



Can We Trust the Bible? (Grades 6-8)

Sometimes when sharing our faith, we often run into scoffers—people who do not believe the Bible (and are not shy about telling you that). During this lesson we will explore three common objections people have about the Bible and provide a tool that will increase your confidence in the Bible and strengthen your faith. Let's get started!

Since the Bible was written long ago and has been copied many times, critics have said that it must be filled with mistakes by now. Is that true? Let's take a look at our helpful tool—MAP. Each letter of MAP stands for something:

“Above all, you must understand that in the last days scoffers will come...” 2 Peter 3:3

M = Manuscripts

A

P

The word “manuscript” simply means writings or book. Since the Bible was written long before computers were invented, it was written on scrolls made of parchment (paper) and animal skins. Over time, these materials would fall apart. Because of this, a special group of people called scribes would copy the words of the original scrolls onto new scrolls. The scribes were very careful when copying the scrolls! Once they were done, they would carefully check the new scroll to ensure that it was perfect. If they found even one mistake, they would destroy the scroll and start all over again...and you thought your teacher was tough! So, did it work? Let's talk about the Dead Sea Scrolls.

In 1947 shepherds chasing a lost sheep in the caves above the Qumran Valley northwest of the Dead Sea made one of the most significant archaeological discoveries of our time—the Dead Sea Scrolls. The scrolls were found in numerous clay jars and included fragments of almost every book in the Old Testament. They also found a complete copy of the book of Isaiah! When experts compared the book of Isaiah that we have in our Bibles today to the Dead Sea scroll, it turned out to be 95% the same! God has done a great job preserving His holy Word!



The Dead Sea Scrolls were found in caves stored in jars like the one shown above.

Activity: in the space shown below, copy the scripture shown in the box and then answer the questions. Important note: please make sure your copy has the same words as the original on each line.

“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters.”

Genesis 1:1-2

After you have copied the text, complete the following tests:

	<u>original</u>	<u>copy</u>
1. Count the number of letters on each line:	_____	_____
Line #1:	_____	_____
Line #2:	_____	_____
Line #3:	_____	_____
Line #4:	_____	_____
Line #5:	_____	_____
2. Add up the total number of letters :	_____	_____
3. Count each “h” in both the original and your copy:	_____	_____
4. Count each “n” in both the original and your copy:	_____	_____
5. Count each “t” in both the original and your copy:	_____	_____

Are all of the numbers the same for the original and the copy? If so, congratulations! If not, please don't feel bad—copying things accurately requires lots of practice.

Ok, let's move on to the next objection: some people say that the Bible is riddled with myths and mistakes. They claim there is no evidence that some of the cities and people mentioned in the Bible ever existed! Let's look at our MAP:

M = Manuscripts

A = Archaeology

P

The “A” in MAP stands for archaeology. Archaeology is the study of history through ancient ruins and artifacts. Over the years archaeologists have discovered several things that provide evidence that the Bible can be trusted. Here are some examples:

Of course the Bible is not accurate—it's riddled with myths, mistakes and contradictions. It has nothing to do with historical fact!



Claim

“The Hittites mentioned in Genesis 23:10 (and elsewhere in the Bible) never existed.”

Discovery



Hattusha—Capitol City of the Hittite Nation (1906)

“The Assyrian king Sargon mentioned in Isaiah 20:1 never existed!”



The palace of Sargon was discovered about 12 miles north of Nineveh

“Caiaphas the High Priest never existed!” (Mathew 24: 2-6)



The Caiaphas Ossuary (bone box) was discovered in 1991

“Pontius Pilate never existed!” (Luke 3:1)



The Pilate Inscription dedicating a road to the Roman emperor

Claim

“Belshazzar never existed! Nabonidus was the last king of Babylon!”

Discoveries



Inscriptions on the Nabonidus Cylinders and the Nabonidus Chronical Tablet confirmed that Belshazzar was Nabonidus’s first born son and was often placed in charge of the kingdom.



Ok, it’s time for the final objection. Some people think that the Bible is just a book that contains lots of stories. How do we know that the Bible is really the Word of God? Glad you asked! Let’s look at our MAP again:

M = Manuscripts

A = Archaeology

P = Prophecy

The “P” in MAP stands for prophecy. Prophecies are predictions about the future and the Bible contains hundreds of them! Here are a couple of examples:

Prediction: The prophet Isaiah predicted a man named Cyrus would rebuild the Jewish temple (Isaiah 44:28; 54:1) 160 years before it happened!

Fulfilment:

1. Nebuchadnezzar destroyed Jerusalem and the temple in 586 BC.
2. The Persians conquered the Babylonians in around 539 BC.

The Bible is filled with fairytales – why should we believe it?



3. Shortly afterwards a Persian king named Cyrus gave the decree to rebuild the temple in Jerusalem.

Source: Bill Wilson. The Best of Josh McDowell, A Ready Defense, page 56

Prediction: The city of Tyre would be destroyed:

“Therefore, this is what the Sovereign Lord says: I am against you, Tyre, and I will bring many nations against you, like the sea casting up its waves. They will destroy the walls of Tyre and pull down her towers; I will scrape away her rubble and make her a bare rock.” Ezekiel 26:3-4

Fulfilment

1. In 573 BC, Nebuchadnezzar destroyed the mainland city of Tyre (towers destroyed). The inhabitants of Tyre escaped to an island one half mile off shore.
2. In 332 BC, Alexander the Great and his army conquered Tyre. They used the debris from the mainland city of Tyre to build a bridge to the island (Tyre will be made a bare rock). He also enlisted ships from conquered nations to defeat Tyre (many nations will be against Tyre).

Source: Bill Wilson. The Best of Josh McDowell, A Ready Defense, pages 60-63

The Bible also contains many prophecies about Jesus Christ. Some of them have already come true. Here are a few examples:

	Prophecy	Date prophesied	Fulfillment
1	Born of a virgin (Isa. 7:14)	792-722 B.C	Matt. 1:18, 24,25
2	To be the Son of God (Ps. 2:7)	1,000 B.C.	Matt. 3:17
3	From House of David (Jer. 23:5)	589 B.C.	Matt. 1:1, Luke 3:23,31
4	Born in Bethlehem (Mic. 5:2)	722 B.C.	Matt. 2:1
5	Herod kills children (Jer. 31:15)	627-585 B.C.	Matt. 2:16-18
6	To be called Immanuel (Isa. 7:14)	792-722 B.C.	Matt. 1:23
7	Spirit of the Lord upon Him (Isa 61:1)	792-722 B.C.	Luke 4:15-21
8	Preceded by a messenger (Mal. 3:1)	450-400 B.C.	Matt. 11:10
9	Would do miracles (Isa. 35:5-6)	792-722 B.C.	Matt. 9:35
10	Rides in Jerusalem on donkey (Zech. 9:9)	520 B.C.	Luke 19:35-37
11	Betrayed by a friend (Ps. 41:9)	1,000 B.C.	Matt. 10:4
12	Sold for 30 pieces of silver (Zech. 11:12)	520 B.C.	Matt. 26:15
13	Money thrown in God's house (Zech. 11:13)	520 B.C.	Matt. 27:5
14	Price given for Potter's field (Zech. 11:13)	520 B.C.	Matt. 27:7
15	Forsaken by disciples (Zech. 13:7)	520 B.C.	Matt. 26:31
16	Wounded, bruised, scourged (Isa. 53:5)	792-722 B.C.	Matt. 27:26, Luke 22:63
17	Hands and feet pierced (Ps. 22:16)	1,000 B.C.	John 20:25
18	Cast lots for clothing (Ps. 22:18)	1,000 B.C.	John 19:23-24
19	Given vinegar to drink (Ps. 69:21)	1,000 B.C.	Matt. 27:34
20	"Why hast Thou forsaken me?" (Ps. 22:1)	1,000 B.C.	Matt. 27:46
21	"Into Thy hand I commit my spirit" (Ps. 31:5)	1,000 B.C.	Luke 23:46
22	Messiah's side pierced (Zech. 12:10)	520 B.C.	John 19:34, 37
23	Messiah's bones not broken (Ps. 34:20)	1,000 B.C.	John 19:32-36
24	Buried in rich man's tomb (Isa. 53:9)	740 B.C.	Matt. 27:57-60
25	Resurrected from dead (Ps. 16:10, 30:3)	1,000 B.C.	Acts 2:31, 13:33-35
26	Ascends into heaven (Ps. 68:18)	1,000 B.C.	Acts 1:9, Eph. 4:7-10
27	Messiah is light to the Gentiles (Isa. 49:6, 60:3)	740 B.C.	Acts 13:47,48

Source: The New Evidence That Demands a Verdict, Josh McDowell, pages 164-196

As you can see, Jesus has already fulfilled many prophecies and will fulfil the remaining ones when He comes back some day. What is the probability of just eight prophecies coming true in one person?

1 chance in 10^{28} or 10,000,000,000,000, 000,000,000,000!

In other words, it is impossible—but not for God! Since God exists outside of space and time, He sees everything all at once. How do we know that the Bible is God’s Word? Hundreds of fulfilled prophecies prove it!

We believe God told the prophets to write down predictions about the future because:

1. He wanted to show us that the Bible is His Word.
2. He wanted us not to overlook the most amazing event of all time: the arrival of Jesus Christ.

Activity: look up the scriptures in the table above.

The next time you have doubts, remember MAP

M = Manuscripts: The Dead Sea Scrolls and other discoveries prove that what we have in our Bibles is essentially the same that was written thousands of years ago. God has done a great job preserving His Word.

A = Archaeology: Archaeological discoveries have confirmed many historical details found in the Bible. No one has ever discovered anything that disproves the Bible!

P = Prophecy: hundreds of fulfilled prophecies prove that the Bible is the Word of God.

We can trust the Bible!

Activity: take turns role playing as a skeptic and a believer who is trying to get his friend to believe that the Bible can be trusted.