



Lesson 1- Part I: How can we know if the Bible is to be trusted?

MAPS

A. Manuscripts:

Since we don't have the original documents, how can we trust the copies? Using three main manuscript tests (bibliographic, eyewitness, and external) we can check their accuracy.

1. Test of Historicity #1

_____ – An examination of the textual transmission by which the documents reach us (the number of manuscripts and time interval between original and existing copies).

a. New Testament:

- 1.) **Manuscript evidence** – Over 24,000 fragments and copies of the N.T. (many languages). We possess over 5,300 manuscripts or portions of the (Greek) New Testament — almost 800 copied before A.D. 1000. The earliest copy dates to 125 AD (25 yrs from writing of Revelation). Nothing in ancient literature even comes close!
- 2.) **Manuscript evidence supported by various versions** – Over 15,000 copies of various translations, the earliest is 150 AD.
- 3.) **Manuscript evidence supported by early church fathers** – Suppose that the New Testament had been destroyed, and every copy of it lost by the end of the 3rd century, could it have been collected together again from the writings of the Fathers of the 2nd and 3rd centuries? Dalrymple found the entire New Testament except for 11 verses.

b. Old Testament:

- 1.) **We have more than 14,000 manuscripts** and fragments of the Old Testament of three main types: (a) approximately 10,000 from the Cairo Geniza (storeroom) find of 1897, dating back as far as about AD. 800; (b) about 190 from the Dead Sea Scrolls find of 1947-1955, the oldest dating back to 250-200 B.C.; and (c) at least 4,314 assorted other copies. The short time between the original Old Testament manuscripts (completed around 400 B.C.) and the first extensive copies (about 250 B.C.) — coupled with the more than 14,000 copies that have been discovered — ensures the trustworthiness of the Old Testament text. The earliest quoted verses (Numbers 6:24-26) date from 800-700 B.C.



2.) _____ of Old Testament by Talmudists (17 steps); AD 100-500.

- Scroll must be written on the skin of a clean animal
- Prepared for the particular use of the synagogue by a Jew
- They must be fastened together with strings taken from clean animals
- Each skin must contain a specified number of columns through entire book
- The length of each column must extend no less than 48 lines or more than 60 lines
- Column breadth must consist of exactly 30 letters
- The ink should be black, neither red, green, nor any other color and be prepared according to a definite recipe
- There must be no deviation
- Nothing – not even the shortest word – could be copied from memory; it had to be copied letter by letter
- The space of a thread must appear between every consonant
- The breadth of nine consonants had to inserted between each section
- A space of three lines had to appear between each book
- Deuteronomy had to conclude exactly with a full line
- The copyist must sit in Jewish dress
- He must wash his whole body
- He could not begin to write the name of God with a pen newly dipped in ink
- If a king addresses him while writing that name, he must take no notice of him

3.) _____ of Old Testament by Massorettes (11 steps); AD 500-900

- Scroll must be written on the skin of a clean animal
- Each skin must contain a specified number of columns throughout entire book
- The length of each column must extend no less than 48 lines or more than 60 lines
- Column breadth must consist of exactly 30 letters
- The space of a thread must appear between every consonant
- The breadth of nine consonants had to inserted between each section
- A space of three lines had to appear between each book
- Deuteronomy had to conclude exactly with a full line
- Nothing – not even the shortest word – could be copied from memory; it had to be copied letter by letter
- The scribe must count the number of times each letter of the alphabet occurred in each book and compare it to the original
- If a manuscript was found to contain even one mistake, it was discarded

4.) Witness of _____ to the **reliability of Hebrew Scriptures** – Incredible preservation. Comments regarding the comparison of the previous existing copy (from 980 AD) with the newly discovered copy of Isaiah, "...in one chapter of 166 words, there is only one word (three letters) in question after a thousand years of transmission – and this word does not significantly change the meaning of the passage." (Geisler and Nix as quoted in *Ready Defense*, p51).

NOTE: What we have is essentially what was recorded. BUT, is it a credible record from that time of those events and people and teachings and to what extent?



2. Test of Historicity #2

_____ : focuses on the eyewitness credentials of the authors. "One must listen to the claims of the document under analysis, and not assume fraud or error unless the author disqualified himself by contradictions or known factual inaccuracies." (John W. Montgomery as quoted in *Ready Defense*, p51). The Old and New Testament authors were eyewitnesses of — or interviewed eyewitnesses of — the majority of the events they described.

- a. **Old Testament** – For example, Moses participated in and was an eyewitness of the remarkable events of the Egyptian captivity, the Exodus, the forty years in the desert, and Israel's final encampment before entering the Promised Land. These events he chronicled in the first five books of the Old Testament.
- b. **New Testament** – Its writers had the same eyewitness authenticity. Luke, who wrote the Books of Luke and Acts, says that he gathered eyewitness testimony and "carefully investigated everything" (Luke 1:1-3). Peter reminded his readers that the disciples "were eyewitnesses of [Jesus'] majesty" and "did not follow cleverly invented stories" (2 Peter 1:16). John wrote, "And he who has seen has borne witness, and his witness is true; and he knows that he is telling the truth, so that you also may believe." (John 19:35)

NOTE: Truly, the Bible affirms the eyewitness credibility of its writers. BUT, is there any support from outside the Bible to what these eyewitnesses recorded – that substantiates its accuracy, reliability and authenticity? See the External Evidence Test.

3. Test of Historicity #3

_____ : Looks outside the texts themselves to ascertain the historical reliability of the historical events, geographical locations, and cultural consistency of the biblical texts. Unlike writings from other world religions which make no historical references or which fabricate histories, the Bible refers to historical events and assumes its historical accuracy. The Bible is not only the inspired Word of God, it is also a history book — and historical assertions it makes have been proven time and again.

- a. **Old Testament** – Despite heavy criticism and attempts to discredit it, the Old Testament has time and time again been proven right in its record of history – people, places, events, cultural information, civilizations, etc.
- b. **New Testament** – Many of the events, people, places, and customs in the New Testament are confirmed by secular historians who were almost contemporaries with New Testament writers. Secular historians like the Jewish Josephus (before A.D. 100), the Roman Tacitus (around A.D. 120), the Roman Suetonius (A.D. 110), and the Roman governor Pliny Secundus (A.D. 100-110) make direct reference to Jesus or affirm one or more historical New Testament references. Early church leaders such as Irenaeus, Tertullian, Julius Africanus, and Clement of Rome — all writing before A.D. 250 — shed light on New Testament historical accuracy. Even skeptical historians agree that the New Testament is a remarkable historical document.

NOTE: Hence, it is clear that there is strong external evidence to support the Bible's manuscript reliability.

**B.**

Over and over again, comprehensive field work (archaeology) and careful biblical interpretation affirm the reliability of the Bible. It is telling when a secular scholar must revise his biblical criticism in light of solid archaeological evidence.

1. **Daniel:** For years critics dismissed the book of Daniel, partly because there was no evidence that a king named Belshazzar ruled in Babylon during that time period. However, later archaeological research confirmed that the reigning monarch, Nabonidus, appointed Belshazzar as his co-regent while he was away from Babylon.
2. **Sir William Ramsey:** One of the most well-known New Testament examples concerns the books of Luke and Acts. A biblical skeptic, Sir William Ramsay, trained as an archaeologist and then set out to disprove the historical reliability of this portion of the New Testament. However, through his painstaking Mediterranean archaeological trips, he became converted as one after another of the historical statements of Luke were proved accurate.
3. **The Hittites:** As a result of archaeological finds, there are now hundreds of references overlapping more than 1,200 years of the Hittite civilization.
4. **The Mari Tablets:** In 1936, on the Middle Euphrates, Andre Parrot unearthed many thousands of cuneiform tablets dating mostly from about 1700 BC throwing light on the background of the traditions of Genesis.
5. **The Nuzi Tablets:** In 1925, in Mesopotamia, over 3,000 tablets were found dating back to Genesis citing references to a Nuzi custom practice of having a child produced from her husband's maid servant just like Jacob – Rachel and Leah. Also, there are references to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.
6. **Nelso Glueck:** Uncovered the five cities of the Plain — Jordan, Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah, Zeboiim and Zoar — dating back to 3,000 BC.
7. **The Historicity of Joseph:** Finds have proven he was sold as a slave, visited Egypt, his promotions and his tomb.
8. **The Amarna Tablets:** Found in 1887, in Egypt, confirming the Israel conquest of Gezer, Ashkelon and Lachish. It has now become possible to pinpoint the background of the stories of Abraham from Genesis 12–24.
9. **The Dead Sea Scrolls:** Up until 1947, the oldest manuscripts we had on the Old Testament were from 1008 AD, 1400 years after it was completed. These scrolls were discovered in caves along the northwest corner of the Dead Sea and are at least over 1,000 years older than what we had before.

NOTE: Archaeological evidence thus confirms the trustworthiness of the Bible.

**C.**

The Bible records predictions of events that could not be known or predicted by chance or common sense. Surprisingly, the predictive nature of many Bible passages was once a popular argument (by liberals) against the reliability of the Bible. Critics argued that the prophecies actually were written after the events and that editors had merely dressed up the Bible text to look like they contained predictions made before the events. Nothing could be further from the truth.

1. **Isaiah and Jesus Christ:** The many predictions of Christ's birth, life and death (see below) were indisputably rendered more than a century before they occurred as proven by the Dead Sea Scrolls of Isaiah and other prophetic books as well as by the Septuagint translation, all dating from earlier than 100 B.C.
2. **Old Testament Cities:** Old Testament prophecies concerning the Phoenician city of Tyre were fulfilled in ancient times, including prophecies that the city would be opposed by many nations (Ezekiel 26:3); its walls would be destroyed and towers broken down (26:4); and its stones, timbers, and debris would be thrown into the water (26:12). Similar prophecies were fulfilled concerning Sidon (Ezekiel 28:23; Isaiah 23; Jeremiah 27:3-6; 47:4) and Babylon (Jeremiah 50:13, 39; 51:26, 42-43, 58; Isaiah 13:20-21).
3. **The Coming One/Jesus Christ:** Since Christ is the culminating theme of the Old Testament and the Living Word of the New Testament, it should not surprise us that prophecies regarding Him outnumber any others. Many of these prophecies would have been impossible for Jesus to deliberately conspire to fulfill, such as:

- Born as an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham (Genesis 22:18; Galatians 3:16)
- Born from the line of Isaac, not Ishmael (Genesis 21:12; Luke 3:23-24)
- Born from Jacob's line, not Esau (Numbers 24:17; Luke 3:23-24)
- Born from Judah's line, not the other 11 sons of Jacob (Genesis 49:10; Luke 3:23-24)
- Born from Jesse's line (Isaiah 11:1; Luke 3:23-24)
- Born from David's line (Jeremiah 23:5; Luke 3:23-31)
- Born in Bethlehem in Judah (Micah 5:2; Matthew 2:1)
- Preceded by a messenger (Isaiah 40:3; Matthew 3:1,2)
- Began his ministry in Galilee (Isaiah 9:1; Matthew 4:12-17)
- Taught in parables (Psalm 78:2; Matthew 13:34-35)
- Performed many miracles (Isaiah 35:5,6; Matthew 9:35)
- Rode into the city of Jerusalem on a donkey (Zechariah 9:9; Matthew 21:2)
- appear suddenly and forcefully at the temple courts and "clean house" (Psalm 69:9; Malachi 3:1; John 2:15-16)

He also fulfilled 29 prophecies spoken at least 500 years earlier about him in one day!

- Betrayed by a friend
- The price would be 30 pieces of silver
- The money would be cast to the floor
- The money would be used to buy the potter's field
- Forsaken and deserted by his disciples
- Accused by false witnesses
- Silent before his accusers
- Wounded and bruised



- Hated without a cause
- Struck and spit upon
- Mocked, ridiculed, and rejected
- Collapse from weakness
- Taunted with specific words
- People would shake their heads at him
- People would stare at Him
- Executed among sinners
- Hands and feet would be pierced
- He will pray for his persecutors
- Friends and family would stand afar off and watch
- Garments would be divided by the casting of lots
- Would thirst
- Given gall and vinegar
- Commit himself to God
- His bones would be left unbroken
- Heart would rupture
- Side would be pierced
- Darkness would come over the land at midday
- Buried in a rich man's tomb
- Would die 483 years after the dec. of Artaxerxes to rebuild the temple in 444 BC (Daniel 9:24)
- On the 3rd day after his death, he would be raised from the dead
- Ascend to heaven
- Be seated at the right hand of God in full majesty and authority

NOTE: Predictive prophecy is a principle of Bible reliability that often reaches even the hard-boiled skeptic!

D. _____

Statistics concern the statistical probability that any or all of the Bible's very specific, detailed prophecies could have been fulfilled through chance, good guessing, or deliberate deceit. When you look at some of the improbable prophecies of the Old and New Testaments, it seems incredible that skeptics — knowing the authenticity and historicity of the texts — could reject the statistical verdict: the Bible is the Word of God, and Jesus Christ is the Son of God, just as Scripture predicted many times and in many ways.

The Bible was written over a span of 1500 years by forty different human authors in three different languages (Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek), on hundreds of subjects. And yet there is one consistent, non-contradictory theme that runs through it all: God's redemption of humankind.

NOTE: Clearly, statistical probability is a powerful indicator of the trustworthiness of Scripture.



FEAT – Reliability of the Resurrection (No resurrection – no hope, no Christianity)

What happened to the body?

- A. The Jews say the disciples _____ it. The guards went to the leading priests and told them what had happened. The religious leaders were called and decided to bribe the soldiers into saying that the disciples came during the night while they were sleeping and stole his body. The guards took the bribe and the story is still believed by Jews today. There are many problems with this theory:
1. If they were sleeping, how could they know what happened?
 2. Roman soldiers were executed for sleeping on guard duty.
 3. How plausible is it for the disciples to sneak past the guards and roll away a 1-2 ton boulder up a hill while they were sleeping?
 4. Depressed and cowardly disciples are hardly the picture of a group that would risk arrest to steal their dead teacher's body.
 5. If the disciples stole it, do you think they would take the time to neatly fold his face cloth?
- B. _____ Theories – Jesus was indeed nailed to the cross but He wasn't dead.
1. In the book, The Passover Plot, by Scofield in 1965 – He plotted it out for himself and took a drug that made him appear to be dead and was taken care of by people who were in on it? Did he faint and revive later?
 2. In 1929, D.H. Lawrence says Jesus ended up in Egypt.
 3. In 1972, Joyce said a doctor who was in the tomb beforehand revived Jesus.
 4. The _____ theory says Jesus was separated at birth by a twin who didn't know He existed. When he found out, he carried on Jesus' ministry after His death.
 5. _____ say He was never crucified, so there is no resurrection.
 6. _____ say his body was just discarded or simply dissolved into gasses.
 7. Another theory has it that the one who was seen was someone who looked like Jesus. _____ was a favorite candidate for this person.
- C. Is it fact or fantasy, a history or a hoax, a miracle or a hoax?
- D. FEAT by Hank Hanegraaff
- F _____



1. Virtual consent by historians (including non-believers) that He was crucified and that He did die.
 - a. In the Garden – Hamatadrosis – sweat drops of blood.
 - b. Judas betrays and arrested
 - c. Mocked beaten and spat upon.
 - d. Praetorian guard
 - i. stripped and flogged with razor sharp bones and lead balls
 - ii. bled pools of blood
 - iii. had thorns driven into His scalp
 - iv. a wooden beam is placed on His body to Golgotha
 - v. He must walk nearly a half mile with I on His back
 - e. He endures the ultimate physical torture for maximum pain – the cross.
 - i. 7" spikes into hands and feet, nerves being lacerated along the way
 - ii. breathing is an agonizing endeavor
 - iii. joint cramps, back moving up and down over wooden cross
 - iv. finally gives up His spirit
 - v. Roman soldier drives spear through into his heart, blood and water coming out proving fatal torment

*** Suffered 6 trials, lack of sleep, the scourge, being spiked to a cross, spear wound in side, 3 days without food or water and physical attention, rolled away and awesome boulder, subdued an armed guard, strolled around on pierced feet and then induced the disciples into believing the myth while he lived out a pathetic life in obscurity.

E _____

1. Buried I the same tomb as Joseph Aramathea (a member of the Jewish court that condemned Jesus). Back then, graves were of great importance to many people. There would have been much attention and whatever happened would have been attested to.
2. No competing burial story anywhere in history or traditions.
3. What about the empty grave clothes, undisturbed in their form and position?
4. Why would they have women (Happy is he whose children are male and I thank thee that I am not a woman) be the discoverers of the empty tomb. If you wanted to sell it, a woman would be the last people to find it. You'd want someone more believable or more important in society or the disciples to find it being empty. Women were not even accepted as legal witnesses. This shows the faithful writing of the disciples even if it would be embarrassing. Having women be disciples was not a popular thing.



5. "His disciples came in the night and stole him away." If that were true, why would the disciples all die a martyr's death? And, if they wanted to prove it didn't happen) early Christianity couldn't have survived without an empty tomb), they would have gone to the deepest lengths to find the body. They never found it.

A _____

1. He was here for over 40 days at least 10 different times:
 - a. To Mary of Magdala in the early morning (Mark 16:9; Jn. 20:11-18)
 - b. To the women returning from the tomb (Matt. 19:9-10)
 - c. To Peter (Luke 24:34; 1 Cor. 15:5)
 - d. To followers on the road to Emmanus in the afternoon (Luke 24:13-33)
 - e. To the disciples and a number of others (Luke 24:36-43)
 - f. To Thomas (John 20:26-29)
 - g. To 7 disciples by the Sea of Galilee in the evening (John 21:1-23)
 - h. To more than 500 followers (1 Cor. 15:6). Many of these people were still alive to be questioned when Paul wrote this letter.
 - i. To James, his brother (1 Cor. 15:7)
 - j. To the 11 disciples at his ascension (Acts 1:4-9)
2. Was it just a legend? This was a very specific, unambiguous and based on eyewitness accounts by Peter and Paul, not some legend. There are actual writings of 3-8 years after his resurrection. That's too fast and too close to the actual event for a legend/lie to emerge and maintain itself.
3. If it didn't happen, there would have been great lengths taken to prove its mistruth. Many of the hundreds of those people were still alive to corroborate the event or tell of its mistruth.

T _____

Of the disciples and the entire world itself when all was against them. The disciples had no hope of life here or in Heaven if it is not true. What could have been their motive if the resurrection wasn't true?

1. Jesus' half brother, James, calls himself a bond-servant of Jesus and martyred in 62AD after having been embarrassed to be his brother.
2. Paul gave up his position of esteemed Jewish leader, Rabbi and Pharisee, a mission of destroying Christianity for poverty, prison and persecution only to be martyred.
3. Within weeks, an entire community of at least 10,000 Jews gave up their traditions (Sabbath, the Sacrifices and Sacraments) themselves to Christ.
 - a. Sabbath – celebration of God's creation, celebration of God's deliverance from Egypt, celebration of the rest we have through Christ. Day changed to Sunday – with a new



pattern for worship through his resurrection and receipt of the Holy Spirit on Sunday.
Jesus was the substance that fulfilled the Sabbath.

- b. Sacrifices – atonement for sin – new covenant better than the old. Jesus was substance of animal sacrifices that takes away the sin in the world.
- c. Sacraments – in place of the Passover meal, the Communion table took over.

*** How could they all give that up if it were not true?

- 4. The incredible spreading of the gospel worldwide over centuries and centuries stands as proof.

NOTE: The only thing that makes sense out of FEAT is that the resurrection must be TRUE!!!!!!