

# VALIDITY OF THE BIBLE

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Updated: 03/29/2021



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# VALIDITY OF THE BIBLE

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The battle over the accuracy of the Bible today is enormous. It is not just a battle over the historicity of an old document. It is a document that makes claims that none other does. It speaks of Jesus of Nazareth, who claims to be what no one else does. If its record is true, then its message affects everything.

## EVIDENCE USED TO PROVE THE BIBLE IS UNRELIABLE

### INCONSISTENCY IN THE TEXTS

Some alleged conflicts arise from the specific vocabulary of one translation of the Bible. There is a difference between *conflict* and *differ*. Some passages differ in factual content but agree in message. Sometimes the original language clears up conflicts that exist between differing translations.

### HISTORICAL INFORMATION

Rounding off numbers and approximations were a common practice in Hebrew literature. Example: there are two dimensions given for the circumference of the brazen sea. The difference could be as easy as an inside and an outside measurement. The 4–6-inch thickness would make the difference. The problem could be in the calculation rather than in the record. Duet 7:2 said to destroy the inhabitants of Canaan. They did not. The solution can be seen when a person proselyted to Judaism, God saved their life. He is just, but He is more willing to forgive than to destroy.

Some differences are minor in nature; a difference in number of people involved, the location of an event, the timing of an event. Most of these differences are not the main point of the text anyway. The lessons or doctrines in the text come through clearly, even though small details vary. When different authors write about the same event and only differ on minor points (non-supporting details), it does not jeopardize their witness. Even though there are small differences in the resurrection accounts, the unified message is consistent. The tomb was discovered empty on Sunday morning by a small group of women, who were told by at least one angel that Jesus had risen from the dead. The angels looked like men.



## SCIENTIFIC INFORMATION

Concepts vs. words. The people of that day used language that reflected their worldview rather than modern scientific description. The worldview may not be consistent with our scientific view, but it was capable of communicating God's idea. The people in those days accurately understood the message of the passage without having our cosmology.

## VARIED INTERPRETATIONS OF DIFFERENT CHRISTIAN GROUPS:

The challenge here is not in the text, but in the interpreter.

## EVIDENCE USED TO SUPPORT THE RELIABILITY OF THE BIBLE

### HISTORY & ARCHEOLOGY

1. 1928: Ugarit- Thousands of cuneiform tablets. They mentioned material about the religious life of the Canaanites.
2. 1947: Dead Sea Scrolls- discovered by shepherds, eleven caves, 800 documents, complete copies or partials of 38 OT books (except Esther), 1000 years older than the oldest MT and yet they were almost exact duplicates in their texts.
3. 1961: Pilot Inscription- At an excavation in Caesarea Maritima. It bears the name of the fifth Roman governor of Palestine. There had been no record of Pilot, outside the Bible, up to that time.
4. 1970's: Baruch Bulla- This was used to seal documents to preserve the contents from tampering. It contained the name of Baruch, the scribe of Jeremiah (Jer 36:4). Also one was found for Seriah, the chief chamberlain of King Zedekiah (Jer 51:59). He was Baruch's brother.
5. 1979: Amulet- This was a rolled-up amulet bearing the tetragrammaton. This is the oldest mention of God's name outside the Bible. It was from the 7th cent BC.



6. 1980: Mt Ebal altar- Dated at 1220-1000 BC. Believed to be the altar mentioned in Josh 8:30-35.
7. 1985-1986: Galilee boat- It was 2000 years old. 30ft long and 8 ft wide. It came from the 1st cent BC to the 1st cent AD. It could be sailed or rowed. It could carry up to 15 people.
8. 1990: Ossuary of Caiaphas- A dump truck went through the roof of a tomb in Nov of 1990. The ossuary was a stone box used for the second burial of the bones after the flesh decomposes. It was dated around the first century BC or AD. It was believed to be the High Priest that Jesus stood before.
9. 1993: Inscription of David- In the northern area of Dan near Mt Hermon, from the 9-8th cent BC,  
\*This is the first mention of King David and the earliest mention of any Bible character outside the Bible.

## SURVIVAL OF MANUSCRIPTS

There are about 1000 copies of the ancient Hebrew OT (excluding the Dead Sea Scrolls). These are mainly Massoretic texts. They were the official texts since 500 AD. The MT we use was written in about 900AD. The policy of copying was amazing. Any imperfect copy was condemned and destroyed. The Massorettes numbered the verses, words, and letters of each book. They even calculated the number of times each letter was used in a book. The Dead Sea Scrolls changed this. They were written 1000 yrs earlier (125 BC). The earlier copies were amazingly similar to the later MT. Example: Isaiah 53. Of the 166 words only 17 letters differ. Ten are simple spelling differences. Four are style changes. The final three are an added word to a verse. This means that only one word out of 166 is different.

The NT manuscripts (portions) were the most copies books in the ancient world: 5300 Greek copies, 10,000 Latin copies, 9300 copies of other languages. Total- 24000. Compare this to the Iliad- 643 manuscripts, Caesar's Gallic Wars- 10, Roman History by Livy- 20, history of Herodotus- 8, Plato- 7, and Aristotle- 5

\*In studying the writings of the early fathers, there were discovered over 36,000 quotations from the NT. Putting them all together, all but 11 verses of the NT could be reconstructed.

Earliest NT fragment was the John Ryland papyrus- 123 AD. The time distance between the original writing and the copy is less than 50 yrs. The time difference between the writing of the NT and the first complete copy is less than 300 years. The Iliad was written in 900 BC, and



the oldest copy was written in 400 BC (500 yrs later). For Herodotus the span was 1300 yrs. Plato lived in 400 BC. The oldest copy of his works was from 900AD. Tacitus lived in 100 AD. The oldest copy of his work was 1100 AD. No one questions the authenticity of Homer, Caesar, or Herodotus, yet the NT manuscripts are overwhelmingly superior. What this shows is that there were not centuries of oral traditions that added a lot of folklore and myth to the writings. They were formalized into writing in a very short amount of time.

The oral records were well maintained. Due to lack of books, people memorized large portions of the OT. The writing of things in poetry and music helped in this.

Earliest complete manuscript -Vaticanus and Sinaiticus- 4th century AD

## CONSISTENCY OF MANUSCRIPTS

Out of the 20,000 lines in the NT text, only about 40 are seriously disputed. That is less than 1%. This is compared to 5% in the Iliad. Most of the questionable points in the NT are spellings, or style, not doctrine. \*No fundamental doctrine of the Christian faith rests on disputed readings. It has been said that 98% of the Greek manuscripts we use today are accurate with the originals.

## FULFILLED PROPHECY

There are about 2500 prophecies in the Bible. 2000 have already been fulfilled are predicted. The odds of these prophecies all randomly being fulfilled is one in  $10^{2000}$ .

Examples:

1. Daniel 9:25-26 was made in the 6th century BC. Mentions the edict of Artaxerxes to build the city and Messiah coming 483 years later. One in  $10^5$
2. In approx. 700 BC, Micah 5:2 mentions the name of the birthplace of Messiah. One in  $10^5$
3. In the 5th century, Zechariah 11:12-13 predicted that Messiah would be betrayed for 30 pieces of silver. One in  $10^{11}$
4. The mention of crucifixion in Psalms 22 (10th century BC), and Zechariah 12:10 (6th century BC). One in  $10^{13}$



5. Naming Cyrus, 180 years before his birth (Isa 44:28, 45:1). One in 10<sup>15</sup>
6. The destruction of Edom (Jer 49:15-20, Eze 25:12-14). One in 10<sup>5</sup>
7. Prediction of Josiah's reform 300 years before it occurred (1Kin 13:2, 2Kin 23:15-18). One in 10<sup>13</sup>

## MIRACLES

Confirmed acts of providence

## PERSONAL EXPERIENCE

The example of China: True Christianity and false forms of it flourished in China when times were tolerant. When times of persecution arose, false Christians and cults left or denied their faith. Those of true faith had strength to endure even martyrdom.

There have been so many people in different geographic locations that have all had similar life changing experiences.

## CREDIBILITY TEST OF THE WRITERS:

The writers of the Bible were credible to give their witness. They had character. They willingly gave their reports, not under compulsion. They were able to give their witness: they were capable of communicating. They witnessed the events they wrote of. At times they were intimately involved in the story. The tests of their credibility would pass in any court of law. An eyewitness, in their right minds, their records would be admitted.

Sincerity of the writers

- Eyewitness accounts
- Independent perspective (no collusion)
- References to historical people, events, places, and dates that could be verified.





- The dedication of the authors that carried them even to martyrdom.
- They were trustworthy in character.
- They had to be able to tell the truth (sound mind and eyewitness)

#### Sanity of the writers

- The sheer number of eyewitnesses (500). They couldn't all be crazy
- Author's education
  - Moses- trained in the Pharaoh's court
  - Ezra - a trained scribe
  - Isaiah – the historiographer
  - Jeremiah – a priest
  - Daniel – a trained courtier
  - Matthew – an educated publican
  - Luke – a medical doctor
  - Paul – a Pharisee

### **CORROBORATION WITH OTHER LITERATURE**

These sources gained no benefit in recording this information. Jewish and Roman records (Archco volume), Quran.

These sources state that Jesus

1. Came from Nazareth
2. He lived a virtuous life
3. He was crucified under Pontus Pilate at the Passover season



4. His disciples believed he rose from the dead
5. He performed unusual feats
6. His followers grew

## CONCLUSION

We have a large number of copies made within a short period of time, with 98% genuineness. Our modern translations are accurate translations of accurate manuscripts. The original manuscripts were written by reliable writers.

## SKEPTICISM

Absolute certainty is difficult when dealing with historical events occurring in the past. There will always be an element of faith needed that causes a person to conclude from all the evidence that the record is probably true. There can be faith without absolute certainty. That faith can be seen as justified.

Some people have a predisposition to not believe. The greatest proof won't swing their hard hearts. Postmodernism is known as an age of skepticism.

Examples:

- Matt 21:25-32 They would not commit themselves.
- 1Cor 1:18-24 The Gospel was foolishness to them
- Luke 22:67 - "If You are the Christ, tell us." But He said to them, "If I tell you, you will not believe;"
- John 3:12 - "If I told you earthly things and you do not believe, how will you believe if I tell you heavenly things?"
- John 4:48 So Jesus said to him, "Unless you people see signs and wonders, you simply will not believe."



- John 6:36 "But I said to you that you have seen Me, and yet do not believe. John 6:64, 8:45, 9:18, 10:25, 16:9
- John 20:25 So the other disciples were saying to him, "We have seen the Lord!" But he said to them, "Unless I see in His hands the imprint of the nails, and put my finger into the place of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe."

Helping people to believe was the primary purpose of the Gospel of John (John 20:31), which is what makes all the John passages significant.

Our responsibility is to give the reason for our hope. 1 Peter 3:15 says, "But sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence."

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