

Is the Bible Reliable?

4 Areas of Reliability

- I) Date of the New Testament
- II) Manuscripts of the New Testament
- III) Archeological Evidence for the New Testament
- IV) Non Biblical Evidence for the New Testament

I) Date of the New Testament.

1) When was it written?

- If it was written during the same century as the life of Christ, then we have potentially a good source of information about the life of Christ.
- But if it was written centuries after the life of Jesus, then it couldn't possibly be a good source of information about the life of Christ.
- One way to date the New Testament is to look at the existing manuscripts that we have in our possession.

Let's Explore Three Manuscripts:

1) Chester Beatty Papyrus

- Contains most of the New Testament and it dates to about 250 AD
- This means the New Testament was written before 250 AD

2) Bodmer Papyrus

- Contains most of the Gospel of John, which was probably the last Gospel written.
- It dates about 200 AD

Both of these are in the 3rd century, not the same century as Jesus.

3) John Rylands' Fragment

- It contains a passage from John 18
- It was found in the country of Egypt
- It dates to around 125 AD

Interesting to note about this document, it was written in 125 AD, but John was not written in Egypt, so it took time for it to get there. So, the book of John was written well before the date of 125 AD.

Therefore, this pushes most of the New Testament into the 1st century because the Gospel of John was one of the last New Testament books written.

2) Another way to test the dating of the New Testament is quotes from early church fathers.

Let's explore three Early Church Fathers:

- 1) Polycarp
- 2) Ignatius
- 3) Clement of Rome

1) Polycarp...wrote letters to other Christians in 110 AD. Quotes all 4 Gospels and the majority of the Pauline Epistles.

2) Ignatius...wrote letters to other Christians and quotes from 24 different books of the New Testament.

3) Clement of Rome...quotes from 3 different Gospels; Matthew, Mark, and Luke. He writes in 96 AD in the 1st century.

This means those books were created before that date.

3) Internal Evidence

A) Let's examine the Gospel of Luke and Acts of the Apostles.

-- The writer of Luke and Acts focuses their writings around the city of Jerusalem...In Acts 1:8 for example.

-- The city of Jerusalem is the focal point.

-- What is not included in these 2 books is the destruction of Jerusalem.

-- Destruction of Jerusalem happened in 70 AD

-- If their focal point is the city of Jerusalem and they don't mention the destruction of Jerusalem; then, the books were written before that date.

Luke and Acts were written before 70 AD.

4) Importance of an early dating of the New Testament

A) Eye witnesses to Jesus were alive when the documents were written

B) Legends were too early to develop.

-- Scholars have determined that it take 2 generations to pass before a legend can corrupt a historical narrative.

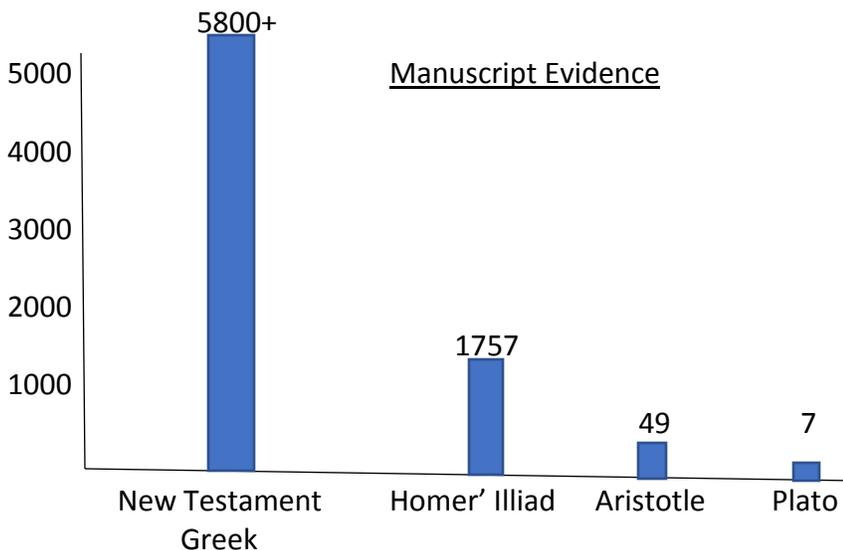
II) Manuscripts of the New Testament

-- We know the New Testament was written before 70 AD, but we do not have original document...what we have are copies or manuscripts.

1) So, the question is...do we have enough copies or manuscripts to compare and contrast to reproduce the originals?

-- We **do not** have the original autographs or documents of ANY ancient documents.

-- So, how many manuscripts of the New Testament do we have and how does it compare to other ancient manuscripts?



- New Testament has more ancient manuscripts than any other ancient document on the planet.
- New Testament can be reproduced with 99.5% accuracy.
- Meaning...there is .5% of New Testament that we don't know exactly what it says. That .5% does not effect any doctrine or belief in Christianity.
- For example, Matthew 1 states in one manuscript "Christ Jesus", but in another manuscript it states "Jesus Christ". So in original manuscript, we do not know if in Matthew 1 it is "Christ Jesus" or "Jesus Christ".

So we know the New Testament was written in same century as Jesus and we have enough manuscripts to compare and contrast to reproduce the New Testament with a high degree of confidence.

2) Now must ask...did the writers write it down accurately I the first place?

- Here, you need to look at internal evidence.

A) Embarrassing Detail

- This looks at the narrative of the New Testament and one of the things we find is how highly embarrassing the disciples, who wrote the New Testament, are and how foolish they look when they describe their experiences with Jesus.

For example:

- Peter denied Jesus 3 times.
- If you're going to lie about this event, you don't put yourself in a bad light.
- But think of all the embarrassing details of the disciples...but they recorded it anyway.
- This is an indication that they are telling the truth.

3) Another piece of internal evidence to know what they wrote is accurate is called "Variation of Detail"

- When you compare the different Gospels, which we have 4, they don't say the exact same thing, the exact same way, with the exact same emphasis, in the exact same order.
- If they did that, it would actually be an indicator of conspiracy, that they made it up.

For example:

- Bride and grooms account of their wedding.
- Each one will emphasis and describe different things even though at their own wedding!!

III) Archeological Evidence for the Reliability of the Bible

1) Old Testament Archeological Discoveries

A) Dead Sea Scrolls

- Discovered in 1947 in Qumran, Israel
- Contains every book in the Old Testament except the book of Esther
- Can compare the Dead Sea Scrolls to the Masoretic Text of 900 AD
- The Dead Sea Scrolls were written in 100 BC...it fills in a thousand year gap.
- When compare the two, the transmission process of the Old Testament was unbelievably accurate.

B) House of David Inscription

- Discovered in Tel Dan, Israel in 1993
- It's the earliest mention of King David outside the Bible.

C) Cylinder of Nabonidus

- It was discovered in Iraq in 1854
- It corroborates Bel Shazzar as the last King of Babylon in Daniel 5

2) New Testament Archeological Discoveries

A) Caesaria Maritima

- This was a palace built by Herod the Great on the coast of the Mediterranean Sea in Israel.
- In Caesarea Maritima, they discovered the Pilot Stone Inscription.
- This confirms the existence and office of Pontius Pilate and even crosses the dates of Jesus' life.
- Remember, Pilot was the Roman Governor who condemned Jesus to death.

B) Caiaphas Ossuary

- This is a bone box or coffin that has the inscription of the side with Caiaphas' name.
- The bone box contains the bones of the high priest Caiaphas.
- Remember, Caiaphas was the high priest.

3) Pool of Silam

- In John 9, you find the miracle of Jesus healing the blind man.
- This pool has been discovered.

4) Archeological Evidence of the Crucifixion

- Crucified heel bone...heel bone of an individual who was crucified with a nail still in it.

"Archeology has not produced anything that is unequivocally a contradiction to the Bible."

John McRay

- Over 30,000 archeological discoveries that relate to the Bible that confirm the reliability of it.
- Of all the world religions, only the Bible has archeological evidence that supports its history and reliability.

IV) Non Biblical evidences for the Reliability of the Bible

1) Quotations from the early church fathers.

- Over 36,000 from the New Testament
- 47% of the New Testament could be reproduced by just using early church father's quotations.

2) Secular Testimony

- These are sources that are not Christian, they are Jewish, Greek, Roman historians and rulers.
- Examples:

A) Josephus – Jewish historian from 37-100 AD

-- As a Roman captive, he wrote a book called *Jewish Antiquities* which confirms the life of Christ, His resurrection, and the persecution of the disciples.

B) Cornelius Tacitus – Roman historian from 55-117 AD

-- Names Jesus by name as the founder of Christianity.

C) Pliny the Younger – Roman Governor who wrote in 112 AD about the Christians who worshipped Christ

-- He would mention how he would kill Christians trying to get them to curse Christ as he tortured them, but he said genuine Christians would never deny Christ.

D) Lucian – Greek Satirist in the 2nd century.

E) Suetonius – Roman historian about AD 120

F) Thallus – Sumerian historian writing in AD 52

-- If only combined secular testimony about the Bible, this is what you would get:

1. Jesus was crucified by Pontius Pilot at Passove time.
2. It is believed by His disciples that Jesus rose on the third day.
3. The church leaders charged Christ with sorcery (performing of miracles)
4. Christianity could not be contained and spread into all the Roman world.
5. Nero and other Roman rulers persecuted Christians.
6. Early Christians denied Polytheism, the belief in many gods.
7. Followers lived dedicated lives according to Jesus' teachings.
8. Followers worshipped Christ as God.

“While this evidence is not extensive it is noteworthy that it does not in any way conflict with, but rather confirms the historical information in the New Testament.”

Paul Barnett – Professor of ancient history at Macquarie University in Australia.

-- **So in conclusion, secular testimony is congruent with the New Testament reliability.**

-- **So, we have 4 reasons to believe the Reliability of the Bible:**

I) Dating is where we want it to be.

II) We have manuscript evidence that confirms what the original says.

III) Archeological evidence is continually pointing to the historicity of the New Testament.

IV) Non Biblical sources are congruent with the New Testament narrative.