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Discovery

Scripture & Science for Kids



"...holy men of God
spoke as they were
moved by the Holy Spirit."
— 2 Peter 1:21 —



THE SPECIAL BOOK

Television, video games, and computers are very exciting things that capture the attention of young men and women all over the world. Through them, we are able to visit far-off places, fight deadly dragons, race fast cars, and go on a million other wild adventures. But when the TV is turned off, the video games are put away, and the computer is shut down, we realize that we never actually left our rooms, the fast cars never really moved, and the dragons weren't so deadly after all. It was just pretend, not real.

But what if I told you about a book that tells of real battles between men and giants? A book that describes a real creature with fire bellowing from its mouth and smoke steaming from its nostrils. A book that tells of a sea being parted, and people walking through on dry land. This book tells of the long and gruesome war between the evil forces of darkness and the all-powerful Force of good. It is alive and exciting, but the best

part about this book is that it is real life. It can never be turned off, unplugged, or shut down. It shows how ordinary humans can be transformed into God's children.

Maybe you've heard of this book; in fact, you probably own one—the Bible. But do you know just how special this book is? Just in case you don't know what a treasure you have, let me tell you some wonderful things about The Book.

Thousands of years ago, God spoke directly to people. He did not use a book to tell them how to live; He simply spoke to them like your mother or father speaks to you. Some of those men wrote down what God said to them so that their children, grandchildren, and even future generations would know the things God wanted them to do. Over the years, the writings of these men were put together in a book that we call the Bible. God used about 40 men to write the Bible—men who were very different from one another. Some of them were very rich kings, while others were just poor shepherds. Some of the men were very well educated, while others had little education at all. They wrote during different times in history. In fact, the Bible was written over a period of about 1,600 years. God instructed Moses to write the first books of the Old Testament in approximately 1,500 B.C. And the apostle John wrote Revelation (the last book of the New Testament) about A.D. 100.

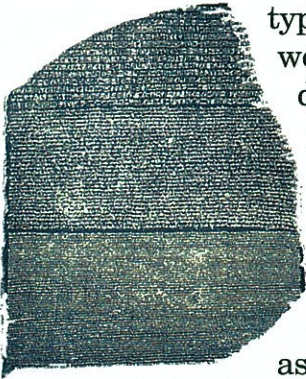
Amazingly, although many of the books of the Bible were written hundreds of years apart by different men, they still fit together so that they read like one story. Of course, they fit together so well because God was behind their writing, instructing each man what to write.

But how do we know that it has not been changed over the many hundreds of years since it was written? Is there proof that the books of the Bible we have in the 21st century are the same as the ones people had 500 or 1,000 years ago? Absolutely! And this issue of *Discovery* will show you some of that proof.

Ancient

WRITING MATERIALS

We live in a time when writing notes, typing letters, and printing books is very easy to do. If you want to write a note to someone, all you have to do is take a piece of paper from a notebook or pad, use an ink pen, pencil, or magic marker, and write until your hand hurts. Everything you need to write is at your fingertips. But how did people write letters or papers before pens, pencils, typewriters, or computers were invented? And what did they write on before paper was invented?



Can you imagine a schoolteacher asking her class to take out a clean piece of stone in order to take a spelling test? Yet, as silly as that sounds to us, flat slabs of rock probably were some of the first things used as “paper.” To write on these rock slabs, people used sharp pieces of metal or a hard stone. They would cut or engrave the words deep into the tablets of stone.

Moses used stone tablets for the Ten Commandments. We read in Exodus 34:1 that the Lord told him to “cut two tablets of stone.” Writing on stone was a way to ensure that the words were preserved for many generations.

CLAY

Clay was another material ancient writers used. Clay had many qualities that made it a good writing material. For one, it was common and inexpensive. Also, it was easy to write on. When clay is moist, it is soft and can be engraved easily using a stone or stick. Once the clay dries, the words engraved in it become permanently set.



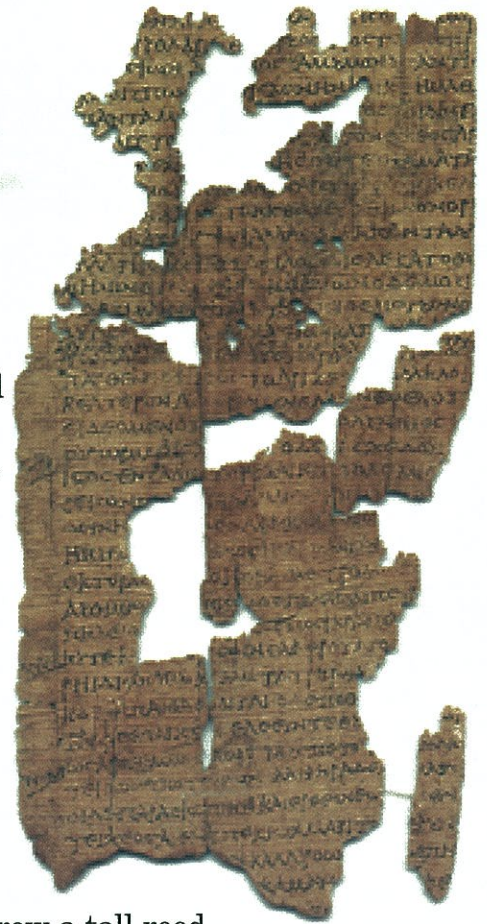
Ezekiel mentioned a clay tablet in chapter 4, verse 1, of his book in the Old Testament. And many clay tablets—thousands of years old—have been found buried in the ground.

POPULAR PAPYRUS

Near shallow lakes and rivers grew a tall reed called papyrus. It especially grew by the Nile River in Egypt. The ancient people would harvest this hollow reed, slit it down the middle, and roll it out flat. Then they would take these reeds and glue them together. After gluing many of the reeds together, a rock was used to smooth the surface of the papyrus so that people could write on it just like paper.

Papyrus was one of the most popular ways to write and send messages. The sheets were glued into long pieces that were rolled into scrolls. The scrolls mentioned in Revelation 5:1 were most likely papyrus. The apostles and other New Testament writers probably used papyrus to write their original books.

Many other materials were used to write, record, and document the past. Wood, leather, bone, and shells are a few. But the ones mentioned in this article were some of the most popular forms of writing materials. The next time we pick up a sheet of paper and ballpoint pen, or sit down to type on a computer, let's be thankful for the great progress that our ancestors made in the area of writing. And let's be thankful that these ancient people had ways to preserve the Word of God.



HOW DID WE GET THE NEW TESTAMENT?

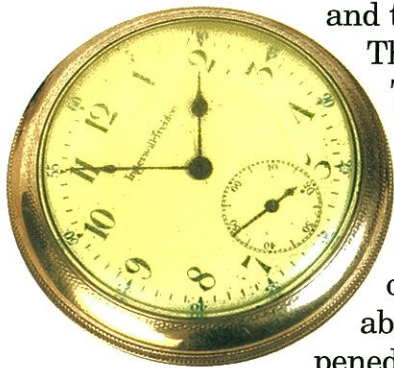
Almost 1,900 years ago, God inspired the writers of the New Testament to pen their books and letters. The actual letters and books written by these men were known as “autographs.” Unfortunately, we do not have any of the original autographs that these men wrote. Why didn’t God preserve these original documents so that we could see them and possibly touch them? We cannot be sure. Maybe He knew that some people might value the actual piece of papyrus and not the words and ideas written on it. For whatever reasons, God did not preserve the original documents that the New Testament writers produced. So, the question arises: “How do we know that the New Testament we read in the 21st century is the same one that God inspired almost 1,900 years ago?”

CHECK THE TIME

Understanding when the original documents of the New Testament were written will help us determine how well they have been preserved. The earliest events recorded in the New Testament are those surrounding the birth of Jesus. He was born in approximately A.D. 1 (we date our calendars from the birth of Christ). He lived almost 33 years, and then was crucified.

Therefore, since the New Testament tells about His life and death, it could not have been written much earlier than A.D. 33. In fact, one book (Acts) tells about things that happened around A.D. 50-60.

When, exactly, was the New Testament written? We cannot be sure of the exact date when each book was written, but we do know that the entire New Testament was written between approximately A.D. 35 and A.D. 100.



MANY MANUSCRIPTS

Thousands of manuscripts of the New Testament exist. A “manuscript” is a hand-written copy of an old document that was copied in its original language. Since the New Testament originally was written in Greek, the manuscripts also are written in Greek. Over 5,300 old manuscripts exist that contain all or part of the New Testament.

The fact that so many old copies of the New Testament exist is truly amazing, especially when it is compared to other ancient books. What is even more amazing is the time that they were produced. Some have been found that were copied only a few years after they were written. One manuscript known as the *John Ryland’s Papyrus* has portions of the gospel of John written on it. It was found in Egypt, and dates back to A.D. 130—just a few years after the New Testament was completed.

How Does the New Testament Measure Up to Other Ancient Books?

Title of Ancient Book	Date It was Written	Date of Earliest Manuscript	Number of Manuscripts
Homer’s <i>Illiad</i>	700 B.C.	Unknown	643
<i>History of Herodotus</i>	425 B.C.	A.D. 900	8
Josephus’ <i>Jewish Wars</i>	A.D. 70	A.D. 400	9
<i>Histories of Tacitus</i>	A.D. 100	A.D. 900	2
New Testament	A.D. 35-100	A.D. 125	5,366

To tell the truth, uninspired books do not have a fraction of the evidence that the New Testament does to support its accuracy. God made sure that the Bible was passed down faithfully from one generation to the next. So the next time you read the New Testament, you can be sure that it is the Word of God.

DOES THE BIBLE

Lie.?

The light shone brightly into the eyes of the suspect who was seated between two FBI special agents in black suits.

"Where were you the night of October 31, 2002?," demanded one of the agents. The suspect nervously muttered, "I already told you, I was at a Halloween party with some friends." The questioning continued: "And what exactly were you doing at the party?," asked the same demanding agent. "I bobbed for apples," retorted the suspect in his shaky voice. Many hours later, during a different questioning period, another FBI officer asked the same suspect a question that seemed to be very silly: "Have you ever bobbed for apples?" The suspect firmly replied, "No, I have never in my life bobbed for apples."

Obviously, the suspect had lied. He could not truthfully say in one breath that he bobbed for apples, and then in the next breath say that he never bobbed for apples in all his life. Either he had or he had not bobbed for apples; both his statements could not have been true.

Some people accuse the Bible of doing the exact same thing as the lying suspect. They claim that the Bible contradicts itself, which means that it says one thing in one place, and then says something totally opposite in another place.

The Christian claims that the Bible is the Word of God. Yet if it contradicts itself, then that would make God a liar. And since the Bible says that God cannot lie (Titus 1:2), then any book with contradictions in it could not have been inspired by God. Therefore, if a real contradiction can be found anywhere in the Bible, then it is not the Word of God.

The truth is, when all the facts are considered, each thing that people have found in the

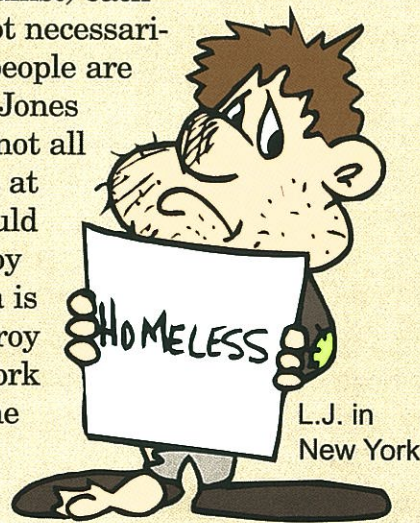
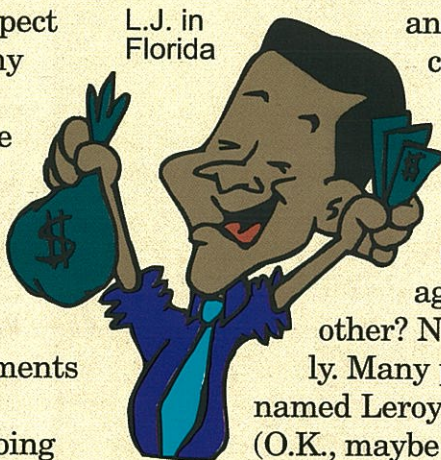
Bible that they thought was a contradiction has been shown to be something other than a true mistake. That is a powerful statement, considering the fact that no book in the world has been examined more closely than the Bible.

Generally, most of the things that people think are mistakes in the Bible can be solved by answering three simple questions: (1) Is the same person or thing being considered?; (2) Is the same time period being discussed?; and (3) Is the same sense under consideration?

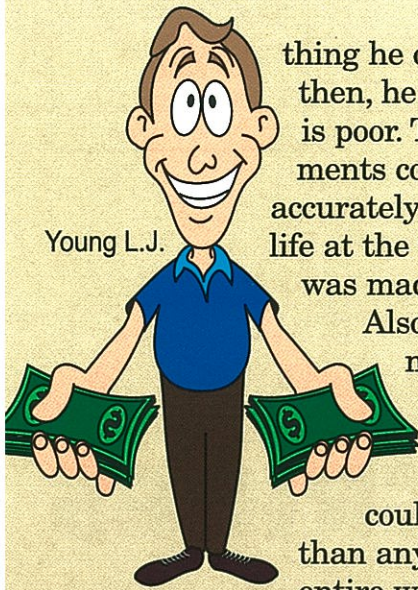
Think with me. Suppose that someone says, "Leroy Jones is rich," and "Leroy Jones is poor." Do those two statements contradict (go against) each other? Not necessarily. Many people are named Leroy Jones (O.K., maybe not all that many, but at least two). It could be that the Leroy Jones in Florida is rich, but the Leroy Jones in New York is poor. The same person or thing must be under consideration.

Further, the same time period must be under consideration. Leroy Jones could have made a fortune in his early twenties as an oil tycoon and been very rich, but after a terrible stock market crash, he could have lost every-

L.J. in Florida



L.J. in New York



Young L.J.

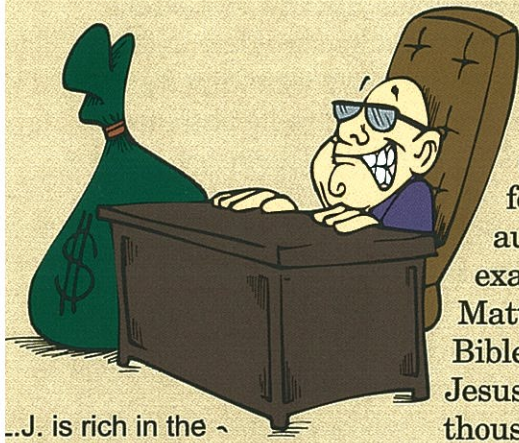
thing he owned. At one time, then, he was rich, but now he is poor. The two statements could have been accurately describing his life at the time each was made.

Also, the statements must be talking about the same sense. Leroy Jones could have more money than anyone else in the entire world, but if he is not

following God, then he is poor. On the other hand, he could have absolutely no money, but be rich in spiritual blessings. After all, "Has God not chosen the poor of this world to be rich in faith" (James 2:5)? Answering these three questions helps tremendously in resolving the contradiction controversy.

Sometimes, people accuse the Bible of making

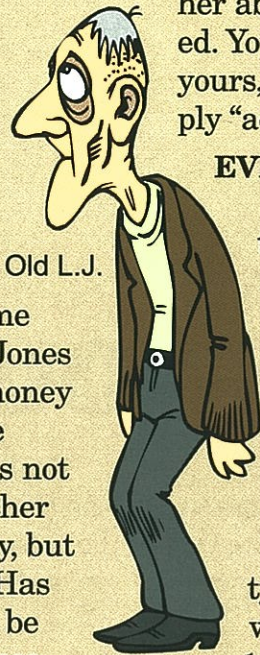
mistakes when the same story is told differently by different authors. For example, in Matthew 14:21 the Bible says that Jesus fed about five thousand men, and



Old L.J. is rich in the world's eyes

that He also fed women and children. But in Mark 6:44, it says that He fed about five thousand men. Mark never mentions the women and children. Is that a mistake? No, of course not. Did He feed about 5,000 men? Yes, and that makes Mark correct. Did Jesus feed about 5,000 men, along with some women and children? Yes, which makes Matthew right, too. Just because one account "adds" some things does not mean that the accounts contradict each other.

To illustrate this point, suppose you and your mother went to the mall. When you came home, your sister asked what you did at the



Old L.J.

mall. You told her about playing video games and eating cinnamon rolls. Your mother told her about all the good clothing stores you visited. Your mother's details are different from yours, but they are not contradictory. She simply "added" some things to your story.

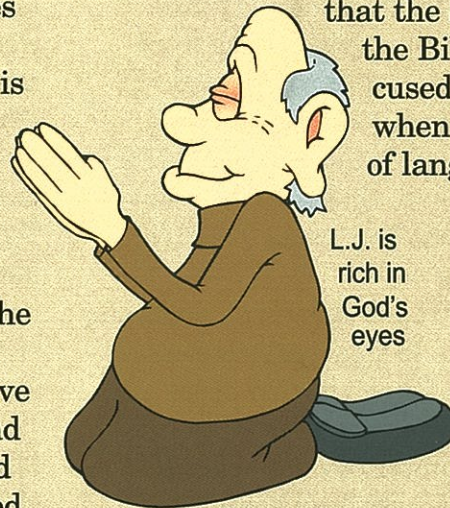
EVERYDAY CONVERSATION

Suppose that the weatherman comes on the television and announces, "the Sun will rise at 6:03 a.m. on Saturday." Even though the Earth rotates and the Sun really is not rising at all, we have no problem understanding his comment. We call this "phenomenal" language—language that is used in everyday speech to refer to ordinary phenomena.

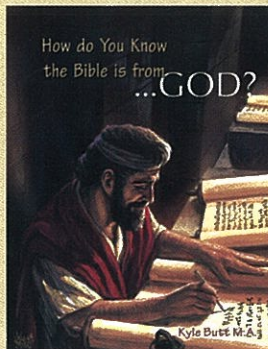
On occasion, the Bible also uses this type of language. In Psalm 50:1, the writer described the Sun as rising, and in 1 Corinthians 15:6 Paul described some of the Christians who had died as having "fallen asleep." No one would accuse the weatherman of making a scientific mistake when he says

that the Sun will rise. Likewise, the Bible should not be accused of making mistakes when it uses the same type of language.

No one has ever found one real contradiction in the Bible. Isn't it wonderful that God has given us the Bible without any contradictions in it?



L.J. is rich in God's eyes

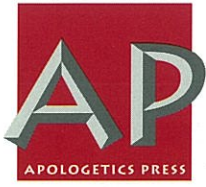


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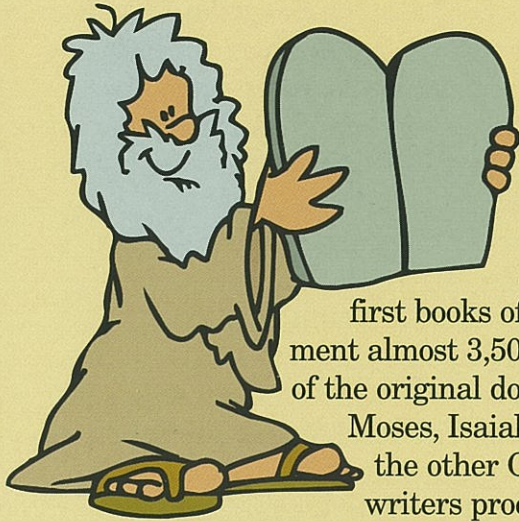
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SERIOUS SCRIBES

Moses began to write the first books of the Old Testament almost 3,500 years ago. All of the original documents that Moses, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and the other Old Testament writers produced have been

destroyed. We have only copies of their writings. So, how do we know that the original books were copied correctly? Can we be sure that the book of Genesis that we read in the 21st century is the same book that God inspired Moses to write 3,500 years ago? Yes, we can be sure that the Old Testament that we read today has been copied accurately. Let's look at the reasons why.

Sometimes kids get in trouble at school, and for punishment they are made to copy pages out of the dictionary or encyclopedia. Copying such pages is boring. But suppose you lived in a time when the printing press or the computer did not exist. If each school needed a dictionary, how would so many copies be produced? Well, someone would have to sit down and copy the original by hand. Such a person was called a scribe. Scribes copied almost any type of document imaginable—business receipts, legal documents, marriage certificates, and more.

Scribes took their jobs very seriously because the slightest mistake could make a big difference. For instance, suppose that a person bought a piece of land for 20 gold pieces. If the scribe did not pay close attention to his work, he might write 2 gold pieces or 200 gold pieces, drastically altering the original price.

But there was one group of scribes who took their jobs more seriously than all the rest. Those ancient scribes who copied the Old Testament went to great lengths to make sure they made no mistakes. They knew that they were copying the Word of God, and they wanted to be absolutely sure that it was done right. For this reason, they made many rules concerning copies of the Old Testament. These rules included using a special kind of ink, making sure that each letter of a word was spaced exactly a hairsbreadth (the thickness of one hair) from its neighbor, and never writing even the smallest letter from memory.

One group of scribes, who were known as the Masoretes, made even stricter rules than the ones above. They counted every single verse, word, and letter of the Old Testament books that they copied. They also counted how many times a letter was used and which verse, word, and letter should be exactly in the middle of the book. The Masoretes were some of the world's greatest perfectionists.

ANSWERS

ACTIVITY PAGES MAY BE COPIED FOR MULTIPLE STUDENT USE

Fill in the Blanks: 1. 1,600; 2. papyrus; 3. manuscript; 4. scribes; 5. read; 6. lie; 7. phenomenal; 8. Masoretes
 True or False: 1. F; 2. T; 3. F; 4. T; 5. T; 6. T; 7. F; 8. F

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