

Bible

(Rev. 05/25)

Are babies perfect?

Okay, for the sake of this question, I'm assuming that another way to put this is, "Do babies / newborns go to Heaven if they die?" (If not, find me afterward and I'll try again.) Nothing like a HUGE theological question to play with! This is actually part of a bigger question called "Original Sin". Original Sin says that we are cursed with sin from the moment we are conceived and are sinful at birth. The primary "proof text" for Original Sin comes from Psalm 51:5:

For I was born a sinner – yes, from the moment my mother conceived me. - Psalm 51:5 (NLT)

Pretty cut-and-dried, right? We're all sinners from conception...except that this verse is slightly mistranslated from the Hebrew. A better way to put it is, "*I was conceived in sin.*" In other words, my parents were not doing the right thing when they had me! This doesn't say anything about me, personally, but it does say a LOT about my parents!

While there are a lot of different Bible verses I could quote, I have only three:

You made all the delicate, inner parts of my body and knit me together in my mother's womb. Thank you for making me so wonderfully complex! Your workmanship is marvelous—how well I know it. - Psalm 139:13-14 (NLT)

This first verse says that God created our body. Now we know that God cannot create anything "bad", so we can't inherit sin from God creating our body.

Yes, remember your Creator now while you are young, before the silver cord of life snaps and the golden bowl is broken. Don't wait until the water jar is smashed at the spring and the pulley is broken at the well. For then the dust will return to the earth, and the spirit will return to God who gave it. - Ecclesiastes 12:6-7 (NLT)

This second verse says that God gives us our spirit...which, again, cannot be sinful because a Holy (Perfect) God can't create something sinful.

In other words, we have a sinless body and a sinless spirit – both given by a God who CANNOT sin – so we have to assume then that babies are sinless. If that's the case, then a baby who dies does so without sinning and, because of that, they get to go to Heaven.

The final verse that I want to look at is:

And the LORD was pleased with the aroma of the sacrifice and said to himself, "I will never again curse the ground because of the human race, even though everything they think or imagine is bent toward evil from childhood. I will never again destroy all living things." - Genesis 8:21 (NLT)

God uses the phrase "from childhood", not "at conception" or "from birth". The Hebrew word here (Strong's: 5271) means literally "early life"; not "in the womb" or "childbirth". In other words, God says that we are bent toward evil from a young age; NOT from before we were born. Based on this it appears that there's a time in our early childhood when we can choose to either follow or reject God.

After that point, God holds us accountable for the choices we make because we CHOOSE to sin!

If you want to learn a LOT more than you've probably ever wanted to know about this topic, ask me. I had to write a very, very long paper on this for a Bible Study. I'll kill a few trees to get you a copy if you really, really want one. (Not sure why you would, but there you go!)

Note: The longer paper is now included in the addendum to the NDQ binder.

Are there books that weren't included in the Bible?

Okay, this may come as a surprise to some of you, but there ARE other books that weren't included in your Bible.

The most common ones people hear about are the Apocrypha or “Deuterocanonical” books. These include: Baruch, Judith, 1 & 2 Maccabees, Sirach, Tobit, Wisdom, etc., as well as additions to books like Daniel. The Nation of Israel had even more books, like the Book of Enoch which some say is quoted in the Book of Jude that IS in your Bible. (Enoch is dealt with in the question, “Since Jude quotes the Book of Enoch...”)

Finally, there are a lot of other books that aren't in the Catholic, Protestant, or Jewish traditions, and are usually called the pseudepigrapha, or “false writings”.

So, why were books left out of your Bible?

First, let's deal with the pseudepigrapha. These are written by people who claim to be the “real” Peter, Paul, John, Moses, Noah, etc. - but weren't. (Basically, the thought is that if you **believed** that a document was written by Noah, it MUST be true, right?)

- In “The Gospel of Peter”, Jesus isn't a physical being...basically He's a ghost who doesn't even leave footprints on the ground. Two angels, whose heads reach into the clouds, go into the tomb to get Jesus. A cross hops around like a pogo stick at this time. Also, it's strangely similar to other stories that were written about 100 years after Peter had died!
- Another example is “The Secret Gospel Of Mark”. This “gospel” has Jesus in a seemingly homosexual relationship with a young man. The person who discovered it could never produce the document – it vanished! Instead, he took photographs of it which, when the handwriting of the document was compared to the handwriting of the man who “discovered” it, they matched! (Amazing that a scribe in the 1800s could have copied a modern man's handwriting, right?) Strangely enough, the man who discovered “Secret Mark” was also gay...and he found a document that said Jesus was gay...and no one can examine that document...

The list of problems with the pseudepigrapha goes on for an embarrassingly long time after this...

Some people – even supposed Christians – say we should accept these as equal to the books in the Bible, even though we can show that they're false writings. (I would say that the phrase “false writings” should automatically disqualify them, but that's just me!)

Oh, and just so you know, this isn't a "new" problem. In Galatians 1:6-10, Paul has to write to them to counter a "false Gospel" that's going around. The Galatians heard about the "new message" and they immediately began to walk away from the truth they knew to follow a lie!

Second, let's deal with the Apocrypha (literally "hidden away"). First, you need to know that there IS some debate as to whether some of these are apocryphal or pseudepigraphal. (I think it's splitting hairs, but okay.)

These books, especially the Old Testament ones, were preserved by the nation of Israel because of the history they supposedly taught. To compare it to our modern day, it's like the story of how George Washington threw a coin across the Potomac River or Abraham Lincoln chopped down a cherry tree and then confessed to it. We KNOW those stories aren't true, but they're added to other parts that ARE true to add some "color" to the tale.

Example of the errors you can encounter are:

- Baruch 6:2 says the Jews would serve in Babylon for seven generations where Jer. 25:11 says it was for 70 years. "And this whole land shall be a desolation and a horror, and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years."
- Tobit 6:5-7 tells of how an angel teaches Tobias magical spells to drive away evil spirits...in direct contradiction with EVERYTHING in the Old Testament that says, "Do NOT do magic spells!"

So, are they interesting? Certainly. Do they contain some valid history? Absolutely. Could there be truth in them? In small ways, sure! Are they canonical? Probably not. Should you base your theology on them? No! (Again, if it has errors, it probably shouldn't be canon.)

And this leads us to one last question: What should we make of Jude supposedly quoting the Book of Enoch? Doesn't that mean it should be on the same level as all the rest?

The answer, quite simply, is "no". Let me give you an example. There is a great quote out there that says, "Words build bridges into unexplored regions." What I take this to mean is that we can use words to make new friends, to build new relationships, and to even create new realities. (For example, the abolitionists used words to end slavery and change their world.) Pretty good, right?

The guy who said this quote? Adolph Hitler.

Now, if I were to use this quote to talk about building relationships, does that automatically mean I subscribe to everything Hitler said and did? Not remotely! It just means that this one phrase, one time, fits a specific purpose.

If Jude is actually quoting from the Book of Enoch, he's simply saying, "This quote that many of you are familiar with fits my argument. I'm just using something you're familiar with. That's all."

I hope this helps you to understand! Great question, by the way!

Because Jude quotes the Book of Enoch, does that mean that it should be in the Bible?

This is a continuation of the question, “Are there books that weren’t included in the Bible?”. Recently, I was challenged to look deeper into this topic, and I felt it important to share what I’ve found.

Before we get into that, though, we need to actually expand upon this question. Why? Well, Jude may not have been quoting from one extra-Biblical book...but two! According to some early church leaders, Jude verse 9 is quoting from a book called the Assumption Of Moses, and verses 14-15 are from the Book of Enoch. (<https://www.evidenceunseen.com/bible-difficulties-2/nt-difficulties/jude/jude-9-14-15-why-does-jude-quote-the-assumption-of-moses-v-9-and-the-book-of-enoch-v-14-15/>)

Okay, so now that we’ve made it way MORE confusing, let’s try to figure out what’s going on! As I was researching the answer to this, one of the articles I read had this to say:

At the beginning, let the following point be emphasized. In logic there is a concept known as “the law of rationality.” Simply stated it is this: One should draw only such conclusions as are warranted by the evidence. To go further, is to abuse the evidence.

Now note carefully the actual facts that are set forth in this passage. There was a man of the early earth whose name was Enoch. He was the seventh generation from Adam, the first man (1 Cor. 15:45). Enoch uttered a prophecy of judgment against ungodly people who had spoken against God.

Observe further, by way of contrast, what is not contained in this text. Nothing is said about a “book of Enoch.” There is no phrase such as, “it is written in the book of Enoch.” Nothing at all is indicated about any literary production. (<https://christiancourier.com/articles/did-jude-quote-from-the-book-of-enoch>)

So, Jude doesn’t say, “According to the Book of Enoch...” Instead, what Jude says is, “Enoch, the seventh generation from Adam, said...”

Why does this matter? Jude could actually be quoting from another source other than the Book of Enoch! (If you read Jude 14-15 and then read Enoch 1:9, there ARE differences!) Also, we know that there is “lost material” out there because of Acts 20:35. Let me show you:

And I have been a constant example of how you can help those in need by working hard. You should remember the words of the Lord Jesus: ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive.’” - Acts 20:35 (NLT)

The problem with this? According to the Gospels, Jesus never said this! Does that mean that Paul got it wrong? Not remotely! There are “oral traditions” (stories passed by word-of-mouth) as well as the possibility of other books that we don’t have, and each could have contained this quote! In either case, Paul says it like his audience would know it!

What does this mean in Jude’s case? Simply put, Jude may be quoting from a **tradition** that existed at

the time, rather than a discredited book.

Next, you need to know that Paul, in the New Testament, quotes from several Greek writers: Arastus (Acts 17:28), Menander (1 Corinthians 15:33), and Epimenides (Titus 1:12). Despite using these sources, no one makes the claim that these writers should be included in the Bible!

Also, you have to know that the Old Testament quotes non-Biblical books, including the Book of Jasher (Joshua 10:13, 2 Samuel 1:18), the Acts of Solomon (1 Kings 11:41), and the Annals of King David (1 Chronicles 27:24). Again, these were rejected for use in the Bible due to errors, but it doesn't mean that there isn't ANY truth in them!

Finally, there's the possibility that part of the Book of Enoch is from an ancient tradition and that Enoch actually spoke some of the words recorded in the Book. But, even if part of the Book of Enoch is "truthful", it doesn't mean that the entire thing is.

We have precedents in the Bible where someone says something that IS from God, despite their non-Godly actions! Balaam was an Old Testament prophet who is paid to curse the Nation of Israel and who, instead, ends up prophesying about the Messiah, the Savior. (Numbers 24:17) Caiaphas, the High Priest, has an accurate prophecy about the death of Jesus. (John 11:51) These are two examples of people who are NOT truly following God – Balaam is a "prophet for hire" and Caiaphas kills Jesus, the Son of God – but they're still correct at least once!

So, why would Jude quote such a book then? Jude might quote it because it was a common book, one that his audience would be familiar with. Or, another – and I think better – argument is that Jude is using a book that his enemies cite against them. (It's like using a quote from an atheist to debate an atheist!)

Or, since it's NOT specified and the words used differ between the Bible and Enoch, Jude may not be quoting the Book of Enoch at all...

By the way, notice that I've been making the arguments concerning the Book of Enoch; however, you need to understand that the Assumption of Moses falls under these same arguments, as well! (On a quick side note, we don't have this section of the Assumption of Moses, so we're forced to rely on Jude – and the early church fathers – for this information!)

Couldn't God use some other form of communication to give the world his word other than written text? Even if writing it down was the best way to go about things (which I doubt) why write it in such a way that causes so much dissension and confusion?

I'm not really certain how to answer this question. To begin with, what would be acceptable? If I showed you a video that someone supposedly made 2,000 years ago, would you believe it? No. Why? Because they didn't make videos 2,000 years ago!

Sorry, I'm NOT trying to be sarcastic here; I just don't know what to say. What I can tell you is:

Originally, the words of the Bible were NOT written down, but existed as an "oral tradition". That doesn't mean much to us, because our culture doesn't understand what it is. To the Jews, they listened

to the words, they studied them, and they repeated them.

Later on, around 1,400-1,500 BC (or so), Moses would have written down the first words. (Before that, Genesis existed as only an oral tradition.) Even after they were written down, though, the texts were still committed to memory. In fact, if you were a priest and made a mistake in quoting – from memory – any part of the Torah (the first five books), you were basically sent back to grade school to start over! Because of that, oral traditions have a pretty solid track-record of successfully storing and transmitting information.

Even into the New Testament times, the texts were not written down immediately. In fact, the earliest written Gospels were recorded sometime between around 45 AD – 90 AD. In modern times, we would be horrified at that much of a gap between the events and the written records. In a culture that valued memorization and storytelling, it would have resulted in almost no change whatsoever.

Now, as for dissension and confusion, much of that is the fault of people, not the text. I have a copy of a Bible that was written by white supremacists. (I have a friend who is one and who I like, despite the fact that I'm part Native American...) In it, any time they could translate a word for "clean" as "white", they did so! Is that legitimate? Well, kind of... Somewhere, at some time, someone in earth's history used that word to mean white. You have to ignore the thousands of other times when it means "clean" to get there, but you CAN find the word "white" being used somewhere. On the whole, is this an acceptable way to translate a document? Nope!

I also had a copy – not sure where it is now – of a Bible written by feminists. They removed all reference to God or Jesus being "male". There are no male pronouns – he, him, his – and they removed any reference to men. Is this acceptable? You can easily argue that God is not a "man" in the sense that I am, but if God uses male pronouns to refer to Himself, do you have the right to change it? Probably not...

The problem is that we want the Bible to conform to our views! We want God to be made in our images, not the other way around!

We get into that with translations of the Bible, as well. I know a man that argues that only the King James Version of the Bible is the correct one. In fact, he has even said, "If it was good enough for Jesus, it's good enough for me!" (We'll ignore the fact that King James had the translation done in the 1600's and Jesus walked the earth WAY before that!) This man uses HIS Bible to try to force HIS views on others. This isn't from God; it's humans...

And, I would argue that no matter how God encoded His message, we humans would find a way to force it into the language that matches what we want to hear. Or, like many people, we would ignore it altogether...

How did the Bible stay together through all those years and get translated perfectly to this day? Or is it not?

To answer this one, I'm not going to appeal to the Bible itself; after all, we're trying to find out if what's written in the Bible is accurate, right? If I used the Bible to try to prove the Bible, the argument would go something like this: "The Bible is true! Why? Because it says that it is!" Instead of doing that, let's

take a look at some other experts:

According to Bruce Metzger, an expert on the texts of the New Testament, the earliest surviving fragment from the Bible is from the Gospel of John and was written around 100 A.D. This is a copy, which means that the original texts are much earlier than this fragment! To compare that with the next closest contender, we have scraps of Homer's Iliad that are from 1,000 years after he originally wrote it!

Next, we have to compare the number of manuscripts. Homer's Iliad has 650 copies of it, some of which are just small pieces and they're all 1,000 years after Homer lived! The New Testament has over 24,000 copies in existence; some are fragments and others are complete manuscripts!

Most experts consider that the Iliad we have is the way it was meant to be written. If they can say that based on 650 pieces that were written 1,000 years after Homer lived, how confident can we be with 24,000 manuscripts written within 50 – 300 years after the originals?

By the way, that's not counting all the references to the writings mentioned by early church leaders in about 150 A.D. Their testimony covers all of the major themes in the Bible, meaning that from just them alone we can be certain of what the Bible actually says!

Barry's Note: I wrote this answer before I read The Case for the Real Jesus by Lee Strobel. If you want a MUCH more in-depth, detailed handling of this topic, I would strongly encourage you to read this book!

How do you know where to look in the Bible for specific answers?

I love this question because of the response I received when I answered it!

Most Bibles – unless they're "giveaway" Bibles – tend to have an Index in the back. In fact, mine has an index, maps, a section called "Verses To Read When You're Feeling...", and more.

When I showed those resources to the young lady who asked this, she became mad. I asked what was wrong, and she said, "You mean I've been carrying the answers around with me this whole time?" She went on to be the greatest proponent of Biblical resources that I've ever met...

Next, there's a super-secret (not really!) website that you can visit: <https://www.gotquestions.org/> When I'm faced with a question and I'm trying to find the exact wording I want to use, I frequently go there. Is it perfect? Nope. Is it very, very, very good? Yep!

Finally, you can ask me or any other Pastor. We usually have books of resources that can help you out!

How much of the Bible is symbolic? How are we supposed to believe something that constantly shifts from facts to story?

Another good question! The general rule of thumb is:

**The Bible is supposed to be interpreted literally, except where
such a view would contradict other parts of the Bible.**

For example, the Bible says there were six literal days of Creation. At one time I used to think it was symbolic, until someone explained to me some of the issues with that view. If it IS symbolic, how do you explain that there was “day” for six million years and then “night” for six million years? It doesn’t make sense. Also, other verses refer to it:

For in six days the LORD made the heavens, the earth, the sea, and everything in them; but on the seventh day he rested. That is why the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and set it apart as holy. - Exodus 20:11 (NLT)

So, if I decide that six days is symbolic, what do I do with this verse? Well, it must be symbolic, too, right? Or, it’s wrong and I have to throw it out... (By the way, I can give you an excellent book by a friend of mine, Jay Seegert, who has studied this extensively!)

Where it can be tricky, is when you get to the Books of Poetry (Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes and the Song of Solomon). In these books, you DO get overblown, poetic imagery:

I observed everything going on under the sun, and really, it is all meaningless—like chasing the wind. - Ecclesiastes 1:14 (NLT)

Did Solomon REALLY see everything that is happening everywhere in the world? No. And clearly he doesn’t mean for us to take it literally; it’s like saying, “I never win at Euchre.” Never? Really? In this case, it’s hyperbole, exaggerated speech. The truthful way to say it would be, “I usually don’t win at Euchre...”

Let me give you another example:

Their tongues sting like a snake; the venom of a viper drips from their lips. Interlude – Psalm 140:3 (NLT)

So, wait! Does this mean that the guy who wrote this song actually knew people who had “tongues” that could “sting” and that had “venom”? Nope! But did the guy who wrote this song know people who used their words to cut people down? To lie? To hurt others? Yep! Welcome to poetry!

The final category that’s open to interpretation is...prophecy! In many different places, God gives people a glimpse of Heaven, a glimpse of the future, and other stuff. Then, these poor humans had to try to write down what they saw. Let me give you an example:

The locusts looked like horses prepared for battle. They had what looked like gold crowns on their heads, and their faces looked like human faces. They had hair like women’s hair and teeth like the teeth of a lion. They wore armor made of iron, and their wings roared like an army of chariots rushing into battle. They had tails that stung like scorpions, and for five months they had the power to torment people. - Revelation 9:7-10 (NLT)

So, are these literal locusts? Or, is John, the author of the Book of Revelations, trying to describe something he can’t comprehend? Imagine if you took John, a man from the first century, and had him

walk the streets of New York today; you then show him television and movies; and, to end the day, you take him to a military firing range and let him watch helicopters unleash Hellfire missiles on tanks. You then return him to his own time with instructions for him to write what he saw.

What words would he use to describe New York? The sun shining off the skyscrapers, Times Square, or even the slums? What words would he use to describe what he saw on television? How could he describe the movie “Star Wars”, the TV show “The Walking Dead”, or a commercial with animated characters? Finally, how would he describe modern warfare?

John simply doesn’t have the words to describe what he sees. Could it be literal? Certainly! Could it be John’s attempt to describe something quite literally indescribable? Definitely!

Otherwise, I think when Jesus is walking through a field...I think He...walked...through a field. Why? Because the literal interpretation is the one that makes the most sense...

If the Old Testament is relevant, why aren’t the Old Testament laws relevant, especially since Jesus didn’t come to abolish the law?

All right, the main passage for this is:

“Don’t misunderstand why I have come. I did not come to abolish the law of Moses or the writings of the prophets. No, I came to accomplish their purpose. I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not even the smallest detail of God’s law will disappear until its purpose is achieved. So if you ignore the least commandment and teach others to do the same, you will be called the least in the Kingdom of Heaven. But anyone who obeys God’s laws and teaches them will be called great in the Kingdom of Heaven. - Matthew 5:17-19 (NLT)

Jesus tells us that we need to respect the laws, but the question is: Which ones?

If you read Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, etc., there are hundreds of rules that God gives to the Israelites! These include laws of dress, laws of conduct, laws on slavery, the 10 Commandments in Exodus 20, etc. Does Jesus mean for us to literally follow EVERY law that’s listed in the Old Testament?

To be fair, this isn’t a new debate. The early church in the Book of Acts struggles with this very question. After some debate between the Jewish Christians who argue that all laws are to be kept, and the Gentile Christians who argue that only the rules laid down by Jesus need to be kept, they reach a compromise in Acts 15:

“And so my judgment is that we should not make it difficult for the Gentiles who are turning to God. Instead, we should write and tell them to abstain from eating food offered to idols, from sexual immorality, from eating the meat of strangled animals, and from consuming blood. For these laws of Moses have been preached in Jewish synagogues in every city on every Sabbath for many generations.” - Acts 15:19-21 (NLT)

Does this mean that Gentiles (non-Jewish people) only need to obey four things? No. This in no way negates what Jesus taught, nor does it say that Gentile believers can live any way they want as long as they obey these four laws. This is a compromise between two separate groups; nothing more.

The next place to look is both the Book of Romans and the Book of Galatians. In these books, Paul wrestles with the Jewish laws as they relate to the Gentiles. The Jewish Christians yell at Paul because he's too lenient with the Gentiles and that they need to follow both Jesus Christ AND the Law of Moses; the Gentiles are yelling at Paul because they want to be Christians, not Jews. In the middle of this controversy in Galatians, Paul says this:

So I say, let the Holy Spirit guide your lives. Then you won't be doing what your sinful nature craves. The sinful nature wants to do evil, which is just the opposite of what the Spirit wants. And the Spirit gives us desires that are the opposite of what the sinful nature desires. These two forces are constantly fighting each other, so you are not free to carry out your good intentions. But when you are directed by the Spirit, you are not under obligation to the law of Moses. - Galatians 5:16-18 (NLT)

According to Paul, as long as you're a Christian, you're not bound by the Law of Moses. But, doesn't this contradict what Jesus said? Actually, not really... You need to understand that the debate is not whether or not to keep "the law", but which set of laws we're supposed to keep. If you study the Bible, you'll see that there isn't just one law, there's three!

The first is what's called **Civil Laws**. Civil Laws are the laws that the nation of Israel created to govern itself. These include such things as what to do if a man is gored by an ox, the rules on slavery, etc. and are rules that are meant to apply only to the nation of Israel, not everyone.

The second is what's called **Ceremonial Laws**. Ceremonial Laws include the roles of the Levites, dietary restrictions, clothing requirements, feasts and observances (e.g. Passover), etc. These are commands issued by God specifically to the nation of Israel, who was to be His priests and are meant only to apply to those who are Jewish, not everyone.

The final is called **Moral Laws**. Moral Laws are the laws that God intended for all people, at all times, in all place. These include rules like taking care of widows and orphans, providing equal justice to all, not murdering, not committing adultery, loving our neighbor, and loving God.

Based on the debate in Acts and the comments from Paul in Galatians, we can see that the debate is NOT over whether or not the Gentiles were to obey the Moral Laws, because that was expected. We can also see that the debate is not over the Civil Laws of Israel, since much of Paul's audience did NOT live in Israel. The debate, therefore, is about the Ceremonial Laws, and that's what Paul says that Gentiles are exempt from.

This fulfills Jesus' requirements that the law shall not pass away, but also allows for both James and Paul to confidently say that the Ceremonial Laws no longer apply.

On a final note, we need to realize that we can read through all of the laws – civil, ceremonial, and moral – and learn something from them about the way that we're to conduct ourselves, relate to those

around us, and follow God, even if we don't have to obey them.

Is it possible that important events have NOT been added to the Bible?

John 21:25 tell us:

Jesus also did many other things. If they were all written down, I suppose the whole world could not contain the books that would be written. - John 21:25 (NLT)

If you think about it, the four Gospels sum up the 33 years of Jesus' life in four small books! Also, if you read the sermons and sayings of Jesus straight through without any breaks, it would take a very short time! There had to be more than that, right?

Is there a good way to know which of the stories are parables and which are actual history?

Hmm... This one is tough. Why do I say that? Because I had a Jewish friend once teach me something about parables. In Luke 16:-19-31 we find the story of "The Rich Man and Lazarus". Now I was always taught that this was meant to describe what Hell was like. I mean, it's pretty obvious, right?

Well, a Jewish man read it and explained to me that I was wrong. When he reads it, he sees a clear rebuke to the Jewish people for denying Christ. The whole fact that Lazarus is carried to "Abraham's side" – the Pharisees claimed Abraham as their "father" – the talk about the five brothers, etc.

He explained, in detail, how a Jewish man, especially someone who was religious, would have read that in the first century, and it has literally NOTHING to do with Hell! Instead, it's all about how the Jews have rejected Jesus and even if a man rose from the dead, they still wouldn't believe it! (Remember: When Jesus DID rise from the dead, the religious leaders covered it up.)

So, I'm not sure that I'm the best one to answer this because I had this story wrong for literally decades until a Jewish man taught me the meaning of the Christian Bible.

But, since I'm not the best one to teach you, and since I promised you answers, here we go:

- First, go to gotquestions.org/parables-in-the-Bible.html. It gives a pretty good list of parables to get you started.
- Second, get a book that lists the parables of the Bible. GotQuestions.org recommends All The Parables Of The Bible, by Herbert Lockyer. Note: I have NEVER read this book, nor do I have it in my library. This is a recommendation from GotQuestions.org, not me. (But, if it's any good, let me know so I can add it to my library!)

Please keep in mind that any resource you use is a human opinion. Why do I say that? Because, among Bible experts, there IS some debate over what is a parable and what is an actual piece of history. (Many are agreed upon, but not all.)

Is there an English translation that REALLY follows the original Hebrew?

Unfortunately, I get this question a lot. The reason I say “unfortunately” is because there are a lot of people out there who are convinced that only one translation – usually the one they use – is the only “TRUE” translation of God’s Word. (If that’s you, assume that I just totally agreed with your choice and skip the rest of these words.)

As for which is the most accurate, here are my thoughts and opinions. Please remember that these are ONLY my thoughts and opinions:

- ESV* - Is probably the most accurate “modern” translation, but uses a LOT of big words. A lot of new Christians or young students have trouble with it.
- HCSB* - I actually just got a copy of one and know next-to-nothing about it.
- KJV* - Does a great job with the poetry, but the language can be difficult to understand.
- NASB* - A LONG time ago I had one of these. It did a good job of translating “word for word”; but it also was very difficult to read. The nice thing is that my Bible provided footnotes which gave you different possible interpretations for more complicated words.
- NIV* - Good translation, but it focuses on “thought for thought” rather than word for word. Because of that, they occasionally go off from the original languages.
- NKJV* - Keeps the poetry and strives for a “word for word” translation, even when it’s confusing. (Some Greek and Hebrew words don’t make sense in English.)
- NLT* - Good translation, but also went “thought for thought”. In my opinion they did better than NIV, but there are still some differences from the original texts.

In the end, the “best” one is the one that you will actually use. I think all of the “mainstream” Bibles do a good job of rendering the original texts into English and I don’t believe that any of the most common Bibles are “wrong” in their translation. Also, I don’t think that reading one over another will give you the “best” understanding. (If you really want to be thorough, they DO make side-by-side Bibles which feature different translations that can be read at the same time!)

For me? I prefer the NLT simply because it’s accurate enough and it’s very easy to read.

One person once tried to prove the Bible wrong to me by bringing up Mark 16:17-18 saying that it doesn't happen and said drink poison now or give up on the thought of the Bible always being true. I pointed to him to some Biblegateway sources because I did not know how to reply. Is there anything that I could have explained?

Yep! First of all, say something like, “We don’t raise the dead, miraculously heal people, make the lame to walk anymore, etc., so part of that no longer applies! Anyhow, now back to the state of your soul and where you stand before God...” ☺

Now, we get to the bigger problem: did it ever apply in the first place? If you open your Bibles and look at Mark 16, you'll probably see a note there that says something like, "The earliest and most reliable manuscripts do not have anything past Mark 16:8."

Wait, what? The Bible has been tampered with? Does that mean the whole thing should be thrown out? Nope! If you notice, Mark 16 ends with Jesus rising from the dead! That means that we have the whole of the Gospel presentation in Mark already! Jesus lived, He taught, He did miracles, He died, and He rose! Any questions?

What it DOES mean is that we shouldn't base a major belief – or life choice – on the text unless it's supported in the other Gospels. Now, we do find that Paul handles a snake safely (Acts 28:5), the disciples healed the sick (Matthew 10:1, Acts 3:7-8), etc.; but we're also strictly commanded by Jesus to NOT put the Lord, our God to the test! (Exodus 17:2, Deuteronomy 6:16, Matthew 4:7, Luke 4:12)

So, can we do it? Possibly... God certainly allowed it to happen in different circumstances. Should we do it? No, we're not to test God and we certainly shouldn't test Him based on words that were added later... (In theological terms, this text is not considered "authoritative".)

What are testaments and why do we need them?

Okay, not sure exactly what's being asked here, so I'm going to go for the most obvious answer. (If this answer isn't what you were looking for, please let me know!)

The word "testament" is a Greek word that means "covenant" or "agreement". In the Bible, we talk about two testaments: The Old Testament and the New Testament.

What do we mean by that? The Old Testament is the "old agreement" between God and man. Let me give you a brief glimpse of this agreement:

Then Moses climbed the mountain to appear before God. The LORD called to him from the mountain and said, "Give these instructions to the family of Jacob; announce it to the descendants of Israel: 'You have seen what I did to the Egyptians. You know how I carried you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself. Now if you will obey me and keep my covenant, you will be my own special treasure from among all the peoples on earth; for all the earth belongs to me. And you will be my kingdom of priests, my holy nation.' This is the message you must give to the people of Israel." - Exodus 19:3-6 (NLT)

Israel was chosen to be a nation of priests who were supposed to go out and tell the world about God. They didn't really do that... They were supposed to bring all nations to Jerusalem where people could worship God. They didn't really do that... They were supposed to obey the commands that God told them. They didn't really do that...

Because of that, God offers a new agreement through the death of His Son, Jesus:

As they were eating, Jesus took some bread and blessed it. Then he broke it in pieces and gave it to the

disciples, saying, “Take this and eat it, for this is my body.”

And he took a cup of wine and gave thanks to God for it. He gave it to them and said, “Each of you drink from it, for this is my blood, which confirms the covenant between God and his people. It is poured out as a sacrifice to forgive the sins of many. Mark my words—I will not drink wine again until the day I drink it new with you in my Father’s Kingdom.” - Matthew 26:26-29 (NLT)

Under this agreement, it’s not a nation that is called to serve God, but individuals. We can all make the choice to follow Jesus and be forgiven...or not.

The second part of this question is why do we need these agreements?

The old agreement – the Old Testament – is focused on our actions. God gives us the rules to live by, and we try to live by them. When we fail – and we will fail – we have to kill an animal. This animal’s death shows us that sin has a price: something has to die.

The new agreement – the New Testament – doesn’t depend on trying to follow rules, but is about the forgiveness God offers us when we do fail. It’s something we call “grace”. Jesus has already died for our sins and rose again to show us how we can have life in Him. We just need to make the choice to follow Him.

I hope that makes sense. If you want more, please let me know!

What was the original Bible?

This one is kind of tough to answer in the short space I have here, but I'm going to try:

The Bible is a unique book. The first five books of it are written by Moses, with parts of the very first book – Genesis – being told to him by God. Moses wasn't living at the time of the creation of the universe, Adam and Eve, Noah and the Flood, Abraham, etc. So he had to get his information from the stories passed down and from God's own words. With that being said, the first part of the Bible existed as stories, songs, and poetry passed on from generation to generation before they were written down.

At this point, I get people who go, “Wait a minute! When I play games like “telephone”, simple stories get messed up all the time! Does that mean our Bibles are wrong?” The short answer is: no. Our society doesn't place much importance on storytelling, but the Hebrew people – the Jews of the Old Testament – didn't have anything other than stories. In their culture, memorizing the stories and being able to recite them accurately was considered important; and those that could do it well became leaders. (Kind of like the rock stars of the ancient world.) Because of that, we can be pretty sure that the stories passed on through the generations didn't change much.

The earliest Bible passages written down are probably around 1,400 B.C. (Source: biblica.com) We know that the Egyptians wrote on clay tablets, so it seems reasonable that Moses, trained by the leading Egyptian scholars, would have learned to write, too. If he wrote it in Egypt, odds are pretty good that he would have kept doing it, especially as they were hoofing it to the Promised Land.

In around 132 B.C., scholars translated the Hebrew scriptures – what we would call the “Old Testament” – into Greek. (Source: religionfacts.com) This document, called the Septuagint, tells us that the books of the Old Testament had been written down in their final forms before that time. (That means that at least half of your Bible dates all the way back to around 2,500 years ago, and parts of it – the parts that were written by Moses – would go back around 3,500 years!)

Now, we have to fast-forward to after Jesus death and resurrection. The Disciples, along with Paul, are out telling everyone about Jesus; but they don't have phones, the internet, or pigeons, so they have to find a way to communicate with others. What's the solution? They write letters!

Paul may have begun writing to the churches he was working with as early as 40 A.D! (Source: tyndalearchive.com) That means that he's writing letters to people around 7-8 years after Jesus rose from the dead! If that's true, he's incredibly close to the source of it all and the fact that he's writing to churches means that there are a whole lot of people who already believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Messiah, the one who can save us from our sins! Other scholars date his writings to 50 A.D., which means that it's only 17-18 years later, which is still really good! (Source: Boston College)

Paul is telling the churches the Good News of Jesus, helping them to focus on what's important and pointing out areas where they need to improve. In a lot of ways, Paul's letters are report cards on the churches. Why are they important to us today? Because we still make a lot of the same mistakes that the early church did, and Paul's writings help us to understand how we can have a better relationship with God.

The Gospels, the books of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, present a problem. These are the biographies of Jesus written by people who either knew Him personally or who became a Christian early on. The reason that the Gospels are a problem is that there are a lot of people who argue for different dates, different authors, and more. Unfortunately, a lot of the debate is NOT based on science, but preference. At the start of the study of the Gospels, many scholars put the Gospel of Matthew as early as 40 A.D. In the past 150 years, other scholars have argued that it wasn't written until 140 A.D. (Source: gotquestions.org)

So, why is there a debate? A lot of the scholars who argue for a later date for the Gospels do so because they don't like to have to follow the Jesus of the Bible. If they can argue that the Bible was written much later, then they can say that Jesus didn't really say and do all of the things the Gospels mention; and, because of that, we don't really have to follow Him. (Not all scholars do this, but there are a lot of them who do!)

The problem with this is that some of the early leaders in the church tell us that Matthew wrote his book around 42 – 45 A.D. (That doesn't fit very well into the time-line that says he wrote it one hundred years later!) Also, we have the fragment of the Gospel of John that was found in Egypt and that was written at the absolute latest in 150 A.D. This means that there were copies of the stories of Jesus being passed around before that time, if it could get brought all the way to Egypt!

By the way, even if the writers of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John didn't write them down until 30+ years after Jesus' resurrection, it wouldn't matter. Why? Because these were Jews who lived in a culture that was very good at passing stories along intact! (Check out the question, “Couldn't God use some other form of communication to give the world his word..?”)

There's one other quirky thing to consider, too. Remember when I mentioned the early church leaders? Between the time when Paul began to write his letters and the time that the Bible was “put together”, many of the church leaders spent their time quoting from these original letters!

In fact, they use over 36,000 quotations from different parts of the New Testament! This includes quotes from Matthew, Luke, John, Acts, Romans, Ephesians, Hebrews and more! In fact, they quote both the Old Testament and New Testament so much that if we threw out every Bible on earth, we could still rebuild most of the Bible from their writings, alone! (Source: datingthenewtestament.com)

So, with all of that, it's fairly safe to say that we have the Bible, the way it was originally written down, and with the message that God wants us to have.

Random Trivia: the first English version of the Bible was created by William Tyndale in 1525. Unfortunately, it was against the law to translate the Bible into English, and so he was caught, held in prison for 18 months, and then publicly strangled to death for his “crime” of translating the Bible in 1536. (Source: tyndalearchive.com)

What was the original language of the Bible?

This question kind of confused me. So, I am going to answer it in two different ways:

First, the people in the Old Testament spoke Hebrew. Parts of the books of Ezra and Daniel, as well as the language spoken by Jesus and His Disciples, is Aramaic. (Aramaic became the most common language in that area at that time.) Finally, the rest of the New Testament, including the writings of Paul, would have been in Greek.

Why the different languages? For most of them – especially for the Hebrew and Aramaic – this was the language the people spoke! It's like people in Germany speaking German; people in France speaking French; or people in America speaking whatever they want... Paul was writing to a mostly-Greek crowd, so even though he knew Hebrew and Aramaic, he wrote in the language of the people he was talking to.

Second, if you were asking what the original language spoken by Adam and Eve – and God – was, I don't really know. The Bible doesn't tell us, “In the beginning, God spoke Hebrew...” So, the best guess I've got is simply that...a guess. Do you want to know what my guess is? My guess is that it was probably NOT English!

Who came up with all of the names in the Bible?

This is an interesting question, and it requires me to give two answers:

First, who named the animals? That was Adam in the Garden of Eden! Let me show you:

Then the LORD God said, “It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper who is just right for him.” So the LORD God formed from the ground all the wild animals and all the birds of the sky. He brought them to the man to see what he would

call them, and the man chose a name for each one. He gave names to all the livestock, all the birds of the sky, and all the wild animals. But still there was no helper just right for him. - Genesis 2:18-20 (NLT)

Second, what about the names of places and people? Well, here's the quirky thing about those names: most of the Biblical names are actually DESCRIPTIONS of things!

“At last!” the man exclaimed. “This one is bone from my bone, and flesh from my flesh! She will be called ‘woman,’ because she was taken from ‘man.’” - Genesis 2:23 (NLT)

Then God said, “I am El-Shaddai—‘God Almighty.’ Be fruitful and multiply. You will become a great nation, even many nations. Kings will be among your descendants! - Genesis 35:11 (NLT)

Rachel was about to die, but with her last breath she named the baby Ben-oni (which means “son of my sorrow”). The baby’s father, however, called him Benjamin (which means “son of my right hand”). - Genesis 35:18 (NLT)

Even Jesus’ name is based on the Hebrew words for “YHWH (God) saves!”

So, when we talk about names and places in the Bible, many of them are actually descriptions given to the person or place! How cool is that?

Why are there so many authors of the Bible?

To answer this, we need to look at a key verse:

All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives. It corrects us when we are wrong and teaches us to do what is right. God uses it to prepare and equip his people to do every good work. - 2 Timothy 3:16-17 (NLT)

In other words, God is the person who “wrote” the Bible. He chose people at different points in history to write down what they saw, what they experienced, and what they believed. Some of them – like Paul – wrote large chunks of the Bible; others only wrote a few short chapters. But, it was God who ultimately put it all together.

All-in-all, by having different writers, from different social levels (e.g. kings, fishermen, scholars) over a 1,500-year-or-so span, the Bible became able to speak on a wide-range of subjects; more than would happen if it was only written by one person. This means that no matter what we’re facing, we can always go to the Bible and find an answer.

Did God “need” that many authors? No. But He chose that many to make sure we had the tools that we need to face life each and every day.

Why are there verses in the Bible?

Do you want to know something that you may laugh at? I had no idea that the original Bible didn't have verses...or even chapters! It was many years after I became a Christian that I read that fact in a book! I was kind of embarrassed about that...until I realized that the reason no one told me was because they didn't know, either!

Okay, let me introduce you to a person that most people have never heard of: Stephen Langton! Do you know him? Probably not. Why? Because he was the Archbishop of Canterbury and lived in the 13th century! (Now you know some pretty useless trivia that you can share with others – and put them to sleep from boredom!)

In around 1227 A.D., Langton developed a series of chapter divisions to help people find information in the Bible more easily. In fact, the Wycliffe English Bible, published in 1382 AD, was the first to use this chapter pattern. From that point on, nearly all Bibles have used Langton's creation.

As for verses, we have two different people to thank. First, a Jewish Rabbi (teacher) named Nathan divided the Old Testament into verses in 1448 AD. Second, a man named Robert Estienne, who was also called Stephanus, divided the New Testament into verses in 1555 AD. These verse divisions have been used into our modern times.

By the way, because of the random way chapters and verses were put in, they sometimes make the Bible HARDER to read, not easier! This is especially true if you do a Bible Study that focuses only on chapters.

For example, 1 Corinthians 13 is called "The Love Chapter" and contains some of the most beautiful language in the entire Bible. If you only read 1 Corinthians 13, you get a beautiful, poetic chapter. But, 1 Corinthians 13 doesn't exist on its own; there's more to the book than just one chapter!

If you read the chapters before and after chapter 13, Paul, the author, is basically telling a church to stop being dumb and treat each other nicely! If you read 1 Corinthians 12-14, including chapter 13, you realize that the reason Paul is talking about love is because the church doesn't HAVE love for each other!

Because of this, you'll hear me talk about "context" when I teach. In other words, don't just read the chapter or verses, read the stuff around them, too!

Why do churches never go over books like Revelations?

The answer, unfortunately, is pretty simple: We don't understand it. Let me explain what I mean:

When I was young, there were traveling speakers who visited churches in our city about once every couple of months. It was always a big deal, and all of the churches would get together, have a pot-luck dinner (the old ladies always made GREAT desserts!), and then the speaker would talk.

For a few years in the 80s, the speakers ALWAYS talked about how to interpret the Book of Revelation. The first guy I ever saw got up with pretty posters, explained the timeline of events, clarified everything that would happen, explained all of the symbolism, and then left. And I thought to myself, "Golly! That sure made sense! I understand the Book of Revelation now!"

The next month, a new speaker came in with new posters, a new timeline, and new explanations...all of which differed from the first guy. When he got done, I totally understood everything about Revelation!

Then the next guy showed up – he had a cool slideshow with real slides! – and all of his stuff was different! By the fourth or fifth guy, I, a young teenager, was both disgusted and frustrated. And then I studied Revelation for myself, and do you know what I found? I couldn't understand it, either!

Let me give you a quick example:

Then locusts came from the smoke and descended on the earth, and they were given power to sting like scorpions. They were told not to harm the grass or plants or trees, but only the people who did not have the seal of God on their foreheads. They were told not to kill them but to torture them for five months with pain like the pain of a scorpion sting. In those days people will seek death but will not find it. They will long to die, but death will flee from them!

The locusts looked like horses prepared for battle. They had what looked like gold crowns on their heads, and their faces looked like human faces. They had hair like women's hair and teeth like the teeth of a lion. They wore armor made of iron, and their wings roared like an army of chariots rushing into battle. They had tails that stung like scorpions, and for five months they had the power to torment people. - Revelation 9:3-10 (NLT)

So, are these literal locusts? Or, is John, the author of the Book of Revelations, trying to describe something he can't comprehend? Imagine if you took John, a man from the first century, and had him walk the streets of New York today; you then show him television and movies; and, to end the day, you take him to a military firing range and let him watch helicopters unleash Hellfire missiles on tanks. You then return him to his own time with instructions for him to write what he saw.

What words would he use to describe New York? The sun shining off the skyscrapers, Times Square, or even the slums? What words would he use to describe what he saw on television? How could he describe the movie "Star Wars", the TV show "The Walking Dead", or a commercial with animated characters? Finally, how would he describe modern warfare?

John simply doesn't have the words to describe what he sees. Could it be literal? Certainly! Could it be John's attempt to describe something quite literally indescribable? Definitely!

Now, at this point, I was going to leave the story here and move on to the next question, but there IS another reason I wouldn't preach Revelation from the front. Simply put, I like to teach things that you can apply to your life; that you can use to build your relationship with God. Revelation doesn't really do that for me. How do those verses we just read apply? I really don't know.

For me, I would LOVE to study this in a small group...and I have! I would love to do this as a Bible Study with friends...and I have! I just don't think I could make it relevant to anyone from the front...except that one of my all-time favorite sets of verses is in Revelation! Check this out:

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the old heaven and the old earth had disappeared. And the sea was also gone. And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven like a bride beautifully dressed for her husband.

I heard a loud shout from the throne, saying, "Look, God's home is now among his people! He will live with them, and they will be his people. God himself will be with them. He will wipe every tear from their eyes, and there will be no more death or sorrow or crying or pain. All these things are gone forever." - Revelation 21:1-4 (NLT)

I think I could preach a sermon or two from this alone! Just sayin'.

So, let me bring this all back around. The first reason we don't preach it is because we don't understand it. The second reason is that the parts we DO understand tell us that Jesus WILL come back, at some point, and you need to be ready for that! (It should also motivate you to tell EVERYONE about Jesus because you know how the story ends – both the good and the bad!)

Why is the Bible full of white people?

Answer: it isn't! People in the Middle East tend to have darker skin, dark eyes, and dark hair. If you've seen pictures of a white-skinned, blue-eyed Jesus with long, brown hair, it's just a painting and it has little to do with what Jesus really looked like. (Artists paint what they want to see, not always what's there.)

In fact, MOST of the people in the Bible would not have been "white"! The Greeks and Romans would have looked the most "white"; the Ethiopians (Acts 8, Jeremiah 13, 2 Chronicles 14) would probably – and I AM saying "probably" - have been "black"; and the people in Israel and Palestine would have been "brown".

The one thing I do like about the Bible is that it really does NOT talk about skin color or looks. God, Himself, told us what He sees when He looks at us:

But the LORD said to Samuel, "Don't judge by his appearance or height, for I have rejected him. The LORD doesn't see things the way you see them. People judge by outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart." - 1 Samuel 16:7 (NLT)

Table Of Contents

Bible.....	1
Are babies perfect?.....	2
Are there books that weren't included in the Bible?.....	3
Because Jude quotes the Book of Enoch, does that mean that it should be in the Bible?.....	5
Couldn't God use some other form of communication to give the world his word other than written text? Even if writing it down was the best way to go about things (which I doubt) why write it in such a way that causes so much dissension and confusion?.....	6
How did the Bible stay together through all those years and get translated perfectly to this day? Or is it not?.....	7
How do you know where to look in the Bible for specific answers?.....	8
How much of the Bible is symbolic? How are we supposed to believe something that constantly shifts from facts to story?.....	8
If the Old Testament is relevant, why aren't the Old Testament laws relevant, especially since Jesus didn't come to abolish the law?.....	10
Is it possible that important events have NOT been added to the Bible?.....	12
Is there a good way to know which of the stories are parables and which are actual history?.....	12
Is there an English translation that REALLY follows the original Hebrew?.....	13
One person once tried to prove the Bible wrong to me by bringing up Mark 16:17-18 saying that it doesn't happen and said drink poison now or give up on the thought of the Bible always being true. I pointed to him to some Biblegateway sources because I did not know how to reply. Is there anything that I could have explained?.....	13
What are testaments and why do we need them?.....	14
What was the original Bible?.....	15
What was the original language of the Bible?.....	17
Who came up with all of the names in the Bible?.....	17
Why are there so many authors of the Bible?.....	18
Why are there verses in the Bible?.....	18
Why do churches never go over books like Revelations?.....	19
Why is the Bible full of white people?.....	21
Table Of Contents.....	22