

# HOW CAN WE TRUST THE BIBLE?

## APOLOGETICS “GROUND RULES”

1. God is just as concerned with our **character** as he is with our **content**.  
It won't do us or God any good to know the truth but be unable or unwilling to communicate it with love and respect.
2. Our aim is to win the **person**, NOT the **argument**.  
God doesn't need us to defend him, he can do that on his own. We are ambassadors, not soldiers of his truth.
3. You don't need to know **all** the answers, but know that there **are** answers.
4. Understand the limits of apologetics.  
It can clear the way for the hearer, but it can't convert the soul of a sinner.
5. Don't be afraid to leave questions answered sometimes.  
People don't have a knowledge problem—they have a sin problem.
6. A critic will say, “Give me one reason to believe the Bible?”  
The point is that there isn't one reason to believe the Bible. . .there are tons of them!

**In a lawsuit the first to speak seems right, until someone comes forward and cross-examines. - Proverbs 18:17**

## CAN WE REALLY TRUST THAT THE BIBLE IS THE WORD OF GOD? HERE ARE SOME REASONS WHY THE ANSWER IS A RESOUNDING YES!

### COHESIVENESS

- There are 39 books in the Old Testament or “Hebrew Canon” and there are 27 books in the New Testament.
- There are 40 different and unique authors from many different backgrounds including, political and military leaders, fishermen, shepherds, kings, doctors, historians, and even a tax collector.
- It was written on three different continents: Asia, Africa, and Europe.
- It was written in three different languages: Hebrew, Greek, and Aramaic.
- It was written over a span of 1,500 years.

And yet, despite incredible odds, the Bible has an amazing cohesiveness—one unfolding story centered on Christ, with no contradiction on “hot topics” such as marriage, homosexuality, lying, parenting, nature, or the character of God!

### SCIENCE

*He spreads out the northern skies over empty space; he suspends the earth over nothing. - Job 26:7*

- At the time this was written, many believed that the earth rode on the back of a large animal. In fact, it wasn't discovered that the earth “hung in space” until about 1650AD.

*He sits enthroned above the circle of the earth. . . - Isaiah 40:22*

- This scripture was written in 700BC, Aristotle didn't suggest that the Earth was sphere until 300 years later.

*This is how you are to build it: The ark is to be three hundred cubits long, fifty cubits wide and thirty cubits high. Make a roof for it, leaving below the roof an opening one cubit high all around. . . - Genesis 6*

- In 1609AD a ship in Holland was built to these dimensions and it forever revolutionized ship building. In the 1900s every ship built used these dimensions.

## THE BIBLE AND HYGIENE: AHEAD OF ITS TIME

*When a man is cleansed from his discharge, he is to count off seven days for his ceremonial cleansing; he must wash his clothes and bathe himself with fresh water, and he will be clean. - Leviticus 15:13*

*You are to be my holy people. So do not eat the meat of an animal torn by wild beasts; throw it to the dogs. - Exodus 22:31*

*For the unclean person, put some ashes from the burned purification offering into a jar and pour fresh water over them. Then a man who is ceremonially clean is to take some hyssop, dip it in the water and sprinkle the tent and all the furnishings and the people who were there. He must also sprinkle anyone who touched a human bone or anyone who has been killed or anyone who has died a natural death. - Numbers 19:17-18*

In Numbers 19, God specifically prescribed the use of water containing ash and hyssop. The ashes in combination with the oil of the hyssop plant made a kind of soap. It just so happens that the hyssop plant, a type of marjoram which grows in the Middle East, contains in its oil about 50% carvacrol, an organic compound almost identical to the commonly used antifungal and antibacterial compound thymol. Therefore, ash and hyssop work both as a soap and as a natural antibiotic. Does it seem reasonable to believe this was just luck on Moses' part? It is extremely interesting to note that the stringent practice of hand washing between the touching of patients or after touching dead bodies was only introduced to modern medicine by the work of Ignaz Semmelweis in the 1840s and 1850s.

Semmelweis worked at that time in a hospital in Vienna at which one in six of the maternity patients died in the hospital. No wonder women preferred to have their children at home! These depressing statistics were typical numbers for hospitals at that time. Semmelweis noted that a typical practice for the doctors in hospitals was to perform autopsies on the patients who had died the previous day before immediately proceeding to examine their patients. Today, of course, one cringes to hear of this practice, but it should be noted that the concept of infectious disease, commonly known as the germ theory, was not introduced to the world or proved by modern science until the nineteenth century by the work of the likes of Pasteur, Lister and Semmelweis. Semmelweis ordered that all doctors performing autopsies must wash their hands thoroughly before working with live patients. There was an immediate fourteen-fold decrease in mortality. If only the doctors had heeded the commands of Moses concerning washing after the touching of dead bodies before this date!

-John Oakes

## MANUSCRIPTS

### The Old Testament

- It was carried along by Scribes who copied the manuscripts by hand before the invention of the printing press in 1450AD.
- The OT was written from 1500 to 1000BC.
- The scribes went to incredible lengths to make sure the manuscripts had no mistakes and were identical to the originals:

They counted the number of the times each letter was written to make sure that it occurred the same number of times in each copy.

They knew the middle letter of the Pentateuch so that they could check each manuscript, a different letter than the original meant something was off.

They also knew the middle letter of the entire Hebrew Bible so that they could check each manuscript and make sure nothing was off or out of place.

They numbered verses, words, and letters of every book so that they could be checked, re-checked, and referenced.

They also calculated the middle word and middle letter of each book.

Scribes would check one another's work. . . erasure marks occurred where mistakes had been scraped away from the animal hide with a sharp object. These erasure marks would be counted:

Temple Standard: 0-3 erasure marks

Common Use: 4-8 erasure marks

Anything with over 8 corrected mistakes was burned!

## THE DEAD SEA SCROLLS

Some have claimed that our oldest copies of the Bible were tampered with to make it look as though Jesus was fulfilling prophecies. However, this argument was put to rest in 1947 when a shepherd boy found the Dead Sea Scrolls while throwing rocks into a cave in Qumran. These scrolls dated back to 150-100BC and matched the scriptures and manuscripts that we have today, proving that the Bible could not have been doctored!

### The New Testament

- Letters were written down and passed to different churches and copied.
- These letters were written on papyri or animal skins, archaeologists are able to dig up and find old manuscripts.
- In 1450AD the printing press was invented and solidified the text.
- How can we know if something that happened 2000 years ago is true? The crucial gap is not between when the events happened and when we read about them. The crucial gap is between when the events occurred and when they were written down. The length of that time is what gives us proof of their veracity.

AUTHOR	BOOK	DATE WRITTEN	EARLIEST COPIES	TIME GAP	NO. OF COPIES
Homer	<i>Iliad</i>	800 B.C.	c. 400 B.C.	c. 400 yrs.	643
Herodotus	<i>History</i>	480-425 B.C.	c. A.D. 900	c. 1,350 yrs.	8
Thucydides	<i>History</i>	460-400 B.C.	c. A.D. 900	c. 1,300 yrs	8
Plato		400 B.C.	c. A.D. 900	c. 1,300 yrs	7
Caesar	<i>Gallic Wars</i>	100-44 B.C.	c. A.D. 900	c. 1,000 yrs	10
Livy	<i>History of Rome</i>	59 B.C. – A.D. 17	4 <sup>th</sup> Cent. (partial) mostly 10th cent.	c. 400 yrs c. 1000 yrs	1 partial 19 copies
Tacitus	<i>Annals</i>	A.D. 100	c. A.D. 1100	c. 1,000 yrs	20
Pliny the Younger	<i>Natural History</i>	A.D. 61-113	c. A.D. 850	c. 750 yrs	7
New Testament		A.D. 50-100	c. 114 (fragment) c. 200 (books) c. 250 (most of NT) c. 325 (complete NT)	+50 yrs 100 yrs 150 yrs. 225 yrs.	5366

## EARLY CHURCH FATHERS WHO QUOTED THE NEW TESTAMENT IN OUTSIDE TEXTS

Other writers and leaders using direct quotes from the New Testament letters, are evidence that the events described occurred and that what we have now is the same as the original.

### **Clement of Rome (96AD)**

Quotes from ten of the twenty-seven NT books.

### **Ignatius (115AD)**

Quotes from Matthew, John, and Luke.

### **Polycarp (120AD)**

Quotes from Matthew, Mark, Luke, Acts, 1 & 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, 1 & 2 Thessalonians, 1 & 2 Timothy, Hebrews, 1 Peter, and 1 & 2 John.

These quotations are so extensive that the New Testament could be virtually reconstructed from them without the use of New Testament manuscripts. -J. Harold Greenlee

It is interesting to note that within the writings of the early church fathers there are no quotes from the gnostic gospel. . .ever!

## TEXTUAL CRITICISM

There are some who argue that the manuscripts have over 100,000 errors. Take a look at the following to see what some of these "errors" look like:

Manuscript 1: Jesus Christ is the Savior of the whole worl.

Manuscript 2: Christ Jesus is the Savior of the whole world.

Manuscript 3: Jesus Christ s the Savior of the whole world.

Manuscript 4: Jesus Christ is th Savior of the whle world.

Manuscript 5: Jesus Christ is the Savior of the whole wrld.

These claimed "mistakes" and "errors" are purely superficial and do not change or mar the message or content.

## INTERNAL EVIDENCE

Many ask if there are contradictions within the New Testament—a logical thought, given that the NT had so many different and unique writers.

Conflict: Matthew relates that Judas died by hanging himself. In Acts it says that Judas fell headlong in a field and “his body burst open and all his intestines spilled out.”

Theory: Judas hanged himself off the side of a cliff, the rope gave way and he fell headlong into the field below. In fact, the traditional site of Judas’ death is a field at the bottom of a cliff outside of Jerusalem.

### How we can answer “contradictions”

1. The unexplained is not unexplainable
  - At one time there was no explanation for meteors, eclipses, tornadoes, hurricanes, and earthquakes, or even how a bumblebee could fly.
  - For example, some claim that Moses could not have written the first five books of the Bible because there was no written language in Moses’ day. . .however, this is wrong, it is a historical fact that written language existed for thousands of years before Moses.
  - At one point Hittite people (mentioned in the Bible) were completely unknown to historians. There is now a Hittite library in Turkey!
2. Understand the context of a passage.
  - Psalm 14:1 says, “There is no god.” Reading the entire passage gives us the context: “The fool says in his heart, ‘there is no god.’”
3. The Bible is a human book with human characteristics
  - There are some literary embellishments and exaggerations just like in other writings. For example, in Matthew when Jesus tells people to cut off their hands or gouge out their eyes.
4. Later revelation supercedes previous revelation.
  - Laws in the old testament evolved after God took care of sin and sacrifice on the cross. Many of the old laws which were meant to display God’s holiness were loosened. . .their changing doesn’t show a contradiction, instead it displays the power of Jesus.

## EXTERNAL EVIDENCE

1. Critics charge or imply that the NT is unreliable because it was written by disciples of Jesus and there is no evidence of Jesus or NT events from non-christians of the time.
2. But the NT is not necessarily biased just because the writers were close to the one of whom they gave testimony. For example, Holocaust survivors are in the best position to describe what happened because they were closest to the events at hand. In the same way, a courtroom testimony from the victim of a vicious attack is not considered unreliable either.

3. We have many non-christian sources available that help us confirm the writings of the disciples: Lucian of Samasota, Pliny the Younger, Tacitus, etc.
4. Non-christian sources from Greek, Roman, Jewish, and Samaritan sources confirm the following facts:
  - Jesus was from Nazareth.
  - He lived a wise and virtuous life.
  - He was crucified in Palestine under Pontius Pilate during the reign of Tiberius Caesar at Passover time, being considered the Jewish King.
  - He was believed by his disciples to have been raised from the dead three days after his death.
  - His enemies acknowledged that he performed unusual feats they called sorcery.
  - His small band of disciples multiplied rapidly, spreading even as far as Rome.
  - His disciples denied polytheism, lived moral lives, and worshipped Christ as divine.
5. Archaeology
  - Found ruins of Sodom and Gomorrah show earthquake activity, that various layers of earth were disrupted and hurled high into the air, Bitumen is plentiful and an accurate description would be that brimstone (Bituminous pitch) was hurled down there. There is evidence that sedimentary rock layers have been molded together by intense heat.
    - Jericho wall fell outwards when the walls of conquered cities usually fall inwards.
    - Slingshots were one of the primary weapons used in David's day, Saul's fortress at Gibeah has been excavated.

## CRITICS

### **Sir William Ramsey**

- Was very skeptical of the accuracy of the New Testament.
- He ventured to Asia Minor to refute the historicity of Luke and Acts, both written by the disciple Luke.
- Dig after archaeological dig revealed evidence that supported Luke's accounts.
- Without a single error, Luke was accurate in naming 32 countries, 54 cities, and 9 islands.

Sir William Ramsey's conclusion was this: Luke is a historian of the first rank. . .this author should be placed along with the greatest of historians.

*To suppose that the eye, with all its inimitable contrivances for adjusting the focus to different distance, for admitting different amounts of light, and for the correction of spherical and chromatic aberration, could have been formed by natural selection, seems, I freely confess, absurd in the highest possible degree.*

-Charles Darwin in "Origin of Species"