

How Can We Trust the Bible?

“All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.”

—2 Timothy 3:16-17

“And we have the prophetic word more fully confirmed, to which you will do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts, knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone’s own interpretation. For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.”

–2 Peter 1:19-21

Being Ready

- ◆ We, as Christians, should be ready to defend these claims. This is exactly what Peter says in 1 Peter 3:15: “In your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect.”
- ◆ If we cannot do this, we cannot obey this commandment.
- ◆ True faith is not blind. We should not check our brains at the door!

Textual Criticism

Literary Uniqueness of the Bible

Archaeology and the Bible

Textual Criticism

Work	Number of MSS
Homer's Iliad	1,900+
Heroditus—Histories	106
Sophocles's Plays	226
Plato's Tetralogies	238
Caesar's Gallic Wars	251
Livy's History of Rome	473
Tacitus's Annals	36
Pliny the Elder's Natural	200+
Thucydides's History	188
Demosthenes's Speeches	444
Total	4,062+

- ◆ The total number of manuscripts from these ancient classical works numbers (at present) 4,062.
- ◆ If you look in the accompanying handout, the smallest gap between the surviving manuscript and the date of authorship is 200 years.

Textual Criticism

Language	Number of MSS
Armenian	2,000+
Coptic	975
Gothic	6
Ethiopian	600+
Latin	10,000+
Syriac	350+
Georgian	89
Slavic	4,000+
Total Non-Greek MSS	18,130+
Greek	5,856
Total Greek and Non-Greek MSS	23,986+
New Testament Greek Manuscripts	5,856
New Testament Early Translations	18,130
Old Testament Scrolls, Codices	42,300
Total Biblical Manuscript Evidences	66,286

- ◆ The Bible has more ancient manuscripts that have survived than any other document in antiquity.
- ◆ The vast array of texts have minimal variances. None of these slight differences impact theology or doctrine.

Textual Criticism

Writer	Gospels	Acts	Pauline Epistles	General Epistles	Revelation	Total
Justin Martyr	268	10	43	6	3 (266 allusions)	330
Irenaeus	1,038	194	499	23	65	1,819
Clement (Alex.)	1,107	44	1,127	2017	11	2,496
Origen	9,231	349	7,778	399	165	17,992
Tertullian	3,822	502	2,609	120	205	7,258
Hippolytus	734	42	387	27	188	1,378
Eusebius	3,268	211	1,592	88	27	5,186
Grand Totals	19,468	1,352	14,035	870	664	36,389

Textual Criticism

- ◆ This is important because we can absolutely rely on:
 - ◆ The authorship of Scripture
 - ◆ The date of the writing
 - ◆ The content of the text

Textual Criticism

Literary Uniqueness of the Bible

Archaeology and the Bible

Literary Uniqueness of the Bible

- ◆ Time span.
- ◆ Personal background of authors.
- ◆ Geographical location.
- ◆ Internal consistency for such a large compilation.

Textual Criticism

Literary Uniqueness of the Bible

Archaeology and the Bible

Archaeology and the Bible

- ◆ Hazor, Syria.
- ◆ Excavations uncovered destruction in 13th century BC.
- ◆ Used to throw doubt on Scripture.
- ◆ Further excavation revealed earlier destruction in 15th century BC.
- ◆ Now matches Biblical narrative.



Archaeology and the Bible

- ◆ This is a bulla. Impression made after a seal is placed on clay.
- ◆ Previously, some said that the kings of Judah and Israel were mythological folk characters.
- ◆ On December 2, 2015, archaeologists found bulla belonging to “Hezekiah, son of Ahaz, King of Judah.”



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Archaeology and the Bible

- ◆ Shishak/Shoshenq invades Israel and Judah in 925 BC (1 Kings 14:25-26).
- ◆ Rehoboam plunders the Temple to pay him off.
- ◆ Shishak/Shoshenq turns eyes to other targets (namely Israel in the north).



Archaeology and the Bible

- ◆ Shoshenq leaves two monuments to conquest: one in Megiddo (Israel), and one on the Bubastis Portal of the Karnak Temple in Thebes (right).
- ◆ Shoshenq dies two years after conquest.
- ◆ Osorkon, his son, donates portions of conquest to Egyptian temples.



Archaeology and the Bible

- ◆ Critics claim that Israelite and Judahite kings were “poor” kings of “cow towns” in Canaan, with little actual territory.
- ◆ Osorkon’s donation is the largest recorded in Egyptian history, at 383 tons of gold and silver.



Archaeology and the Bible

- ◆ Egyptian records state that Israel and Judah may very well have been smaller than the great empires of the Ancient Near East, but they were exceptionally wealthy (exactly the way the Bible describes).



Textual Criticism

Literary Uniqueness of the Bible

Archaeology and the Bible

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What Really Matters

What Really Matters

- ◆ All this information is great, and it provides some support for the trustworthiness of the narrative of the Bible, but there's something bigger than all of this.
- ◆ The real reason I believe the Bible is because it's honest and real about life on this planet.

What Really Matters

- ◆ All the other religions of the world promise that *your* life will just be great if you do what [insert system here] requires.
- ◆ The honest truth is simple: those promises are just a bunch of nonsense. Anyone with any experience at all in life can tell you that.

What Really Matters

“Again I saw that under the sun the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, nor bread to the wise, nor riches to the intelligent, nor favor to those with knowledge, but time and chance happen to them all.”

—Ecclesiastes 9:11

What Really Matters

“In my vain life I have seen everything. There is a righteous man who perishes in his righteousness, and there is a wicked man who prolongs his life in his evil-doing.”

—Ecclesiastes 7:15

What Really Matters

- ◆ When confronted with the harsh and cold truths of reality, only the Bible, among religious texts, grapples with the temptation to nihilism.
- ◆ The truth is that morality makes no sense without a theological framework. Neither do human rights.

What Really Matters

- ◆ The Bible acknowledges that yes, life on this earth can be miserable and full of sorrow (Ecclesiastes 2:23).
- ◆ It also says that this life is not the end. Life without a theological framework is absolutely nihilistic (Ecclesiastes 1:14).

What Really Matters

- ◆ Life with God though, brings an awareness of purpose, makes sense of the chaos, and provides a light in the darkness (Ecclesiastes 12:1-14).
- ◆ Only a theological framework gives purpose to life, and the Bible is the most trustworthy religious text in existence.