

**The Jesus Myth: Is the  
Bible True?**



# **What is the historical basis for believing the Bible is the inerrant Word of God?**

- **Not even the actual words**
- **Error-ridden copies**
- **Centuries removed from the originals**
- **Today's Bible excludes other books**
- **The Jesus story is based on earlier pagan myths**



**Argument #1 –**  
***“The modern Bible is full of errors, variations, and mistakes from the original text, rendering it inaccurate and untrustworthy.”***



## *Argument #1 –*

***“The modern Bible is full of errors, variations, and mistakes from the original text, rendering it inaccurate and untrustworthy.”***

*“How does it help us to say that the Bible is the inerrant word of God if in fact we don’t have the words that God inerrantly inspired, but only the words copied by the scribes—sometimes correctly but sometimes (many times!) incorrectly?” “We don’t have the originals! We have only error-ridden copies, and the vast majority of these are centuries removed from the originals and different from them, evidently, in thousands of ways...in some instances, the very meaning of the text is at stake...” – Misquoting Jesus, Bart Ehrman, PhD.*

Concludes there are 300,000 to 400,000 variants in the NT texts.



## *Argument #1 –*

***“The modern Bible is full of errors, variations, and mistakes from the original text, rendering it inaccurate and untrustworthy.”***

## ***The Bibliographical Test***

- ***How reliable are the copies we have?***
- ***How many manuscripts have survived?***
- ***How consistent are they?***
- ***What are the time intervals between the originals and the copies?***



## **Argument #1 –**

***“The modern Bible is full of errors, variations, and mistakes from the original text, rendering it inaccurate and untrustworthy.”***

### **Other ancient texts:**

- Thucydides – Greek historian – 460 to 400 BC. (8 manuscripts have survived, earliest 900 AD – 1300 yr gap)
- Herodotus – Greek historian – 5<sup>th</sup> century – 8 manuscripts – 1350 yr gap
- Julius Caesar’s The Gallic Wars (10 manuscripts remain, with the earliest one dating to 1,000 years after the original autograph)
- Pliny the Younger’s Natural History (7 manuscripts; 750 years elapsed)
- Plato (7 manuscripts; 1,300 years)
- Tacitus’ Annals (20 manuscripts; 1,000 years)
- Homer’s Iliad, 2nd best-preserved literary work of all antiquity, 643 copies
- William Shakespeare’s 37 plays (written in 1600’s). No surviving manuscripts.

***The Jesus Myth: Is the Bible True?***



## **Argument #1 –**

***“The modern Bible is full of errors, variations, and mistakes from the original text, rendering it inaccurate and untrustworthy.”***

## **The New Testament –**

- Over 5,600 copies and fragments of the New Testament in the original Greek.
- Most manuscripts written within 40 to 150 years after Christ.
- With copies of the Latin Vulgate and other translations, the number approaches 24,000.

***The Jesus Myth: Is the Bible True?***



## *Argument #1 –*

*“The modern Bible is full of errors, variations, and mistakes from the original text, rendering it inaccurate and untrustworthy.”*

### *So what about the mistakes?*

- Approx. 75% of the variants are spelling (i.e., John or Johnn)*
- 2<sup>nd</sup> largest category – synonyms (i.e., “Lord” or “He”)*
- Textual variance*



## *Argument #1 –*

***“The modern Bible is full of errors, variations, and mistakes from the original text, rendering it inaccurate and untrustworthy.”***

## ***Example of textual variance: Phil 4:13***

- 1 -“I can do all t#ings through Christ who strengthens me.”
- 2 -“I can do all th#ngs through Christ who strengthens me.”
- 3 -“I can do all thi#gs through Christ who strengthens me.”
- 4 -“I can do all thin#s through Christ who strengthens me.”



## **Argument #1 –**

***“The modern Bible is full of errors, variations, and mistakes from the original text, rendering it inaccurate and untrustworthy.”***

### **So what about the mistakes?**

- *Approx. 75% of the variants are spelling (i.e., John or Johnn)*
- *2<sup>nd</sup> largest category – synonyms (i.e., “Lord” or “He”)*
- *Textual variance*
- *When all variations are considered, only about 1 percent involve textual meaning. And that may be an overstatement!*



## Argument #1 –

**“The modern Bible is full of errors, variations, and mistakes from the original text, rendering it inaccurate and untrustworthy.”**

### **Example of textual meaning variance: 1 Jn 1:4**

- “And these things we write to you that **our** joy may be complete.”
- “And these things we write to you that **your** joy may be complete.”



## **Argument #1 –**

***“The modern Bible is full of errors, variations, and mistakes from the original text, rendering it inaccurate and untrustworthy.”***

### **So what about the mistakes?**

- *Approx. 75% of the variants are spelling (i.e., John or Johnn)*
- *2<sup>nd</sup> largest category – synonyms (i.e., “Lord” or “He”)*
- *Textual variance*
- *When all variations are considered, only about 1 percent involve textual meaning. And that may be an overstatement!*
- *Homer’s Iliad – 643 manuscripts, 764 disputed lines*
- *New Testament – 5600+ manuscripts, 40 disputed lines*
- *Over 99% of NT outside of manuscripts (external writings)*
- *More variants because there are more copies*



*Argument #1 –*

*“The modern Bible is full of errors, variations, and mistakes from the original text, rendering it inaccurate and untrustworthy.”*

**So what about the mistakes?**

**NONE ARE CRUCIAL  
TO DOCTRINE!**

*The Jesus Myth: Is the Bible True?*



### *Argument #1 –*

*“The modern Bible is full of errors, variations, and mistakes from the original text, rendering it inaccurate and untrustworthy.”*

*“When a comparison of the variant readings of the NT is made with those of other books which have survived from antiquity, the results are little short of astounding. The evidence for the integrity of the NT is beyond question.”* Norman Geisler, PhD.

*“The short answer to the question of what theological truths are at stake due to these variants is –none.”* Daniel B. Wallace, PhD.



### *Argument #1 –*

*“The modern Bible is full of errors, variations, and mistakes from the original text, rendering it inaccurate and untrustworthy.”*

*Bibliographical test doesn't prove the truth of what was written only that it is textually accurate to what was written.*

## *Internal Criticism*

*The Jesus Myth: Is the Bible True?*



## *Argument #1 –*

*“The modern Bible is full of errors, variations, and mistakes from the original text, rendering it inaccurate and untrustworthy.”*

## *Internal Criticism:*

- *Luke’s historical accuracy – Ac 17:6*
- *Eyewitness testimony – Lk 1:1-4, 2 Pet 1:16-17, Jn 19:35*
- *Common knowledge of events – Ac 2:22, Ac 26:24-26*



**Argument #1 –**

***“The modern Bible is full of errors, variations, and mistakes from the original text, rendering it inaccurate and untrustworthy.”***

***Bibliographical test in conjunction with internal criticism proves we have a reliable and trustworthy copy of the NT and that it is an accurate representation of what Jesus and his followers said and did.***



**Argument #2 –**  
***“The New Testament is incomplete. Other valid gospels were intentionally omitted”***



## **Argument #2 –**

***“The New Testament is incomplete. Other valid gospels were intentionally omitted.”***

## **Banned from the Bible?**

- *The Gospel of Thomas*
- *The Gospel of Peter*
- *The Gospel of Mary*
- *The Secret Gospel of Mark*
- *The Jesus Papers*
- *The Gospel of Judas*



## *Argument #2 –*

*“The New Testament is incomplete. Other valid gospels were intentionally omitted.”*

### *The Gospel of Thomas:*

- Fragments discovered in 1890. Full copy found in 1945 in Nag Hammadi*
- Consists of 114 sayings, no narrative.*
- Mystic in nature. Reflects Gnostic doctrine. Anti-women.*
- Distinctively Syrian in composition.*
- Borrows heavily from over half of NT.*
- Early Christian writers make no mention of it, only 4 gospels.*
- Opposes doctrine of other 4 gospels.*
- Probable dating – late 2<sup>nd</sup> century at earliest.*



## **Argument #2 –**

***“The New Testament is incomplete. Other valid gospels were intentionally omitted.”***

## **Banned from the Bible?**

- ~~*The Gospel of Thomas*~~
- ***The Gospel of Peter***
- *The Gospel of Mary*
- *The Secret Gospel of Mark*
- *The Jesus Papers*
- *The Gospel of Judas*



## **Argument #2 –**

***“The New Testament is incomplete. Other valid gospels were intentionally omitted.”***

### ***The Gospel of Peter:***

- *Discovered in the 1880's in Egypt*
- *No title.*
- *Claims Jesus was never physical in nature.*
- *Story of a priest, angels, & a talking cross.*
- *Contains errors of 1<sup>st</sup> century history (who was ruling Israel, etc).*
- *Earliest dating probably late 2<sup>nd</sup> century, probably into 3<sup>rd</sup> or later.*
- *Not seriously considered by bible scholars.*



## **Argument #2 –**

***“The New Testament is incomplete. Other valid gospels were intentionally omitted.”***

## **Banned from the Bible?**

- ~~*The Gospel of Thomas*~~
- ~~*The Gospel of Peter*~~
- ***The Gospel of Mary***
- *The Secret Gospel of Mark*
- *The Jesus Papers*
- *The Gospel of Judas*



## **Argument #2 –**

***“The New Testament is incomplete. Other valid gospels were intentionally omitted.”***

### ***The Gospel of Mary:***

- *Supposedly written by Mary Magdalene.*
- *Mary at odds with Peter and Andrew over personal revelation from Jesus (contradicts Jesus earlier teaching).*
- *Probably written as protest.*
- *Scholars virtually unanimous on 150-200 AD dating.*
- *Doesn't claim Jesus-Mary marriage.*
- *Not seriously considered by scholars.*



## **Argument #2 –**

***“The New Testament is incomplete. Other valid gospels were intentionally omitted.”***

## **Banned from the Bible?**

- ~~*The Gospel of Thomas*~~
- ~~*The Gospel of Peter*~~
- ~~*The Gospel of Mary*~~
- ***The Secret Gospel of Mark***
- *The Jesus Papers*
- *The Gospel of Judas*



**Argument #2 –**

***“The New Testament is incomplete. Other valid gospels were intentionally omitted.”***

***The Secret Gospel of Mark:***

- *Claims to have been discovered in Mar Saba Monastery in Judean wilderness in 1958.*
- *Story of Jesus raising a young man from the dead.*
- *Original “vanished”.*
- *Later proven to be a hoax.*



## **Argument #2 –**

***“The New Testament is incomplete. Other valid gospels were intentionally omitted.”***

## **Banned from the Bible?**

- ~~*The Gospel of Thomas*~~
- ~~*The Gospel of Peter*~~
- ~~*The Gospel of Mary*~~
- ~~*The Secret Gospel of Mark*~~
- ***The Jesus Papers***
- *The Gospel of Judas*



## *Argument #2 –*

*“The New Testament is incomplete. Other valid gospels were intentionally omitted.”*

### *The Jesus Papers:*

- *Two documents written in Aramaic “discovered” underneath a house in Jerusalem in 1961.*
- *No documents.*
- *Claims two respected archaeologists authenticated them. Both are dead.*
- *Vatican cover-ups, “voodoo” scholarship, etc.*
- *Not seriously considered.*
- *Discoverer a conspiracy author, not a historian.*



## **Argument #2 –**

***“The New Testament is incomplete. Other valid gospels were intentionally omitted.”***

## **Banned from the Bible?**

- ~~*The Gospel of Thomas*~~
- ~~*The Gospel of Peter*~~
- ~~*The Gospel of Mary*~~
- ~~*The Secret Gospel of Mark*~~
- ~~*The Jesus Papers*~~
- ***The Gospel of Judas***



## **Argument #2 –**

***“The New Testament is incomplete. Other valid gospels were intentionally omitted.”***

### ***The Gospel of Judas:***

- *Claims Judas had secret arrangement with Jesus for his betrayal.*
- *Casts Judas in a favorable light.*
- *Probably late 2<sup>nd</sup> century.*
- *Early church historians warned of this “fictitious story”.*
- *Possibly written by Gnostic offshoot.*



## **Argument #2 –**

***“The New Testament is incomplete. Other valid gospels were intentionally omitted.”***

## **Banned from the Bible?**

- ~~*The Gospel of Thomas*~~
- ~~*The Gospel of Peter*~~
- ~~*The Gospel of Mary*~~
- ~~*The Secret Gospel of Mark*~~
- ~~*The Jesus Papers*~~
- ~~*The Gospel of Judas*~~

***The Jesus Myth: Is the Bible True?***



**Argument #2 –**

***“The New Testament is incomplete. Other valid gospels were intentionally omitted.”***

**So what about the 27 books of the  
New Testament?**



## **Argument #2 –**

***“The New Testament is incomplete. Other valid gospels were intentionally omitted.”***

### ***The New Testament:***

- *Men did not decide which books were the Word of God.*
- *Despite popular belief, the Roman Catholic church is not the magistrate and regulator of the canon.*
- *The apostles believed they were speaking from God. Rev 1:1, “which God gave him”, 1 Cor 2:13 “these things we also speak...which the Holy Spirit teaches”, 1 Cor 14:37 “the things which I write to you are the commandments of the Lord”, 1 Thess 2:13 “you received the Word of God which you heard from us”*
- *Paul quoted Luke’s gospel, calling it “scripture”(1 Tim 5:18)*
- *Peter refers to Paul’s epistles and agreed they were inspired. Compares them to the “rest of the Scriptures” 2 Pet 3:15-16*



## **Argument #2 –**

***“The New Testament is incomplete. Other valid gospels were intentionally omitted.”***

### ***The New Testament:***

- *Mid 2<sup>nd</sup> century writings overwhelmingly include (to the exclusivity of all others, The Shepherd of Hermes, etc) 23 of the 27 NT books.*
- *Jude, 2<sup>nd</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup> Jn, Revelation fully accepted around 4<sup>th</sup> century.*



**Argument #3 –**

***“The story of Jesus is based on pagan myths that predate Christianity by hundreds of years.”***



### *Argument #3 –*

*“The Story of Jesus is based on pagan myths that predate Christianity by hundreds of years.”*

- *“Nothing in Christianity is original” The Lord’s Supper, the resurrection, Sunday worship were all “taken directly from earlier pagan mystery religions” **The Da Vinci Code***
- *“ Why should we consider the stories of Osiris, Dionysus, Adonis, Attis, Mithras, and other pagan mystery saviors as fables, yet come across essentially the same story told in a Jewish context and believe it to be the biography of a carpenter from Bethelhem?”  
Timothy Freke and Peter Gandy, **The Jesus Mysteries***



### **Argument #3 –**

***“The Story of Jesus is based on pagan myths that predate Christianity by hundreds of years.”***

- *“There is nothing the Jesus of the Gospels either said or did...that cannot be shown to have originated thousands of years before, in Egyptian mystery rites and other sacred literature.” Tom Harpur, **The Pagan Christ***
- *“Each mystery religion taught its own version of the myth of the dying and resurrecting Godman, who was known by different names in different places. In Egypt, where the mysteries began, he was Osiris. In Greece he became Dionysus, in Asia Minor he is known as Attis, in Syria he is Adonis, in Persia he is Mithras, in Alexandria he is Serapis, to name a few.” Timothy Freke and Peter Gandy, **The Jesus Mysteries***



### **Argument #3 –**

***“The Story of Jesus is based on pagan myths that predate Christianity by hundreds of years.”***

#### ***Pagan gods that “predate” story of Jesus:***

- *Attis – myth predates Christianity, but the first report of a resurrection comes long after the 1<sup>st</sup> century*
- *Adonis – more than 100 years after Jesus*
- *Marduk/Dionysus – No account of a death or resurrection*
- *Osiris – death story is completely different, not resurrected, but reassembled and given status as god of the underworld*
- *Majority of pagan gods and their myths tied to vegetation cycles to explain the seasons of death and renewal.*
- *None are the unique story of Jesus’ death, burial, and resurrection.*



### *Argument #3 –*

*“The Story of Jesus is based on pagan myths that predate Christianity by hundreds of years.”*

## *Mithras:*

- *Most common myth referred tied to story of Jesus*
- *Born of a virgin on Dec 25*
- *Considered a great traveling teacher with 12 disciples*
- *Promised his followers immortality,*
- *Sacrificed himself for world peace*
- *Was buried in a tomb and rose again 3 days later,*
- *Instituted a “Lord’s Supper”*
- *Was considered the Messiah/Redeemer*

*The Jesus Myth: Is the Bible True?*



### **Argument #3 –**

***“The Story of Jesus is based on pagan myths that predate Christianity by hundreds of years.”***

### ***Mithras – upon further examination:***

- *Not born of a virgin – born out of a rock*
- *Born on Dec 25 – not a biblical reference*
- *Not a traveling teacher with 12 disciples – he was a god.*
- *Promised immortality – aim of most religions*
- *Not die for world peace – he killed a bull*
- *Not buried in a tomb/raised– no accounts of death/resurrection*
- *Instituted memorial meal – no parallel to Lord’s Supper*
- *Mithras’ myth too late – references/artifacts AD90 at earliest, most 2<sup>nd</sup> century*



### **Argument #3 –**

***“The Story of Jesus is based on pagan myths that predate Christianity by hundreds of years.”***

- *Claims of pagan similarities nothing new.*
- *Jesus existence, life, and death are rooted in extrabiblical history. Tacitus (Roman), Josephus (Jewish, non-believer), Lucian (Greek satirist), Mara Bar-Serapion (pagan), & the Talmud all report a man named Jesus suffered a horrific death at the hands of the Roman government in AD33.*
- *Evidence of the resurrection: empty tomb, change in disciples lives, willing to die...for a lie?*

***The Jesus Myth: Is the Bible True?***



*Last eve I passed beside a blacksmith's door  
And heard the anvil ring the vesper chime;  
When looking in, I saw upon the floor,  
Old hammers worn with beating years of time.*

*"How many anvils have you had," said I,  
"To wear and batter these hammers so?"  
"Just one," said he; then with a twinkling eye,  
"The anvil wears the hammers out, you know."*

*And so, I thought, the anvil of God's Word,  
For ages, skeptics blows have beat upon;  
Yet, though the noise of falling blows was heard,  
The anvil is unharmed - the hammers gone.*

*- by John Clifford*