

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A. The reliability of the Bible as a historical document.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

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.

Years in the making	1500
Number of writers	40
Number of Books	66
Places of Composition	Africa, Asia, Europe
Languages of Composition	Hebrew, Aramaic, Greek
Contents of Composition	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 propagation (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