

CAN WE TRUST THE BIBLE?

Introduction and Importance



Tim Challies wrote (5 Aug 22):

The Bible can be an intimidating book. I suppose any book of the Bible's size can be intimidating merely by virtue of its page count. But then there's also the claims people make about the Bible—that it's a book that transforms lives, that it's a book that reveals the mind of God himself, that it's a book that is without error. And beyond that, there's the nature of the Bible as a collection of writings that span centuries, peoples, cultures, and genres, not to mention the outsized importance of the Bible in shaping the Western world as we know it. For these reasons and many others, the Bible can intimidate people to such a degree that they read it without confidence or perhaps fail to read it at all.

I am interested in many things--including railroads, airplanes and ships, the Civil War, the Second World War, English history, Watergate, football, baseball, music, architecture, archaeology, espionage novels and movies and on and on. I have made trips to all kinds of sites relevant to my interests. But my *greatest interest* is in my faith and the historical and intellectual bedrock on which it is founded—the Bible, supported by my own experiences (especially my coming to faith), my Christian friends (us congregating in all kinds of fellowships), the well-thought-out theology of our faith, good preaching and teaching, discipleship, the unchanging mission of personal evangelism, etc. As regards the first interests I mentioned, there is no one infallible source of information about, say, airplanes or railroad engines. There are many books and stories, but none can be looked to for a reliable, inerrant "last word." Books about the Civil War, for instance, weave all over the road, especially these days. There are reliable accounts, but no inerrant "final word."

OUR EVANGELICAL AND HISTORICALLY ORTHODOX FAITH IS THE MOST IMPORTANT THING IN LIFE FOR US. Its foundation, we would testify, is grounded on and rooted in the Bible; ultimately--there alone. We also study--and do so with some affection--writers and theologians and thinkers who in the two millennia since the Ascension have written about the Bible. From some we pick a nugget or two here and there and then put the book away. There are of course innumerable thinkers who have written many books, whom we have come to admire and greatly respect. Occasionally we might be accused with some of these, for thinking that they are virtually inerrant along with the sacred writings of the Bible. We repent of this when we are guilty of it. But so, we take our Bibles very seriously and we see that in its reliability or not, much is at stake.

We live in a time when the Bible's reliability and relevance has culturally come to be assumed to be thin at best. And frankly, I wonder if anyone even cares anymore? In my lifetime, it *has been* like this:

- Christian states a truth
 - Non-Christian hears
 - Non-Christian disputes, only partially accepts or flatly rejects
- Christian gives rebuttal
 - Non-Christian ponders and decides to either believe or disbelieve the truth posited

Does this process even happen much anymore? In fact, it seems prevalent that even among Christians today, skepticism is rampant. *We, however*, do care and we have staked our all on the Bible's RELIABILITY. If and when it does come up, we can speak with great confidence and assurance that the things that the Bible says are true. They were true when they were written, they were true when William the Conqueror invaded England. They were true in 1776. They are true in Australia, at the north pole, and will be so on Mars (when we terraform it and build a base there).

Much is at stake, as we say and far more than the simple truthfulness of whether Moses parted the Red Sea, whether Jonah could survive the G.I. tract of a fish or whether Jesus really could make a man to see who was blind from birth. Most importantly of course, was Jesus really dead upon the cross and did He really rise from the dead? And what about the "crown jewel" of the Bible, the Gospel? Can that promise be relied upon with all the complexities and alternate philosophies of life in our modern culture?

If our query of God and His activities was only theoretical, we would perhaps have merely a ho-hum interest in our question. But as we see it, the Gospel and all its promises--their veracity--are at stake. The promises of God as recorded in the Bible are stupendous and with eternal and exquisite impact and implications. If nothing else, those promises are made sure by the question "can we trust the Bible?" If our answer is tentative or lukewarm, much hope and future-assurance is compromised. They are made *possible* only. But if we decide, carefully and objectively, that we can trust the Bible's assertions and promises, then both our outlook for the future and our prospects for a good life here are underwritten. Islam promises a conditional and a not-very-joyful future and then, it seems, only for the most rigidly obedient. Catholicism also promises only a tentative good future, and there it seems only vaguely defined. Other world faith-systems are all even more nebulous and so varied that there seems to be little objective and reliable foundations. Only a straightforward and faith-empowered trust in a reliable baseline-timeless, intellectually grounded and time honored, will service humankind's most basic needs.

But here we must note that our understand is that the writings of the Bible were utterly inerrant only in their original manuscripts of which we possess none! They were not transmitted from the Lord in English.

The Limits of a Single Discussion

"Can we trust the Bible?" is a large and complicated question. In considering it once, or in a single presentation we are constrained by time. Only the most salient and main questions can be asked, and then only answered briefly. However, it is an encouragement that with adequate time and attention a very broad answer can confidently be offered to the question, "Is the Bible reliable? Can I trust it?" Yes, yes!

The Problem

More usually in a passive way today (but sometimes actively) the Bible is accused of being full of errors, biases, primitive and localized beliefs, unenlightened aggression, outdated views of sexuality and gender roles plus only a simplistic (and some feel) "binary" understanding, a single and mean-spirited God (who is not very diverse in thinking), misogyny, myths and legends, hard to have faith in... A suggested summary of *some* current skeptical attitudes and objections is provided in Chart 1, below. (There are probably others).

Chart 1

HOTPOINTS IN BIBLE TRUSTING	
Major categories of doubt: Is the Bible correct in what it records? Is the Bible at all relevant now?	Is not the Bible to blame for all the abuses, exploitation, even atrocity Christians have engaged? Biblical living does not satisfy my need for self-defined identity
Genesis 1,2	Creation, mass destruction of Sodom/Gomorah, Babel story stupid
Exodus	God appearing to Moses, parting of the Red Sea
Exodus through Deuteronomy	the Law - some are hard to imagine coming from God
Joshua	Genocidal dictates, Conquest atrocities
Job	Why would God allow such suffering? Satan? please...
Esther	Seems like a superhero story
Psalms	Imprecatory psalms
Jonah	Please...
Proverbs	Can all these ideas be true? How?
Ecclesiastes	Cool, good for song-making, depressing; bad example of positive thinking
Song of Songs	Let's have more books like this
Isaiah	This can't be one guy
Jeremiah	Too depressing
Ezekiel	Too psychadelic
Most of the other "prophets"	Dark, dark, dark... God can't be this petty
Zechariah/Zephaniah	Too psychadelic, is God that mean-spirited?
Matthew/Mark/Luke/John	Too many miracles, anti-Semitic, angels-demons, Resurrection? Seriously?
Acts	No problem except chapters 1 and 2, + Luke kind of anti-Semitic
Romans	anti-Gay; Paul invented the Jesus Myth
I Cor. - Titus	anti-Gay, down on women, unenlightened
Johannine epistles	weird
Petrine epistles	too darkly apocalyptic, pessimistic about the goodness of humankind
Hebrews	whatever
Jude	too dark
Revelation	Seriously? Too many weird sections; End of the World, LOL
other books	How come the Apocrypha, pseudapigraphal books are not in the Bible?
Book of Mormon/Pearl of Great Price	anti-non traditional/elitist/prejudice; non-diversity, non-inclusionist
Vedic hymns/Buddhist wisdom/Beatle lyrics	should be some occasional quotes in the Bible too; why not edit?

Our task is to demonstrate the **Bible's reliability** (and therefore it's trustworthiness) **on ELEVEN THINGS** such as:

1. The **accuracy** of its record of events, from Genesis to Revelation, with, while acknowledging the problematic way people are, a demonstration of the unfailing faithfulness of God to His covenant.
2. It's dual (and wondrous) **blending** of fully human authors with the sovereign Holy Spirit's inspiration of their written contributions to the canon of Scripture
3. It's divine **authority**, unlike any other human writing
4. The existence of a single, all-inclusive **plan** by God for redeeming humans - engineered in two comings of a Messiah, and that plan's creation of a uniquely called and graced "body of Christ"
5. The reality of the ruinous **sinfulness** of humankind
6. The truthfulness of the record that Jesus of Nazareth was Israel's long-awaited and **promised Messiah**
7. The crafting and implementation of **the Gospel** (good news)
8. The truly universal **offer of** the Gospel, freely, to all humankind
9. The **second coming** of Messiah and His Kingdom
10. A timeless **morality** and revealing of what is righteousness
11. An elegance and deeper ability to address humankind's needs -
urgencies which ebb and flow, very and intensify relatively

Is the Bible reliable when it proclaims...

- there is only a single God? But also...
- He is comprised of three persons though He is only one God?
- that people are universally broke, ruined, polluted by sin, (and by the way, can we trust what the Bible says about sin?)
 - What if I meet a really, really nice Mormon, Muslim, Buddhist, Hindu, atheist, yoga-trainer and he/she is a kinder, gentler person than any

Christian I have met? Can the Bible be relied upon for its pronouncements then?

- that Jesus of Nazareth was who the Christian church has always said He was—since the Christian church has declared itself the best interpreter of the Bible?
 - that God specifically created everything by divine decree?
-

From a Biblical Perspective:

- Is there a "map" of time, a timelessly Divine plan, with a distinct beginning and a pre-determined distinct end, in God's mind?
- Is there a place for chance or changes in God's plan?
- Does God love people, and if so, how?
- Was Jesus really Israel's long-awaited Messiah?
- Should I give up listening to non-Christian music?
- Did He really rise from the dead?
- Will He really physically and literally come a second time?
- Will planet Earth end, or be remade by God directly?
- Doesn't God ever upgrade His "software" on sexuality?
- Does God ever condemn anyone?
- If the Church (universal) is so great, how come so many leaders screw up?
- Is the role of women in church life fluid in any way?
- Is weed sin? Is premarital, extramarital or non-heterosexual sex sin? Can something be sinful in one century but not in another?
- What if aliens show up?
- What's the big deal about abortion, if a woman just doesn't want to carry a fetus to term since the sex was only casual?
- Hasn't Christianity been the core reason why Jews and blacks and the poor and women and gays etc. suffer injustices and inequality?

- What if I trusted a pastor and he became abusive, narcissistic, power-crazy money-grubbing and unapproachable?
- What if I heard a college professor who was very smart and he or she offered evidences that the Bible is not reliable in what it says?
- What if I just don't want to be the same thing as my parents are?
- What if I can't find much biblical reference to some current issue I am interested in?
 - slavery, racial parity and equity, militarism, climate change, transgender access to anything they want, etc.

Know what exactly we are saying that the Bible IS

- We are not saying it is magical, a mystical orb handed down to people by God in a single psychedelic moment (ref. the alleged discovery of the Book of Mormon)
- We are not saying that any one English translation is the best or only one to use, and *certainly not* that there has been a kind of secondary form of inspiration given to the KJV, the Geneva Bible, or any other one Bible.
- We are not saying that being able to cite from the Bible makes a person a Christian
- We are not saying that any one denomination or tradition possesses the single clearest and most faithful interpretation of the Bible or that God prefers any one denominational understanding
- **WE ARE SAYING** that the Bible is a collecting-together of 66 individual writings (63 if we combine 1st/2nd Samuel, 1st/2nd Kings, 1st/2nd Chronicles as does the Hebrew Bible) evaluated by three centuries of careful work by the early Church fathers into the "canon" of sacred writings, inspired directly by God and without error in the original writings (called "the original autographs") and concluded with the Revelation of John. That canon remained stable for well over a millennium until the Council of Trent (1546) when the Catholic church added

into their canon the 14 additional books of the Apocrypha, yet rejected (as divinely inspired) by Judaism, Protestantism and Orthodoxy. All three branches of Christendom universally reject much later claims of newly revealed material, i.e. The Book of Mormon, etc.

- **WE ARE SAYING** that somehow, wonderfully, mystically, transformingly the Bible is alive. It is more than merely human writings. It is able to move, driven by the Spirit, into areas of human consciousness and even the subconscious, like no other writings.
- **WE ARE SAYING** that the key to interpreting the Bible is to acknowledge the genuine humanity of its authors—person by person—to give attention to the context of each author's situation, and to interpret their words in a normal way, at face-value unless there is some compelling reason to do otherwise.

Distinguish inferior views of the Bible from our view,
for instance:

- That the Bible should be joined in authority with Church tradition, papal pronouncements, higher critical views, claims of new revelation from God.
- The Bible contains a limited number of errors
- The Bible, its contents, and its laws should be rigidly adhered to and worshipped for themselves
- Access to the Bible itself should be limited to church leaders and officially approved scholars; personal Bible study by individuals should not be encouraged
- The Bible merely contains the Word of God
- The canon of Scripture is not really closed, and that the church should be open to new revelation

Be able to articulate

- The Old Testament from the New Testament
 - The books, personalities, eras, kinds of literature

- The deliberate continuity between OT and NT
- The *progression* of theology across the centuries of biblical books
- The differences between the Catholic, Protestant and Orthodox views of the Bible and its importance in those systems
 - i.e. Protestantism is rooted in the phrase *sola Scriptura*
- the differences between liberal and conservative views of what the Bible is

Know and reference what the Bible exactly says; be precise

It is profitable to be able to practice distinguishing between the three steps in Bible study of **observation**, **interpretation**, and **application**. This contributes to a sense of reliability and trust-worthiness when we cite and seek to apply biblical principles.

Be familiar with the different systems of specific theological subjects

- How we “know” what we say we know (epistemology)
- What truths are timeless and what strong beliefs are cultural
- What things are of primary importance and which are secondary
- Calvinism vs. Arminianism (and the sub-groups)
- Premillennialism vs. Amillennialism vs. Postmillennialism
- Church polity types: congregational, episcopal, presbyterian, what church discipline is and how it should be used; what the ordinances (“sacraments”) are and how they are practiced
- Young creation vs. old creation
- Cessation vs. Continuation in the sign-gifts
- What is corporate worship, and how should it be practiced?
- Male and female roles

All of these areas of thought and impact and address the question, “Can we rely on the Bible?”

TEN ENCOURAGEMENTS FOR TRUSTING THE BIBLE

1. THE TESTIMONY AND "EMBARRASSMENT OF RICHES" OF THE MANUSCRIPT EVIDENCE

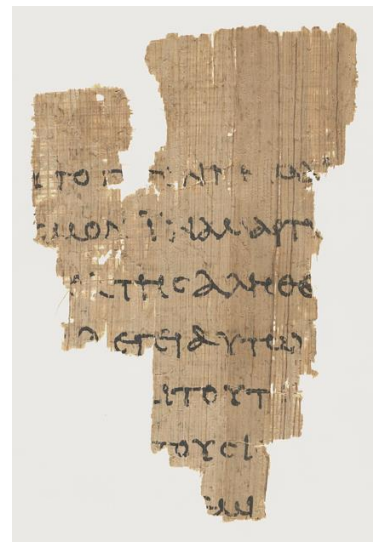
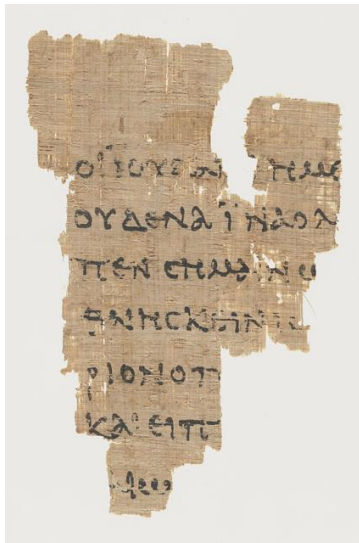
Summary: antiquity, abundance, uniqueness of the collection, high degree of agreement

The area known as "textual" or "lower" criticism can be a great witness to the reliability of the Bible. As noted before, we understand that the writings of the Bible were utterly *inerrant* only in their original manuscripts of which we possess none! Only the first and original copy of Genesis, Jeremiah, John and Revelation (etc.) were without mistake, oversight, miscalculation or simple wrongness. An entire 35-lecture course on this by Dr. Daniel Wallace, can be accessed for free at <https://www.biblicaltraining.org/textual-criticism/daniel-wallace>.

The study of biblical manuscripts though, provides us with such a close approximation as to what the "original autographs" said, as to be a great encouragement to us. As of 2018 there were **5,856 ancient Greek manuscripts** of the New Testament alone. These are joined by 18,130 non-Greek early NT manuscripts (Latin, Armenian, Coptic, etc.) for a total of (at this time) 23,986 ancient NT manuscripts, far more than for *any other* piece of ancient literature in the world. (Homer's *Iliad* is #2 at about 2,000). The striking encouragement from "textual criticism" is that the manuscripts agree on the readings for about 99% for the whole text of the N.T. Skeptics wave this aside; but it is a powerful and curious piece of evidence to dismiss. And while age alone of a manuscript does not necessarily mean it has the best reading, some are so close to the time of the N.T. that their agreement with our NT's (in English translation) are astounding.

The oldest NT manuscript is p52 (P⁵² Papyrus manuscript #52) a fragment, front and back, from John 18) which dates to about 130 AD. p⁵² itself was evidently judged at the time to be an inferior copy of John and thus discarded; to be found in an Egyptian trash heap eighteen centuries later, in about 1920.

POINT: the original copy of the Gospel of John must have been written well before 130 AD.



ΟΙ ΙΟΥΔΑΙΟΙ ΗΜΕΙΝ ΟΥΚ ΕΞΕΣΤΙΝ ΑΠΟΚΤΕΙΝΑΙ
 ΟΥΔΕΝΑ ΙΝΑ Ο ΛΟΓΟΣ ΤΟΥ ΙΗΣΟΥ ΠΛΗΡΩΘΗ ΟΝ ΕΙ-
 ΠΕΝ ΣΗΜΑΙΝΩΝ ΠΟΙΩ ΘΑΝΑΤΩ ΗΜΕΛΛΕΝ ΑΠΟ-
 ΘΗΣΚΕΙΝ ΙΣΗΛΘΕΝ ΟΥΝ ΠΑΛΙΝ ΕΙΣ ΤΟ ΠΡΑΙΤΩ-
 ΡΙΟΝ Ο ΠΙΛΑΤΟΣ ΚΑΙ ΕΦΩΝΗΣΕΝ ΤΟΝ ΙΗΣΟΥΝ
 ΚΑΙ ΕΙΠΕΝ ΑΥΤΩ ΣΥ ΕΙ Ο ΒΑΣΙΛΕΥΣ ΤΩΝ ΙΟΥ-
 ΔΑΙΩΝ

the Jews, "For us it is not permitted to kill anyone," so that the word of Jesus might be fulfilled, which he spoke signifying what kind of death he was going to die. Entered therefore again into the Praetorium Pilate and summoned Jesus and said to him, "Thou art king of the Jews?"



Romans 6:5 from p46 (late 2nd or early 3rd century mss.)



Bodmer papyrus (late 2nd or early 3rd c.)

There are over **62,000 existing ancient manuscripts** of the Old Testament, the most recently discovered being the Dead Sea Scrolls (the finding of which began in 1947) and which represent every canonical O.T. book except Esther. Again, the agreement—verse by verse—between all the

manuscripts, though not 100.00% identical, is profound. Very strong suggestion that the Essene Jews, at least, in the first century used the same canon of Scripture as we do. Here is one shot of **the great Isaiah scroll**:



For further study see: CSNTM.org, F.F. Bruce books, Josh.org

1. CORROBORATION OF THE BIBLE'S VERACITY FROM ARCHAEOLOGY

Countless examples of archaeological discoveries in the last 200 years which verify places and events and people attested to in the Bible

A few examples (there are many):

- Dan - inscription referring to "**House of David**" - mid 8th century



- **Pontius Pilate** - (N.T., Josephus, Philo, Tacitus) said to be merely legendary until a limestone stele found from the 1st century with his name on it, found in 1961:



The "Pilate Inscription" from Caesarea Maritima, Israel. The inscription reads:

This building - Tiberium By Pontius Pilatus Prefect of Judea Has been built

- **Bethsaida** - said to be a mythical town until remains found, verified and excavated, near Capernaum
- The Dead Sea Scrolls show that **Daniel** (given to much skepticism among scholars), was written long before its popularly stated date - until the Scrolls' discovery.
- Ruins and excavations at ancient **Jericho** (of which there are several on-top-of-each-other cities)
- Ruins at **Megiddo** corroborate the biblical testimony of events there

2. ITS ENDURANCE AND WIDE-SPREAD PROPAGATION

It is not an insignificant observation that the reliability of the Bible was almost universally trusted until the 1800s. It was not until then that *higher critical* views and Enlightenment perspective came into play. (If an intellectual evolution of humankind is asserted, evidence against such as idea would be Exhibit A, World War I, and Exhibit B, World War II.) This means that until that time, countless

millions of Bible scholars, churchmen and people in general relied upon and assumed the accuracy of the Bible and worked hard to propagate its spread. Despite the Catholic church's Reformation-era efforts to suppress this, the Bible enjoyed growing presence—in Europe and in America.

3. ITS UNIVERSAL ACKNOWLEDGEMENT BETWEEN ALL CHURCHES

The Bible has been the philosophical and revelatory basis for all of Christendom since the second century. Even in the most recent times no replacement, alternative or additional source-authority has been suggested.

4. ITS CHANGING POWER IN PERSONAL LIVES

Although this is an admittedly subjective type of evidence, it cannot be denied that countless lives have been changed, over-whelmingly for the better, by their introduction and immersion in the Scriptures. That some lives have endured spiritual abuse by church leaders, does not lessen the power for good and righteous effect by the Bible itself. To simply dismiss this latter collection is without a rational base.

The Word of God, and its messages, have always accompanied true spiritual revivals. It is doubtful if higher criticism-based ministries—mainline though they may be—ever spark revival.

5. ITS APPEAL, BLESSING AND LOVE BY SO MANY MILLIONS.

There is also to be considered, the ethereal and sublime affection and hunger possessed by so many people, for the Bible itself. This crosses all cultural barriers where the Bible has been introduced. Many have chosen to study the Bible, memorize it, pass it on to their progeny, and introduce people unfamiliar to it—all with a great zeal. Why is that?

It is because the Bible is the Word of God, "profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work" (2nd Tim. 3:16,17). It is because "the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart" (Hebrews 4:12). It is because, as David wrote three thousand years ago, "Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path" (Psalm 119:105). It is because it is the way that the "God of hope [fills us] with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit [we] may abound in hope" (Romans 15:13). Of course, just quoting Bible verses does not prove anything by themselves, but the love of the Bible, testified to by so many people across all cultures, ages and centuries, is an evidence of no small importance.

6. A BELIEF IN THE INSPIRATION OF THE BIBLE AMONG INNUMERABLE SCHOLARS

It is impossible to list all the PhDs and double-PhDs (and two triple-doctorates that we know of) who testify to their belief in the reliability and inspiration of the Bible. One point of reference in recent decades is to match the diminishing number of scholars in liberal/higher-critical graduate schools with the number of scholars of equal education that do hold to the inspiration, authority and reliability of the Bible. The latter outnumber the former by about 4 to 1, currently (see Chart 2 at end).

7. THE BIBLE'S SELF-VINDICATION IN REAL LIFE

Sooner or later, we find that the Word of God was true. Devotional and moral principles, laid out in the Scripture, have a way of proving themselves true given enough time in day to day living.

8. THE BIBLE AS A RESPECTED SOURCE OF REFERENCE

Even by scholars, politicians, artists, educators and business leaders—with no reason to be religious—the Bible enjoys continuous reference, respect and discussion. To deny or minimize this factor along, is to capitulate to an unreasonable cynicism.

9. THE BIBLE HAS INSPIRED AND DRIVEN GREAT PHILANTHROPIES

Good works, benefiting countless millions of people all over the world, have found their “genesis” in the message and Spirit of the Bible. Hospitals, schools, relief organizations, chaplaincies, food-justice ministries, language skills instruction, war-time rescues, and on and on, populate the history of the Bible. This cannot be claimed by any other writing in the history of world religion.

ALLEGED CONTRADICTIONS

There are not many valid “contradictions” in the whole Bible - surprisingly few, despite the charge by many popular detractors that “the Bible is full of contradictions.” There are perhaps two dozen that should be studied. To begin, it is helpful to examine one’s PRESUPPOSITIONS, which are critical. The ATTITUDE with which one approaches Scripture - do we begin the study assuming guilt or innocence?

Dr. Ryrie illustration (1979) - leaving home in the morning, turning around and going back to get something forgotten; then seeing your best friend leaving the house with your wife waving goodbye at the front door...

OLD TESTAMENT

1. Genesis 1:11,12 and Genesis 2:5 - Two Creation accounts?
Cannot chapter two be an *elaboration* of chapter 1 and not a separate account?
2. Genesis 4:17 - Cain's wife -
Cannot she have been a sister, a niece or a grand-niece?
3. Numbers 25:9 and 1st Corinthians 10:8
24,000 deaths 22,000 deaths
Is it not reasonable to see that Moses and Paul rounded off their numbers, or that Moses' number included all who died, and Paul's a more limited corpus of deaths?
4. 2nd Samuel 24 and 1st Chronicles 21
Both God and Satan worked on David?
5. 2nd Samuel 24:9 vs. 1st Chronicles 21:5
Differing numbers" soldiers vs. draftees? Or valiant men vs. men?
6. 2nd Chronicles 4:2 - inside vs. outside diameters?

NEW TESTAMENT

1. Matthew 13:22 - Jesus must have meant something other than literally THE smallest seed - could he have been that ignorant? So in a parable we look for some other explanation. I.e. in Greek "smallest" can mean "smaller."
2. Matthew 20, Mark 10, Luke 18 - an inter-Synoptic contradiction - they do not exclude each other
3. Matthew 27:9 - could this be a copyist gloss? Or, Jeremiah referred to as the *beginning* of the Prophets? Or, a reference to both Jeremiah and Zechariah accounts simultaneously?
4. Matthew 27:5 and Acts 1:18 - both occurrences, at same time?
5. Mark 1:2,3 - quote from Malachi? Using Malachi to intro the passage?
6. Mark 2:26 - Abiathar - the #1 person in his time. Influence.
7. John 7:53-8:11 and Mark 16:9-20 (the Pericope of the Adulteress and the Ending of Mark). These are the two

most significant textual problems in the NT. They illustrate that although the manuscripts agree overall on 99% of the entire text of the NT, a few interesting differences exist. The John passage has been judged by scholars to be apostolically *genuine* but almost certainly not penned by John. The Mark passage is generally believed not to have been original; more likely an addition by someone other than Mark. A likely explanation was the loss of the final leaf of Mark before it could be copied. None of this diminishes the doctrines of inspiration or inerrancy.

- NOTE: It is not that God is playing a shell-game about His Word. It is that God providentially has allowed the human element into the giving and the preservation of His written Word.

8. Acts 7:4 - age discrepancy of Abraham (Gen. 11:26); when Abraham left Ur. List of names in order of importance, not chrono-logically
9. Acts 7:6 - 400 years or 430 years? Could 400 be a round number?
10. James 4:5 - this quote is nowhere in the O.T. It seems reasonable to assume that James was *prefacing* the quotation in verse 6, a statement clearly taken from Proverbs 3:34: "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble" (also quoted in 1 Peter 5:5). NOTE: quotation marks, common in our English Bibles, are used nowhere in biblical writings.

OTHER POINTS :

In order to meaningfully support that the Bible itself is trustworthy and reliable, a few other insights are useful:

- A clear understanding that there are many interpretations of a biblical text, but ultimately only one true meaning. Our duty is always to seek that one true meaning.
- We need to seek and strive for the most intelligent and informed understanding possible of what the Bible is (without resorting to platitudes and creedal

definitions), how it came to be and how it has endured. This presumes

- o That we are committed to a sustained reading of appropriate material about the Bible (old and new); especially pastors and elders and teachers
 - o That we are committed to being charitable and listening
 - o That we remain interested in continuing research
 - o That we are willing to be humbly corrected when we are wrong about some assumptions and interpretations
 - o That we are vigilant to point out abuses and any "weaponization" of the Bible by cults or aberrant groups
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- We need to acknowledge that there are manuscript discrepancies. POINT: no one English translation is the final and perfect exact representation of the original Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek autographs. We do not possess the original copies of any of biblical books. This is important to keep in mind. It allows us to be intellectually honest about our study of the Bible, admitting the frailties and real humanness of the authors themselves.

 - Any use of the Word which lessens its effectiveness might damage people's confidence in its utility, even if its actual reliability is not specifically threatened. THOUGHT: There are times when "less is more." Evangelicals sometimes quote/recite so much Scripture at a time—in a service or Bible study or special event--almost manically, which can diminish the impact of the spoken Word and therefore diminish its value in the given event.

 - We need to develop and articulate an intelligent definition and explanation as to what is exactly meant by the phrase "the inspiration of the Bible".

 - Good commentaries can be a great aid to understanding the Bible. Bible dictionaries, encyclopedia, atlases and books about specific periods of biblical history can be helpful.

A LAST WORD Going a little deeper, to look at the inclusion of each biblical book into the canon of Scripture is a fascinating study. Over the early centuries some books were "late-comers" into the canon. This is not so much so with the Old Testament Scriptures as it is with some of the New Testament writings. 2nd Timothy, 2nd Peter, the Johannine epistles, Jude, Hebrews and Revelation were later additions into the canon. Marcion (144 AD) was the earliest to collect N.T. writings in one bundle. But he accepted only Luke and most of Paul's writings. Still other writings were judged to be apostolic-inspired or near-apostolic, but did not make the final "cut": *The Shepherd of Hermas*, *The Didache*, The First Epistle of Clement to the Corinthians (Clement is mentioned by Paul in Phil. 4:3), The Epistle of Polycarp.

It would take three centuries for the final 27 books that we know as the New Testament to be finalized. That **carefulness**, in itself, of the early church fathers is a witness to the authenticity of the Bible.

Chart 2

Comparative Enrollments of Theologically Conservative with Liberal/Modernist Graduate Schools of Theology (2020)

Conservative/Evangelical Schools		Liberal/Modernist/Higher Critical Schools	
Southern Baptist Theological Seminary	5067	Graduate Theological Union (Berkeley; inter-religion)	925
Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary	2635	Princeton Theological Seminary	660
Fuller Seminary	2463	Duke Divinity School	543
Dallas Theological Seminary	2322	Wesley Seminary	500
Grace Theological Seminary	1773	Emory-Candler School of Theology	500
Gordon Conwell Theological Seminary	1734	Luther Seminary, St Paul	490
Asbury Theological Seminary	1710	Harvard Divinity School	453
Reformed Theological Seminary	1645	Yale Divinity School	392
Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary	1440	Perkins School of Theology	383
Talbot Theological Seminary	1235	Clermont School of Theology	351
Trinity Evangelical Divinity School	1231	Boston U School of Theology	350
Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary	1060	ILIFF School of Theology, Denver	336
Denver Seminary	1030	Vanderbilt Divinity School	247
Liberty Seminary	992	Union Theological Seminary NY	210
Western Conservative Baptist	886	McCormick Theological Seminary	200
Bethel Theological Seminary	700	Methodist Theological School of Ohio	200
Westminster Theological Seminary (incl CA)	600	Eden Seminary	200
The Master's Seminary	598	Union Presbyterian Seminary	190
Concordia Seminary St. Louis	549	Virginia Theological Seminary (Episcopal)	151
Truett Theological Seminary (Baylor)	521	Eastern Mennonite Seminary	150
Covenant Theological Seminary	349	Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary	141
Seattle School of Theology and Psychology	272	Seminary of the Southwest (Episcopal)	135
Palmer Theological Seminary	252	Wake Forest School of Divinity	121
Knox Theological Seminary	250	Church Divinity School of the Pacific (Episcopal)	116
Phoenix Seminary	244	Earlham School of Religion	100
BJU Seminary	200	Meadville Lombard Theological School	90
Beeson Divinity School	180	Sewanee (Episcopal)	79
Wesley Biblical Seminary	136	General Theological Seminary (Episcopal)	42
Reformed Episcopal Seminary	19	U of Chicago Divinity School	
Moody Theological Seminary			
Southern Evangelical Seminary			
	32093		8255
	0.795		0.205

Last Point

Either this is true, as King David wrote it 3,000 years ago, or it is not...

Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path. (Psalm 119:105 ESV)

נֶר-לְרַגְלִי דְבַרְךָ יְאֹר לְנִתְיָבְתִי Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia

Thy word is a lampe vnto my feete: and a light vnto my path (1611 KJV)

*By your words I can see where I'm going;
they throw a beam of light on my dark path. (The Message)*