

Why We Can Trust The Bible

The Bible makes an extraordinary claim about itself



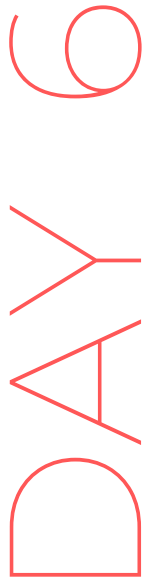
2 Timothy 3:16 "All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness."

Notice that the Bible says that all scripture, meaning the entire book, is divinely inspired.

A common attack on Christianity comes in the form of disputing the trustworthiness of the Bible. Even some folks who claim to be Christians insist that we should let go of the idea that the Bible is true and has no errors. After all, they say, there are many things in the Bible that cannot possibly be true, right? Creation in six days, global flood, talking donkeys, a man getting swallowed by a giant fish and surviving, people rising from the dead – these are just allegories to teach us important life lessons, right? Everyone knows that these stories cannot be true.

The problem with that approach to the Bible is that the Bible itself does not leave room for it. The Bible claims to be the divinely inspired, completely true, completely trustworthy word of almighty God. It is written in such a way that it is either true or it is not.

So, it is fair to ask the question, "How do we know that we can trust the Bible?"





Four reasons why we can trust the Bible

The Bible Is Historically Accurate

01

Any discussion of the trustworthiness of the Bible must begin by addressing its historicity. Now, the Bible is not merely a history book. **The Bible does contain symbolism, parables, and poetry, but it also is full of historical accounts, descriptions of real people in real times at real places.** Any honest reading of the Bible's historical accounts makes it abundantly clear that they are meant to be taken as actual history – real events that really happened, and not just allegories or myths intended to teach some moral or spiritual truth.

For the Bible to be true and trustworthy, if the Bible makes historical claims, those claims must be true. If the Bible's historical claims are unreliable, how can we trust its moral, spiritual, or ethical claims? So, how do we know that the Bible is historically accurate?

There are three tests that historians apply to any ancient work of literature to judge its authenticity and its accuracy. Let's apply these tests to the Bible and see how it stacks up against other ancient works.

The Eyewitness Test

Is the document an eyewitness account, or is it second or third hand information? The Bible consists primarily of eyewitness accounts. That is why it is good history.

- Moses was present when God parted the Red Sea.
- Joshua was there when the walls of Jericho fell.
- The disciples of Jesus witnessed his death, burial, and post-resurrection appearances. The accounts of Jesus' life and the Acts of the Apostles were all either written by eyewitnesses or by someone who personally interviewed the eyewitnesses.

The fact that the Bible is full of eyewitness testimony speaks to its credibility. But how do we know that what those eyewitnesses saw and experienced was accurately transmitted to us over thousands of years? You may have heard skeptics say that it is impossible that the Biblical texts could have been copied over the ages without significant errors being made. That brings us to the second test that historians use.

The Manuscript Test

Of course, no original manuscripts of any ancient document still exist, be it the Bible or any other work. Therefore, when evaluating ancient texts, historians look at the manuscript copies that we have and they ask some questions.

How many copies do we have?

- Plato – 7
- Greek historian Herodotus – 8
- Homer, author of the Iliad and the Odyssey – 643

How many copies do we have of the New Testament books? The answer is over 24,000, and 5,000 of those are complete books written in the original Greek language. The Bible has more copies than any other ancient literary work, and it's not even close.



How much agreement or difference is there among the copies?

It is not just the number of manuscripts that matter, but how well they agree in their content that lends credibility to their authenticity. So, in these thousands of manuscripts that we have of the New Testament, how much do they differ?

The vast majority of differences are in spelling or grammar, differences that do not change the meaning of the text. The remaining differences account for less than 2% of the New Testament. That means the New Testament as we have it today is at least 98% pure. For the other 2%, there is no doctrine of the New Testament that is taught only in a disputed passage. Every doctrine of the New Testament is taught in its entirety in its indisputable parts. This cannot be said of any other ancient book in the world.

What about the Old Testament?

How did we get the Old Testament, and since it is even older than the New Testament, how can we be sure it was accurately transmitted to us through the centuries?

There were Jewish scribes who were commissioned with the task of copying the Old Testament scriptures. These Scribes were meticulous copyists who followed a strict set of rules.

- They copied letter by letter, not word by word.
- They knew how many columns, how many words, and how many letters were supposed to be on each page.
- If any of the counts were wrong, they did not simply fix the mistake. They threw the page away and started over.

For hundreds of years, this is how the Old Testament was preserved.

We know the OT was translated into Greek about 200 BC. That Greek OT was called the Septuagint, and it was the Bible of Jesus' day. However, for centuries the oldest manuscripts we had of the Septuagint were from 900 AD. So, there was a 1300-year gap between the translation of the OT into Greek and the production of the oldest copy that we had. Because of that long gap, skeptics from the 18th to the 20th centuries insisted that the prophecies about Jesus that we find in Isaiah were added hundreds of years after the fact, and that is why they seemed so incredibly accurate.



Then an amazing discovery was made in 1947 by a shepherd boy in some caves near the Dead Sea. The Dead Sea Scrolls, perhaps the greatest archeological find of all time, contained complete copies of every book of the OT except Esther. And guess what – they found a complete copy of Isaiah that was written in 150 BC, over 1000 years earlier than the earliest copy previously in existence, and it agreed 100% with the existing manuscripts, right down to the punctuation! This gives us confidence that the text has indeed been faithfully preserved for centuries. And that's the manuscript test.

The Archeology Test

Let me just briefly say that while archeology cannot and will not conclusively prove the Bible to be true, no finding of archeology has ever disputed a historical claim in the Bible. Not one. Skeptical archeologists love to claim that what you find in the Bible is only true if you can also find it in the ground, but that logic is faulty. Even so, what archeologists do discover continually confirms the Biblical accounts.

What we can conclude is that the Bible is far and away more trustworthy, more authentic, and more accurate historically than any other work of antiquity.

The Bible Is Scientifically Accurate

02

The Bible doesn't promote the science of any particular era, because the conclusions of science change as it advances. That is the nature of science.

Instead, **the Bible presents truth, which never changes.** The Bible doesn't use scientific language, but the Bible never gives bad science. In fact, the Bible is always ahead of the science of any given time period, because it is true. Johannes Kepler, the famous astronomer and mathematician, said, "**Science is simply thinking God's thoughts after Him.**"

Modern evolutionary scientists want us to believe that the more we learn, the more we discover just how wrong the Bible is. The fact is that the opposite is true. Because the Bible is true, the more we learn, the more we discover how right the Bible is. Here is a quick example.

In 1861 a famous book was published by the French Academy of Science entitled **Fifty-One Incontrovertible Proofs that the Bible is Scientifically Inaccurate.** Today, over 150 years later, all 51 incontrovertible proofs have been proven false...by science! **Truth does not change.**



I said that the Bible is always ahead of the science of any given time period. Let me give you just one example.

The ancient Greeks believed the earth was held up by a giant named Atlas. Even though the New Testament is written mostly in Greek, it never mentions Atlas. Why not? Because it is not true.

Did you know that the oldest known piece of literature in the world is the book of Job? Before the Greeks ever wrote down their mythology, Job wrote:



Job 26:7 “God stretches the sky over empty space and hangs the earth on nothing.”

We now know thanks to science that this is 100% true. How did Job know it without telescopes or satellites? Because all Scripture is the breath of God, and all of God’s words are true.

The Bible Is Prophetically Accurate

03

The Bible is a prophetic book in which God often makes predictions about the future. Thousands of events predicted in the Bible have happened exactly as God said, the most famous and most important of which relate to the birth, life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

There are dozens of these. We call them messianic prophecies, because they apply to Jesus, the Messiah. What if we were to pick just thirteen – thirteen prophecies that are perhaps the most familiar to most folks? These would include which Jewish tribe he would be from, his ancestry from King David, his birth in Bethlehem, the nature of his death, and even the timing of his death counting the number of years after the decree to rebuild Jerusalem!



There is no way a man could purposefully order his life to fulfill all thirteen prophecies, because a man cannot orchestrate his own birth. So, out of the dozens of messianic prophecies in the Bible, what are the chances of just thirteen of most well-known being randomly fulfilled in one man? A very conservative estimate is 1 in 100,000,000,000,000,000 (100 quintillion).[1]

[1] Defending Your Faith, Dr. Mark Bird, pg. 128

The only logical explanation for the Bible's fulfilled prophecies is that its Author is the One who knows everything. You can trust Him. You can trust his Word.

The Bible Is Confirmed by Jesus

04

Jesus said:

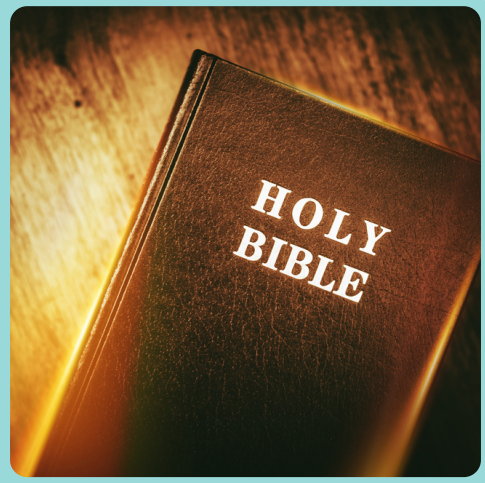


Matthew 5:18 "I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished."

As we already mentioned, the Bible of Jesus' day was what we now call the Old Testament, and Jesus trusted every word of it. Jesus said:



John 10:35 "Scripture is always true."



Conclusion



Today I've given you four compelling reasons why we can trust the Bible.

- 1.** The Bible is historically accurate. No other ancient document is as verifiably authentic and accurate. The evidence is rock solid.
- 2.** The Bible is scientifically accurate. The Bible does not use scientific language, and yet it does not contain bad science. In fact, the Bible is always ahead of the scientific knowledge of the day.
- 3.** The Bible is prophetically accurate. The fulfilled prophecies of scripture are so specific and so accurate that no explanation other than divine inspiration makes any sense at all.
- 4.** The Bible is confirmed by Jesus. The central figure in all of human history, Jesus, the risen Son of God, never questioned the accuracy or authority of the Bible. On the contrary, He confirmed it.

The next time you find yourself wondering if the Bible is a book you can trust, you can be confident that it is.

What is your one takeaway from this session?

