manuscript (A.D. 1008) and the close of the Old Testament (appx. B.C. 400), many would not concede to a reliable copying process.

However, the Dead Sea Scroll discovery changed this view. The scrolls date, at the least, from B.C. 100. This closed the gap by 1100 years. The results were remarkable. The scrolls contained complete or partial copies of every book in the Old Testament except the Book of Esther. Charles Pfeiffer, in his book, "The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Bible" (p. 114, Baker Book House, 1967), said, "The Old Testament books from Qumran are those which we find in our Bibles. Minor textual variants occur as they do in any document which depends on hand copies for multiplication, but the biblical texts may be

regarded as essentially reliable."

Point: Copies from around 1000 A.D. and copies from around 100 B.C. were essentially the same. The assumption that time mandated additions, deletions, and corruptions to the text has been demonstrated false. The Old Testament is very reliable. What we read in the Old Testament today is what the people of long ago read in the Old Testament.

B. The Cohesiveness of the Bible.

<i>Years in the making</i>	1500
<i>Number of writers</i>	40
<i>Number of Books</i>	66
<i>Places of Composition</i>	Africa, Asia, Europe
<i>Languages of Composition</i>	Hebrew, Aramaic, Greek
<i>Contents of Composition</i>	History, Science, Theology, etc.

Yet, the *theme of the Bible is the same from Genesis to Revelation*: the glory of God and the salvation of man through the unfolding of God's grace through Jesus Christ.

Jesus said, "You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify about me, yet you refuse to come to me to have life" (John 5:39,40 NIV).

Luke said, "And beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he (Jesus) explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself" (Luke 24:27 NIV).

Josh McDowell and Don Stewart put it this way: "The Old Testament is the preparation (Isaiah 40:3). The Gospels are the manifestation (John 1:29). The Book of Acts is the propogation (Acts 1:8). The Epistles give the explanation (Colossians 1:27). The Book of Revelation is the consummation (Revelation 1:7). The Bible is all about Jesus." (Answers To Tough Questions.: Here's Life Publishers, Inc.; 1980, p. 2.)

Point: What are the chances that the Bible would be so consistent having been authored by so many different people, in so many different places, over such a long span of time? Not much — unless God is the True Author.

C. The Astonishing Fulfillment of Biblical Prophecy

The Bible is filled with over 3000 prophecies. Some are yet to be fulfilled and await a future date. However, others—literally hundreds—have already been fulfilled, while none have been demonstrated false. We can get a better understanding about the significance of this by narrowing the field down to the 300 Old Testament prophecies concerning the coming Savior and asking some questions about the probability of them coming true in the life of one person.

1. What chance is there that one person could fulfill just eight of the 300 Old Testament prophecies concerning Jesus Christ?

1×10^{17} (100,000,000,000,000,000) 17 zeros

