

**Can We Trust the Bible?**  
**For the week of April 14, 2024**

**Reflection**

1. What were some of the takeaways, for you, from Sunday's sermon?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. Were there questions, comments, concerns...?

That the Bible originated in the mind of God makes it not only unique among all books, it is unique among all the treasures on earth. President Abraham Lincoln appropriately referred to the Bible as "the best gift God has given to man." Indeed it is. It reveals God's eternal plan of redeeming the fallen human race. Yet even though billions of copies of it have been distributed throughout the world, many continue to question its truth. Is the Bible a book of mythology, or is it the true, inspired Word of God? This question is of the greatest importance to every person, whether they know it or not.<sup>1</sup>

**Internal Evidence:**

There are both internal and external evidences that the Bible is truly God's Word. The internal evidences are those things within the Bible that testify of its divine origin. One of the first internal evidences that the Bible is truly God's Word is seen in its unity. Even though it is really sixty-six individual books, written on three continents, in three different languages, over a period of approximately 1500 years, by more than 40 authors who came from many walks of life, the Bible remains one unified book from beginning to end without contradiction. This unity is unique from all other books and is evidence of the divine origin of the words which God moved men to record.<sup>2</sup>

Sunday's sermon underscored how many times the writers of the scriptures quote scriptures 63,779 times! (Do a phrase search of "it is written" just as an example.)

Christ and the apostles did much of their teaching *from* the Old Testament, but what is sometimes overlooked is that they also taught a great deal *about* the Old Testament. Both direct and indirect references unmistakably manifest their affirmation that the Old Testament writings are the inscripturated Word of God. If Jesus did indeed teach that the Jewish Scriptures were the inspired Word of God, then on his confirmed divine authority it can be established that the Old Testament is the written revelation of God.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Got Questions Ministries, [\*Got Questions? Bible Questions Answered\*](#) (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2002–2013).

<sup>2</sup> Got Questions Ministries, [\*Got Questions? Bible Questions Answered\*](#) (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2002–2013).

<sup>3</sup> Norman L. Geisler, [\*Christian Apologetics\*](#) (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1976), 353–354.

## Observations/Thoughts on Internal Evidence:

### Manuscript Evidence

#### **Comparison of the New Testament with Ancient Secular Writings**

From the standpoint of a documentary historian the New Testament has vastly superior evidence to that of any other book from the ancient world. The following chart will reveal the superior number, dating, and degree of accuracy of the New Testament over other books.

<b>COMPARISON OF ANCIENT TEXTS</b>				
Author	Date Written	Earliest Copy	Number of Copies	Accuracy of Copy
Caesar	1st Cent. B.C.	900 A.D.	10	—
Livy	1st Cent. B.C.	—	20	—
Tacitus	c. 100 A.D.	1100 A.D.	20	—
Thucydides	5th Cent. B.C.	900 A.D.	8	—
Herodotus	5th Cent. B.C.	900 A.D.	8	—
Demosthenes	4th Cent. B.C.	1100 A.D.	200	—
<i>Mahabharata</i>	—	—	—	90%
Homer	9th Cent. B.C.	—	643	95%
New Testament	1st Cent. A.D. (50-100 A.D.)	2nd Cent. A.D. (c. 130 A.D. f.)	5,000	99 + %

<sup>4</sup>

As it turns out, rather than being disadvantaged by not having the original writings, we find ourselves in a position of good fortune. If we had the originals, a critic of the writings would only need to call into question one document. Instead, a critic needs to deal with over 5,300 documents that agree substantially 99.5 percent of the time. This ultimately carries as much or more weight than having the originals.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Norman L. Geisler, [\*Christian Apologetics\*](#) (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1976), 307.

<sup>5</sup> Doug Powell, [\*Holman QuickSource Guide to Christian Apologetics\*](#) (Nashville, TN: Holman Reference, 2006), 162.

## **Observations/Thoughts on Manuscript Evidence:**

### **Historical Evidence**

The accurate transmission of the text is, of course, irrelevant if the history it purports to preserve can be shown to be invented or contradicted by archaeological finds. Fortunately, there is no small amount of sites that have yielded and/or continue to yield finds relating to the ancient Hebrews. Like the New Testament, many volumes have been dedicated to the cataloging of such finds. A very few selected highlights are mentioned below.

#### **The Taylor Prism**

*The excavations at the biblical city of Nineveh have given archaeologists a great wealth of findings. From 705 to 681 BC Sennacherib ruled Assyria from Nineveh and housed his great library there. This library included up to 100,000 texts including what became known as the Taylor Prism. This prism is a six-sided clay cylinder with an inscription detailing Sennacherib's siege of Jerusalem. It also mentions Hezekiah as being "like a caged bird within his royal capital."<sup>12</sup> 2 Kings 18–19, 2 Chronicles 32, and Isaiah 36–37 are all corroborated by the Taylor Prism. The Taylor Prism currently resides in the British Museum.<sup>6</sup>*

#### **The Cyrus Cylinder**

A sixth-century-BC clay cylinder found in the nineteenth century bears an inscription concerning Cyrus the Persian. After taking control of Babylon in 539 BC, he issued a decree allowing Babylonian captives to return to their homes and to worship their own gods. This decree corresponds to an account regarding Cyrus in Ezra 1:1–3; 6:3 (cp. 2 Ch 36:23; Is 44:28). It can be seen in the British Museum.<sup>7</sup>

#### **The Moabite Stone**

In 1868 a stone was discovered in Palestine that contained an inscription in ancient Moabite. Not only does the inscription mention Mesha, the Moabite king who rebelled against Israelite rule in 2 Kings 3, but it also mentions the name "Yahweh." The Moabite Stone is housed in the Louvre.<sup>8</sup>

#### **The Tel Dan Stele**

Found in 1993/94 in Israel, this is an Aramaic inscription apparently commissioned by Hazael to commemorate his victory at Ramoth Gilead (2 Kg 8:28–29). It is noteworthy for referring to the kingdom of Judah as the "House of David." This is the first extra-biblical evidence for the fact that the dynasty of David ruled in Jerusalem.<sup>9</sup>

Much information about the Mediterranean world at that time (Biblical) that was found only in the New Testament has now been corroborated by archaeological finds. Titles, names of local

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<sup>6</sup> Doug Powell, [Holman QuickSource Guide to Christian Apologetics](#) (Nashville, TN: Holman Reference, 2006), 194.

<sup>7</sup> Doug Powell, [Holman QuickSource Guide to Christian Apologetics](#) (Nashville, TN: Holman Reference, 2006), 195.

<sup>8</sup> Doug Powell, [Holman QuickSource Guide to Christian Apologetics](#) (Nashville, TN: Holman Reference, 2006), 197.

<sup>9</sup> Doug Powell, [Holman QuickSource Guide to Christian Apologetics](#) (Nashville, TN: Holman Reference, 2006), 197.

rulers, time periods, and landmarks that were once thought to be in error or even fictional are now considered to be fact.<sup>10</sup> The Pilate Stone and the Gallio or Delphi inscription. Other notable finds include the Caiaphas Ossuary (a box used to bury the bones of Caiaphas), found outside Jerusalem in 1990; the Sergius Paulus inscription documents the existence of Paul's first convert on Cyprus; the Pool of Siloam;<sup>15</sup> the Pool of Bethesda; and inscriptions documenting Lysanius as the tetrarch of Abilene at the time John the Baptist began his ministry according to Luke.<sup>11</sup>

Archaeology has only ever served to corroborate the Biblical account.

### **Observation/Thoughts on Historical Evidence:**

### **Prophetic Evidence**

Here are a few of the over 300 prophecies:

- The Messiah will be born of a woman (Gen. 3:15; cf. Gal. 4:4).
- He would be born of a virgin (Isa. 7:14; cf. Matt. 1:21 f.).
- He will be of the seed of Abraham (Gen. 12:1–3 and 22:18; cf. Matt. 1:1 and Gal. 3:16).
- He will be of the tribe of Judah (Gen. 49:10; cf. Luke 3:23, 33; Heb. 7:14).
- He will be of the House of David (II Sam. 7:12 f.; cf. Matt 1:1).
- His birthplace will be Bethlehem (Mic. 5:2; cf. Matt. 2:1; Luke 2:4–7).
- He will be anointed by the Holy Spirit (Isa. 11:2; cf. Matt. 3:16, 17).
- He will have a ministry of miracles (Isa. 35:5, 6; cf. Matt. 9:35).
- He will cleanse the temple (Mal. 3:1; cf. Matt. 21:12).
- He will be rejected by his Jewish people (Ps. 118:22; cf. I Peter 2:7).
- He will die a humiliating death (Ps. 22 and Isa. 53; cf. Matt. 27) involving:
  - silence before his accusers (Isa. 53:7; cf. Matt. 27:12–19)
  - being mocked (Ps. 22:7, 8; cf. Matt. 27:31)
  - piercing his hands and feet (Ps. 22:16; cf. Luke 23:33)
  - being crucified with thieves (Isa. 53:12; cf. Matt. 17:38)
  - buried in a rich man's tomb (Isa. 53:9; cf. Matt. 27:57–60)
- He will rise from the dead (Ps. 2:7; 16:10; cf. Acts 2:31 and Mark 16:6).

### **Observation/Thoughts on Prophetic Evidence:**

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<sup>10</sup> Doug Powell, [Holman QuickSource Guide to Christian Apologetics](#) (Nashville, TN: Holman Reference, 2006), 163.

<sup>11</sup> Doug Powell, [Holman QuickSource Guide to Christian Apologetics](#) (Nashville, TN: Holman Reference, 2006), 163.