

TRUTH ON TRIAL

A 12-week series on
the Evidence for
Christianity



Sermon Notes 3/13/2022

“The Truth about the New Testament”

How can we know that the New Testament is true?

1. The **C**_____ the Bible makes about itself
1 Corinthians 14:37
1 Thessalonians 2:13
2. The **H**_____ accuracy of the Bible
Luke 1:1-4
Luke 3:1-2
3. The **R**_____ unity of the Bible
1 Timothy 5:18
2 Peter 3:16
4. The **I**_____ of the Bible
1 Peter 1:24-25
Matthew 24:35; Mark 13:31; Luke 21:33
5. The **S**_____ support for the Bible
John 1:1-3
Hebrews 1:10-12
6. The **T**_____ of transformed lives
2 Corinthians 5:17
1 Peter 2:24-25

Small Group Discussion Guide

Lesson 10: “The Truth about the New Testament”

As Christians, we should know why we can trust the books of the New Testament. Everything Christians are required to believe, and practice can be found in the New Testament. In our last lesson, we discussed the Old Testament. While there is abundant evidence confirming the truthfulness of the Old Testament, there is even more evidence that verifies the accuracy and authority of the New Testament. In this lesson we will discuss the truthfulness of New Testament. Can we know that the New Testament is true?

As with the Old Testament, the acrostic CHRIST is an excellent way to remember some of the reasons we can know for certain that the New Testament really is the word of God.

Claims the Bible makes about itself
Historical accuracy of the Bible
Remarkable unity of the Bible
Indestructibility of the Bible
Scientific support for the Bible
Testimonies of transformed lives

1. Claims the Bible makes about itself

When someone is accused of a crime and brought to trial the first thing the judge will ask of the defendant is “How do you plea?” If the New Testament is on trial, the first thing we need to ask is “How does it plea?” Over and over the New Testament boldly claims to be the word of God. There are many passages we could look at where the Bible claims to be the word of God. Consider the following examples:

1 Corinthians 14:37
1 Thessalonians 2:13
2 Timothy 3:16-17
2 Peter 1:20-21

2. Historical accuracy of the Bible

Whenever the Bible describes an event, a person, or a place, it does so with precise historical accuracy. Even the ancient historians who were opposed to Christianity confirm the historical accuracy of the Bible. Josephus was a Jewish historian living in the first century. He was not a Christian, but his account about Jesus confirms the historical accuracy of the New Testament.¹

Tacitus was a Roman historian in the second century. He was not a Christian, but his account of the death of Christ also confirms the historical accuracy of the Bible.

Nero fastened the guilt and inflicted the most exquisite tortures on a class hated for their abominations, called Christians by the populace. Christus, from whom the name had its origin, suffered the extreme penalty during the reign of Tiberius at the hands of one of our procurators, Pontius Pilate...²

Pliny was the Governor of Bithynia in Asia Minor from 109 to 111. He wrote to Emperor Trajan and asked about the formal policy concerning Christians. In his letter he described what he learned about Christians from his investigation.

They did nothing wicked or contrary to the laws; except that they rose with the morning sun and sang a hymn to Christ as to a god. But that adultery, and murder, and criminal excesses like these, were totally abhorred by them; and that in all things they acted according to the laws.³

¹ William Whiston, trans., *The Works of Flavius Josephus*, “Antiquities of the Jews” Book XVIII, 3:3 (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1987), 379.

² Lee Strobel, *The Case for Christ: A Journalist’s Personal Investigation of the Evidence for Jesus* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1998), 82.

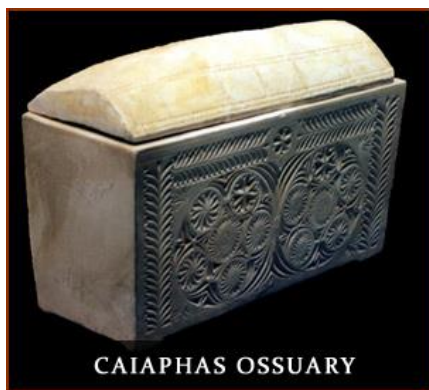
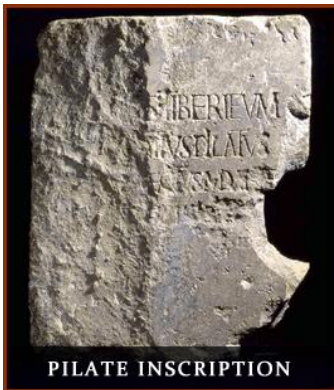
³ Christian Frederick Cruse, trans. *The Ecclesiastical History of Eusebius Pamphilus* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1955), 119.

Secular history confirms that the New Testament is historically accurate!

1. The book of Acts contains 84 historically confirmed details.⁴
2. John contains 59 historically confirmed details.⁵
3. New Testament mentions 32 people confirmed by secular sources or archaeology.⁶

Every major city and most of the minor towns in the Bible have been discovered and excavated. Every coin mentioned in the Bible has been discovered. Many inscriptions of people mentioned in the Bible have been discovered and verified as coming from the time and place described in the Bible.

The Pilate inscription was discovered in 1961. It confirms the historical fact that Pontius Pilate was the prefect of Judea during the reign of Emperor Tiberius. The Caiaphas ossuary was discovered in 1990. Joseph Caiaphas was the acting high priest in Jerusalem from AD 18 to 36. (Matt. 26:3-57; Luke 3:2; John 11:49-50; 18:13-28; Acts 4:6). This ossuary contains the bones of the high priest who condemned Jesus.



⁴ Norman L. Geisler and Frank Turek, *I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2004), 256-259.

⁵ Geisler and Turek, 263-268.

⁶ Geisler and Turek, 270.

When he wrote his Gospel and the book of Acts, Luke was conducting a detailed investigation in order to report an accurate account of historical events.

Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile an account of the things accomplished among us, just as they were handed down to us by those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and servants of the word, it seemed fitting for me as well, having investigated everything carefully from the beginning, to write it out for you in consecutive order, most excellent Theophilus; so that you may know the exact truth about the things you have been taught.—Luke 1:1-4

Luke includes specific historical details, inviting the critics to test the historical accuracy of his books.

“In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar—when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, Herod tetrarch of Galilee, his brother Philip tetrarch of Iturea and Traconitis, and Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene—during the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John son of Zechariah in the desert.”—Luke 3:1-2

The great archaeologist, William Ramsey set out to prove that the book of Acts was not historically reliable. After his investigation he became a believer.

“I began with a mind unfavorable to it [Acts]....; but more recently I found myself brought into contact with the book of Acts as an authority for the topography, antiquities, and society of Asia Minor. It was gradually borne in upon me that in various details the narrative showed marvelous truth.”⁷

⁷ William Ramsey, *St. Paul the Traveler and Roman Citizen* (New York, NY: Putnam, 1896), 189.

3. Remarkable unity of the Bible

The New Testament is a collection of 27 books written by 9 different authors. These different authors support and verify each other by quoting each other and referring to other New Testament books as “Scripture.”

In 1 Timothy 5:18, Paul quotes from Luke 10:7 and identifies it as “Scripture.” In 2 Peter 3:16, Peter refers to the letters of Paul as “Scripture.” Therefore, most of the New Testament is specifically identified by Peter and Paul as “Scripture.”

The unity of the New Testament is also confirmed by the early church fathers. After the time of the Apostles, the leaders of the early church wrote many documents defending the Christian faith. In their writings they quote from every book of the New Testament. In fact, there are so many quotes from the New Testament that even if we didn’t have any New Testament manuscripts, we would be able to compile most of the New Testament just from the quotes made by the early church fathers.⁸

4. Indestructibility of the Bible

Repeated attempts by the most powerful enemies on earth have been launched against the Bible to destroy it, but they have all ended in failure. The Bible continues to be the number one bestselling book of all time long. It has been translated into more languages than any other book and distributed in every nation.

Voltaire was a famous atheist in the eighteenth century. He claimed that “he could and would destroy in a few years what it took Christ eighteen centuries to establish. His old printing press was later used to print Bibles. His log cabin was later owned by a Bible society and filled with Bibles.”⁹

⁸ Josh McDowell and Sean McDowell, *Evidence That Demands a Verdict: Life-Changing Truth for a Skeptical World* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2017), 63.

⁹ Paul Lee Tan, *Encyclopedia of 15,000 Illustrations* (Dallas, TX: Bible Communications, 1998), 525.

For the first three centuries of Christianity the Roman government persecuted Christians. And yet the church continued to grow and spread throughout the empire. During these persecutions many Christian leaders were arrested, tortured and forced to give up their books. Many New Testament manuscripts were confiscated and burned.¹⁰ Despite these overwhelming attempts to destroy the Bible, God has preserved thousands of New Testament manuscripts.

The Manuscript Evidence for the New Testament is better than any other work of Ancient Literature!

1. EARLIER Manuscripts (early 2nd century)
2. MORE Manuscripts (5,686)
3. MORE Accurately Copied (fewer variations compared to other works of ancient literature)
4. MORE Abundantly Supported Manuscripts (in addition to the Greek manuscripts there are over 9,000 ancient manuscripts of the New Testament in other languages)¹¹

5. Scientific support for the Bible

In every area where the Bible gives us information about geology, biology, astronomy, etc., the scientific evidence has always verified what the Bible says.

Before the “Big Bang” theory was developed atheists believed that the universe was infinite in time and space with no beginning and no end. When Edwin Hubble discovered that the universe was expanding the scientific community had to admit that the Bible was right about the universe having a beginning. (See John 1:1-3)

The second law of thermodynamics teaches us that all matter and energy are in a state of decay. Again, the Bible was teaching this truth long before the secular scientists. (See Hebrews 1:10-12)

¹⁰ James North, *A History of the Church from Pentecost to Present* (Joplin, MO: 1983), 75.

¹¹ Geisler and Turek, *I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist*, 225.

6. Testimonies of Transformed Lives

The writers of the New Testament were changed by the message of the Gospel. They were so convinced that the message of the Gospel was true that they were willing to accept torture and death rather than renounce their faith in Christ.

One of the most powerful reasons to believe that the Bible really is the word of God is the personal testimonies of Christians who have been transformed from an old life of sin, addiction, futility, and hopelessness to a new life of victory, freedom, purpose, and hope. Throughout history thousands of Christians have testified to the life changing power of the Bible.

The Bible is the living word of God. It has the power to transform lives. It is the source of eternal life and abundant life. There is no other book like the Bible. It is the only book that we can trust to be the “word of God.” We can study and learn all the evidence for Christianity, but our most effective witness is going to be seen in how we live.

Discussion Questions

1. Look up the following passages and discuss what the New Testament claims about itself:

1 Corinthians 14:37

1 Thessalonians 2:13

2 Timothy 3:16-17

2 Peter 1:20-21

2. How does Paul confirm the writings of Luke in 1 Timothy 5:18?

3. How does Peter confirm the writings of Paul in 2 Peter 3:16?

4. If someone asked you why you believe that the books of the New Testament are trustworthy, what would you tell them?

5. What is your testimony about the Bible? How has the Bible made a difference in your life?