

altering the canine nature. This is similar to what God did in Jesus Christ. God became man in Jesus Christ as the Ultimate Communication, "God manifested in the flesh" (1 Timothy 3:16).

Hebrews 1:1-3 states that God spoke in multiple ways, but ultimately as Jesus, "God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds. And He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature." Jesus was God's full and complete revelation to us, as Matthew said, he is "God with us," (1:23). Colossians 2:9 claims, "For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily."<sup>5</sup>

#### What is the Bible?

The Bible is often referred to as one book, yet it is more than one book, it is actually a collection of 66 books. The Old Testament (OT) has 39 books written in Hebrew, with a few chapters in Aramaic. The New Testament (NT) has 27 books written in Greek. The NT explains the OT, as Jesus said, "They testify of me" (John 3:39). This is why it is not unreasonable to quote one portion of the Bible in support of another portion, because they are different books.

God is the author and he inspired it. Humans are the writers who penned it. The Bible was written over a 1,500-year span (Moses at 1,450 BC to John at 98 AD) by over 40 writers, on three continents (Europe, Asia, Africa), from different backgrounds (royalty to fishermen), in different places (palaces to prisons), yet despite these major differences they consistently spoke God's mind about salvation through Jesus Christ. The original autograph copies do not exist because they were written on organic material, but we have excellent and reliable copies made by scribes who meticulously preserved the text.

The NT Greek word for inspiration in 2 Timothy 3:16 is literally translated as "God-breathed." It states, "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God [*theopneustos*, God-Breathed], and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness." God impressed his message upon the writer's mind without altering the writer's individuality, and the writer wrote the message without altering the integrity of God's word (2 Peter 1:21).

#### Is the Bible True?

In John 14:6, Jesus made the astounding claim, "I am . . . the truth," thus declaring himself as the embodiment of truth. Three chapters later, in John 17:17, he added, "Your word is truth," speaking of God's word, which at that time was the OT. This last statement continues to the NT, because the Greek verb denotes continuous action, meaning that, "Your Word is (continuously) truth."<sup>6</sup>

Jesus embodied "the truth" and he spoke as

God.<sup>7</sup> He did not utter useless or meaningless words and he never apologized, retracted anything, or claimed that he made a mistake when facing accusers. When it comes to truth, what makes him the ultimate communication is that he possesses both natures as God and man.

#### Manuscript Reliability

Scholars have applied the same bibliographical test to the Bible as what they use in other works in antiquity.<sup>8</sup> The second runner up to the Bible is Homer's *Iliad*, with 1,757 extant manuscripts, but it is dwarfed by the number of biblical texts. The number of Hebrew manuscripts is 42,000 for the OT and for the Greek NT, it is 5,838. That is 47,838 to 1,757, or 27 to 1 in comparison to the *Iliad*. The other ancient works (Josephus, Tacitus, Plato, Herodotus, Aristotle, etc.) are much less. This abundance of biblical manuscripts allows the most arduous and stringent examination of each word to reproduce the most reliable text.

How trustworthy are the manuscripts? The Princeton Professor Bruce Metzger discusses at length the "habits of the scribes" and the textual criticism for today's text.<sup>9</sup> Christian scholars labor hard to identify scribal errors and variants so that we can work back toward the original for a reliable text.

Dr. F. F. Bruce wrote a classic, *The New Testament Documents: Are They Reliable?* (1943), which is still in print. He solidly argues for the reliability of the NT, showing early dates for several fragments and codices, 250 to 150 AD, and possibly earlier. A fragment of John's gospel (John Rylands Library Papyrus P52) dates as early as 130 AD.<sup>10</sup>

For the OT manuscripts, the Hebrew scribe's copying method was a meticulously rigid discipline to protect it from error.<sup>11</sup> Strong support for this method comes from the 1947 discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls (DSS), dated 250 BC – 50 AD, which filled a 1,000-year gap to the earliest Hebrew OT text (950 AD). Dr. Peter Flint, a noted scholar on the DSS, claims, "The Scrolls demonstrate that your Bible is 99% accurate."<sup>12</sup> The other one-percent sharpens our understanding and these variations have been added to the marginal notes of many current translations (NKJV, NRSV, NIV, and others).

In 2015, an international team of researchers from Hebrew University and the University of Kentucky discovered a new method to read an unwrapped scroll found in 1970 at En-Gedi, Israel. It was the OT book of Leviticus, dated between 210-390 AD, but the next earlier copy was 935 AD, so now this closes a gap of 550-700 years.<sup>13</sup> Emanuel Tov, of Hebrew University, announced that it was "100-percent identical" to the Masoretic Hebrew text.<sup>14</sup> Michael Segal, of Hebrew University, also points out that each line begins and ends with exactly the same

letter as the Masoretic text after seven centuries.<sup>15</sup> That level of preservation is unheard of for any ancient document.

#### Verification Through Archaeology

Eighteenth century biblical criticism questioned the authorship, history, and sources of the OT books. This became known as a form of "higher criticism," also called the Graf-Wellhausen theory, and it was embraced by most secular and religiously liberal academic institutions in the twentieth century.<sup>16</sup> Liberal theologians began denying that Moses could write, that Sodom, Gomorrah, or Ur existed, that Israel's exodus occurred, or that Hittites and Philistines existed, and they claimed that the OT was not composed until the eighth century BC. Reason tells us that if so, then you should only find cities, people, and kingdoms common to the eighth century instead of the ones Moses and the Patriarchs encountered at 1,450 BC and beyond. Archaeology has turned these doubts around by discovering the very cities in question.

Archaeology has an excellent record for verifying biblical history. The thousands upon thousands of archaeological discoveries in the past two centuries are too vast for a tract, so I defer (in the endnote) to archaeologist Bryant G. Wood's website and two published resources, *Archaeological Study Bible* and *The Popular Handbook of Archaeology and the Bible*.<sup>17</sup> No archaeological discovery has subverted the biblical testimony, but always confirms it.

#### Verification Through Prophecy

Prophecy is from God, through a human instrument, and is often given hundreds of years before its fulfillment. It offers proof of God's existence and his communication by validating a supernatural event separated by time. It is often verified historically, as Jesus claimed for himself, "Beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself" (Luke 24:27; see also John 5:39).

There are forty-eight major messianic prophecies in the OT. The odds of Jesus fulfilling just eight messianic prophecies is one chance in 100,000,000,000,000,000, or 100 quadrillion.<sup>18</sup> Do you think that is easy? The odds of you correctly guessing the alphanumeric serial number of a single random dollar bill without first looking is 1 chance in 31,200,000,000. Try it. To equal Jesus fulfilling eight prophecies of 48, a person would have to correctly guess the serial number of 3.2 million dollar bills, or 3.12 billion characters error free. It is impossible, but Jesus did the impossible as God incarnate.

Critics argue that Jesus arranged fulfillment, so we will restrict ourselves to a few prophecies that could not have been prearranged because they involve other people's will and circumstances. For