

WHY I CAN TRUST THE BIBLE

He Gave Us His Word



What is the Bible?

Canon—collection of books that make up Sacred Text

The Bible was written over 1600 years with more than 40 different authors (including Kings, Shepherds, Priests, and Fishermen) in 3 different languages across 3 continents. (Wes Huff)

And yet there is one author: God.



Bart Ehrman
Misquoting Jesus



Bruce Metzger
The New Testament Documents: Are They Reliable?

Five Reasons You Can Trust the Bible

You've got a faith that will put up a fight.



Reason #1: Trust the Bible because of its cultural importance.

The Bible has been a key set of texts in the founding and forming of Western civilization.

(Source: The Book that Made Your World: How the Bible Created the Soul of Western Civilization by Vishal Mangalwadi)



Society-forming ideas drawn from the Bible:

1. Dignity of every person—including women and children.

Psalm 139:1-6

- 1 You have searched me, Lord,
and you know me.
- 2 You know when I sit and when I rise;
you perceive my thoughts from afar.
- 3 You discern my going out and my lying down;
you are familiar with all my ways.
- 4 Before a word is on my tongue
you, Lord, know it completely.
- 5 You hem me in behind and before,
and you lay your hand upon me.
- 6 Such knowledge is too wonderful for me,
too lofty for me to attain.

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2. Rule of law vs. law of rulers.

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Psalm 111

1 Praise the LORD.

I will extol the Lord with all my heart
in the council of the upright and in the assembly.

2 Great are the works of the Lord;
they are **pondered** by all who delight in them.

3 Glorious and majestic are his deeds,
and his righteousness endures forever.

4 He has caused his wonders to be **remembered**;
the Lord is gracious and compassionate.

5 He provides **food** for those who fear him;
he remembers his covenant forever.

Society-forming ideas drawn from the Bible:

1. Dignity of every person—including women and children.
2. Basis for the rule of law.
3. Scientific, medical, technological advancement.
4. Promotion of education of women and the life of the mind.

Reason #2: Trust the Bible because of its historical value.

The Bible repeatedly has historical plausibility and “fit.”





Tel Dan Stele
(9th century B.C.; discovered 1993)

- Hyksos invasion of Egypt around the time of Joseph (approx. 1650-1550 B.C.)
- Israel's covenant with God bears resemblance to Hittite treaties/covenants of 1600-1200 B.C. but not the first century millennium covenants of the Assyrians (Sandra Richter, *Epic of Eden*, p. 90)

Test of Geography: Does the text know the land in which it claims to be written? There are 24 place names in the Gospels, not just Jerusalem but Cana (small town). (Andy Bannister)

- Name frequency and usage of qualifiers names fits the context and culture of ancient Palestine

Qualifiers:

- Simon *Peter*;
- Jacob/James *the Less*
- Jacob/James *Son of Alphaeus*;
- Jacob/James *Son of Zebedee*

ONOMASTICS (STUDY OF NAMES)

	Palestine (330 BC-200 AD)	Gospels-Acts
Top 2 male names (Simon and Joseph)	15.6%	18.2%
Top 9 male names	41.5%	40.3%
Male names attested only once	7.9%	3.9%
Top 2 female names (Mary and Salome)	28.6%	38.9%
Top 9 female names	49.7%	61.1%
Female names attested only once	9.6%	2.5%

(content: Richard Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses*, 2nd edition;
source of graphic: allkirk.net)

Evidence from history:

- Josephus (c. 37-c. 100), in *Jewish Antiquities* (published 94 A.D.), comments on historical Jesus
- Polycarp, a 1st century Christian bishop, is attested to have had a connection to John the Apostle by Irenaeus (c. 130-c. 202) and Jerome (c. 342-420)

Reason #3: Trust the Bible because of its textual strength.

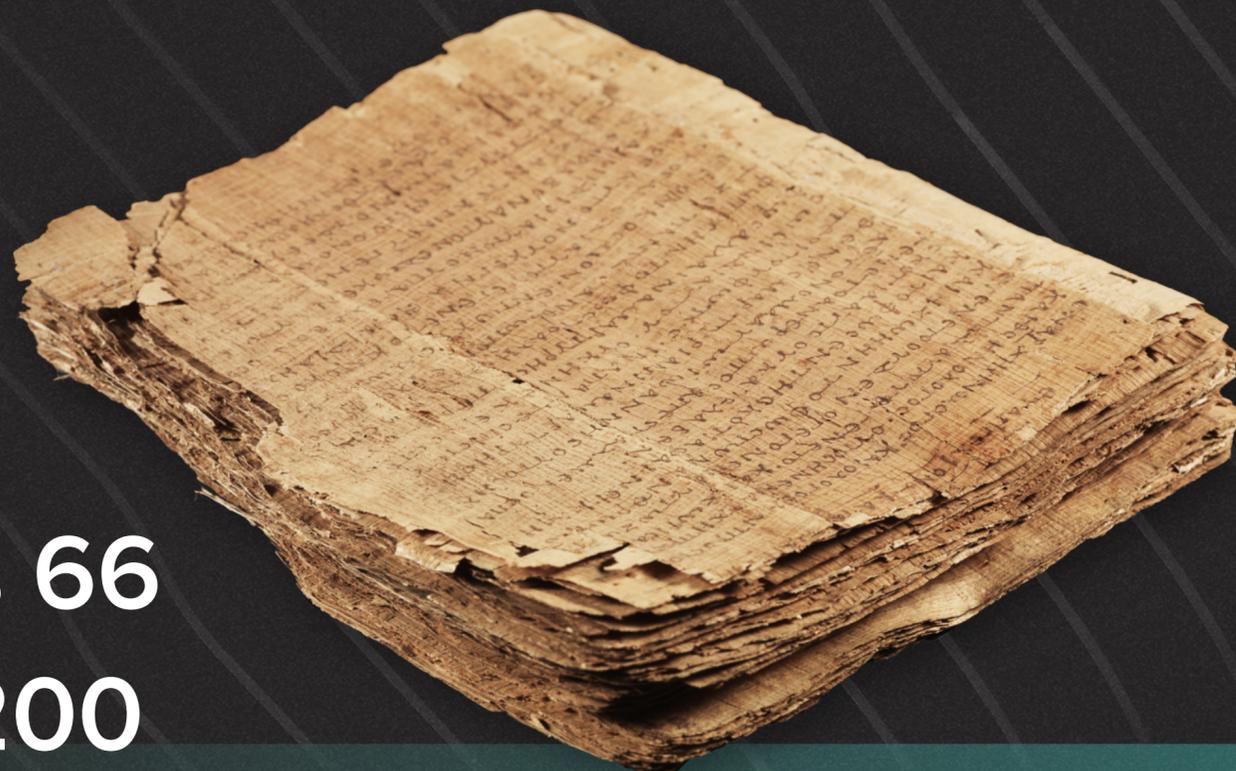
The Bible, especially the New Testament, has been remarkably well preserved.



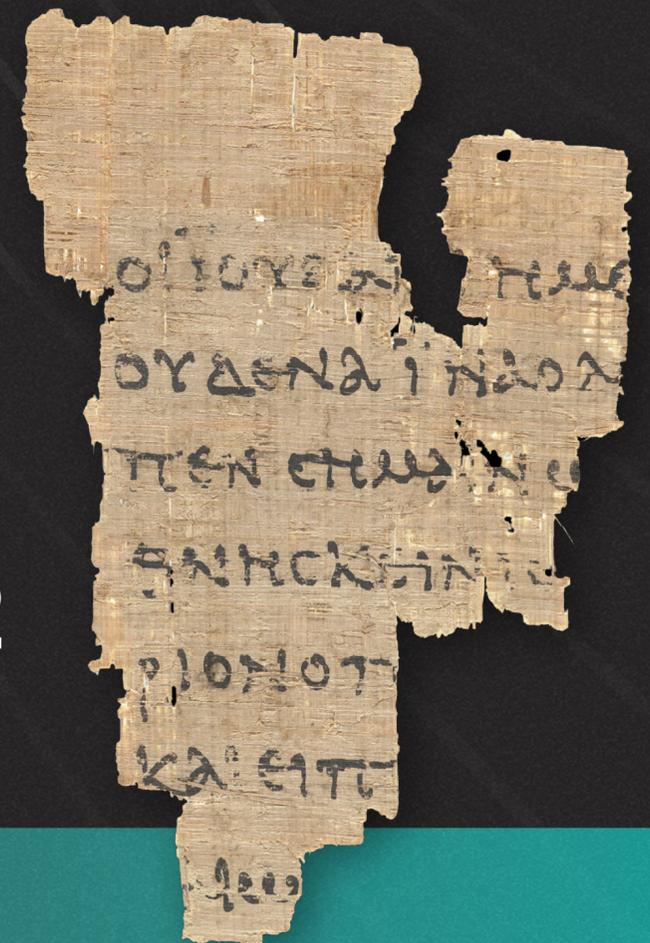
Dead Sea Scrolls (discovered 1946-1957) contained approx. 950-1000 manuscripts, representing each book of the Old Testament, except Esther. Approximately 95% similarity between Isaiah manuscript from Dead Sea Scrolls and a manuscript from about 1000 years older.

5,000 Greek manuscripts (whole or partial copies of the New Testament) ranging from between 350-500 A.D.
(with manuscripts and fragments from earlier)

Papyrus 66
c. 150-200



Papyrus 52
c. 150



By end of 2nd Century, Irenaeus (125/30-202 A.D.) names the four gospels (*Against Heresies*), which record apostolic teaching and 1st century Jewish conditions.

Early writers (writing from 90-160) used or quoted from books now part of the New Testament (e.g., *Didache*, Epistle of Barnabas, Clement's letter to the Corinthians)

Because of their dispersion into Asia, British Isles, and North Africa, wholesale corruption of the Gospels would not have been possible.

W E S H U F F

But what about “textual variants”?

Meaningful: the meaning of the text is changed

Viable: the better variant is unclear

“Textual variants are normal and natural.
Having more variants means you have more
evidence of the original.”

CRAIG EVANS

EXAMPLE OF TEXTUAL VARIANT:

2 Corinthians 4:10 NIV

¹⁰ We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body.

2 Corinthians 4:10 KJV

¹⁰ Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body.

EXAMPLE OF TEXTUAL VARIANT:

John 8:1-11: Should this be included in the Gospel or included elsewhere?

Mark 16:9-20: should these be included or not?

1 John 5:7-8:

NIV: ⁷ For there are three that testify: ⁸ the Spirit, the water and the blood; and the three are in agreement.

KJV: ⁷ For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one. ⁸ And there are three that bear witness in earth, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one.

How many variants are *meaningful and viable*?

About 1%.

-Dan Wallace, Professor of New Testament
at Dallas Theological Seminary

Bart Ehrman
Misquoting Jesus



Bruce Metzger
The New Testament Documents: Are They Reliable?

“The position I argue for in *Misquoting Jesus* does not actually stand at odds with Prof. Metzger’s position that the **essential Christian beliefs are not affected by textual variants** in the manuscript tradition of the New Testament.”

(from *Misquoting Jesus*,
and from his blog: <https://ehrmanblog.org/do-textual-variants-really-matter-for-anything/>)

Reason #4: Trust the Bible because of its evangelical power.

The Bible has been effective in the transformation of personal lives.



“I started to read the Bible the way I was trained to read a book... along with reading it many times through, examining its textual authority, its authorship, its canonicity, and its internal hermeneutics...”



DR. ROSARIA BUTTERFIELD

“I was a heathen reading the Bible, but [about five hours a day] is a lot of time to spend with the Bible... Slowly, over time, the Bible started to take on a life and a meaning that startled me...”



DR. ROSARIA BUTTERFIELD

*The God of the Bible deals
differently with people
when people deal
differently with Him.*



(Source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Eykv-3hvFvl&t=867s>)

Reason #5: Trust the Bible because of Christ's validation.

The Bible is the story of Jesus Christ who has been raised from the dead.



What could explain the simultaneous, instantaneous:

- birth of the church, with Jews and Gentiles fellowshiping as spiritual family
- shift of day of worship for Jewish people
- worship of a specific man by Jewish men and women
- the eruption of mission-focused activity (e.g., writing, traveling, preaching)

...when many Jews had beliefs that would counteract their sorrow?

The resurrection of Jesus Christ.

We can trust the Bible (both Old and New Testament) because it tells the story of Jesus Christ and he is raised from the dead.

In the *end*, the Bible won't need validation. We will. We can be *justified*—made right with God—in the *now*. We need the vindication of Jesus Christ. How does it come? Faith.

In the *now*, *you* might be the only Bible someone reads—the lived expression of the life of Jesus Christ.