

# Is the Bible Trustworthy?

Jon Rittenhouse, MDiv; ThM

Three critical issues to consider:

1. Is what we have in our hands today substantially what was written in the original?
2. Is what was originally written true to history, science, theology and reality itself?
3. How do we evaluate the above two issues?

"Isn't it reasonable to believe that a God who created us could, if He wanted to, communicate with us? And further, couldn't He do so through the vehicle of inspired writing?"<sup>1</sup>

"If the New Testament were a collection of secular writings, their authenticity would generally be regarded as beyond any doubt." (F.F. Bruce, NT Scholar)

## A. The Cumulative Argument for the Bible's Historicity and Truthfulness

1. Its uniqueness [Continuity, Reproduction, Circulation, Translation, Survival, Teaching]
2. Its internal claim to be from God.
3. Its universal claims and application.
4. Its supernatural tenor.
5. Its explanatory power (universe, meaning, man, pain, death)
6. Its ability to transform lives.
7. Its consistency with natural theology (i.e. The Kalam Cosmological Argument)
8. Its divine activity (miracles, angels, resurrection): [Shouldn't we expect confirmation]
9. Its internal consistency, harmony and continuity.
10. Its transmission quality based on the wealth of manuscript evidence.
11. Its confirmation based on eye-witness accounts.
12. Its confirmation based on archeology.
13. Its confirmation based on messianic and historical prophecies.
14. Its confirmation based on science (i.e. order of creation events) [1 in 11,000,000]
15. Its confirmation based on the presence of miracles.
16. Its confirmation based on the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

## B. Why should someone even consider the Bible's authority in their life?<sup>2</sup>

1. It might be from God.
2. It might contain wisdom that is helpful for life.
3. It might have solutions for the needs in my life.
4. It just might be true and therefore worthy of acceptance.
5. An overview of the story of the Bible

Creation: The nature of God and the nature of people.

Rebellion: Man makes a fatal mistake

Redemption: Predicted and provided

Consummation: The culmination of history and the plan of God

---

<sup>1</sup> Randy Newman. Questioning Evangelism (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publishing, 2004), 128.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, 125-142.

C. Internal claims to be true and from God. (#2)

1. Three thousand times the Scriptures claim, "Thus says the Lord God!"
2. Matthew 5:18; John 17:17; Jeremiah 1:4; Is 1:2; Is 40:8; Ezekiel 1:3
3. "All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable..." (2 Tim 3:16-17)
4. The Bible ought to be allowed to testify on its own behalf; i.e. courtroom situation.
5. Aristotle's dictum: The benefit of doubt given to the document in question.

D. Explanatory Power (#5)

1. Why is there unfulfilled longing in the human heart?
2. What and who is man?
3. Why is there pain/suffering/evil in the world?
4. What is the meaning of human life and history?
5. How did the cosmos come to exist?

E. Bibliographical Test: Issue - Transmission Quality (#10)

"The bibliographical test is an examination of the textual transmission by which documents reach us. In other words, since we do not have the original documents, how reliable are the copies we have in regard to the number of manuscripts and the time interval between the original and extant copy?"<sup>3</sup>

"Scholars of almost every theological stripe attest to the profound care with which the New Testament books were copied in the Greek language, and later translated and preserved in Syriac, Coptic, Latin and a variety of other European and Middle Eastern languages."<sup>4</sup>

So, how good is the manuscript evidence?

**Table 1: Comparison of Ancient Manuscripts**

<u>Author</u>	<u>Date Written</u>	<u>Earliest Copy</u>	<u>Time Interval</u>	<u># Manuscripts<sup>5</sup></u>
Plato	400 BC	900 AD	1,300 yrs	7
Caesar	100-44 BC	900 AD	1,000 yrs	10
Tacitus	100 AD	1100 AD	1,000 yrs	20
Aristotle	384-322 BC	1100 AD	1,400 yrs	49
Sophocles	496-406 BC	1000 AD	1,400 yrs	193
Demosthenes	383-322 BC	1100 AD	1,300 yrs	200
Homer	800 BC	400 BC	400 yrs	643
<b>NT</b>	45-95 AD	125 AD	25 yrs (P <sup>52</sup> )	
		250 AD	150 yrs (most NT)	
		325 AD	225 yrs (NT)	24,970

<sup>3</sup> Josh McDowell. The New Evidence That Demands a Verdict. (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1999), 33-34.

<sup>4</sup> Craig Blomberg, "The Historical Reliability of the NT", contained in Reasonable Faith by William Lane Craig (Wheaton: Crossway, 1994), 193

<sup>5</sup> Josh McDowell. The New Evidence That Demands a Verdict (Nashville: Nelson, 1999), 38.

5,686 Total Greek Manuscripts<sup>6</sup>

Papyri = 109      Uncials = 307      Minuscules = 2,860      Lectionaries = 2,410

"There is no body of ancient literature in the world which enjoys such a wealth of good textual attestation as the New Testament." (F.F. Bruce, NT scholar)<sup>7</sup>

**Table 2: OT/NT Manuscripts<sup>8</sup>**

<u>Manuscript</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Contents</u>	<u>Location</u>
John Rylands P <sup>52</sup>	125	John (5vss)	Manchester
Bodmer Papyrus II (P <sup>66</sup> )	150-200	John (75%)	Dublin
Chester Beatty (P <sup>46</sup> )	200	Pauline (much)	Dublin
Papyri P <sup>64</sup>	200	Gospels	Oxford
Codex Vaticanus	325-350	OT/NT	Vatican
Codex Sinaiticus	350	NT/OT <sup>50+</sup>	British Museum
Codex Alexandrinus	400	NT/OT	British Museum
Codex Ephraemi	400's	NT(-2 books)	Paris
Codex Bezae	450	Gospels/Acts	Cambridge

"The interval then between the dates of the original composition and the earliest extant evidence becomes so small as to be in fact negligible, and the last foundation for any doubt that the Scriptures have come down to us substantially as they were written has now been removed."<sup>9</sup> (Sir Frederic Kenyon)

**Table 3: NT Quotes from Church Fathers<sup>10</sup>**

<u>Writer</u>	<u>Gospels</u>	<u>Acts</u>	<u>Pauline</u>	<u>General</u>	<u>Revelation</u>	<u>Total Quotes</u>
Justin Martyr	268	10	43	6	3+266	330
Irenaeus	1,038	194	449	23	65	1,819
Clement (Alex)	1,107	44	1,127	207	11	2,406
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	3,258	211	1,592	88	27	5,176
TOTALS =	19,368	1,352	14,035	870	644	36,289

<sup>6</sup> Lee Strobel. The Case for Christ (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998), 62-63.

<sup>7</sup> F.F. Bruce. The Books and the Parchments (Old Tappan: Revell, 1950), 178.

<sup>8</sup> The New Evidence, 38-41. / Bruce Metzger. The Greek NT, 4ed, 1994, 903-908.

<sup>9</sup> Frederic Kenyon. Our Bible & the Ancient Manuscripts (London: Eyre, 1939), 288.

<sup>10</sup> Josh McDowell. The New Evidence, 43.

## F. Internal Evidence: Intention of writers and closeness to the events (#11)

“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 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)

1. The Intention Test: What were they trying to accomplish?
2. The Ability Test: Where they able to write reliable history?
3. The Character Test: Where the writers men of integrity?
4. The Consistency Test: Do the writers agree with one another?

Brilliant legal expert Simon Greenleaf contended, “There is enough of a discrepancy to show that there could have been no previous concert among them; and at the same time such substantial agreement as to show that they all were independent narrators of the same great transaction.”<sup>11</sup>

5. The Bias Test: Did they skew the material they wrote?
6. The Cover-Up Test: Did they hide things?
7. The Corroboration Test: Can their statements be independently verified?
8. The Adverse Witness Test: Who could have corrected the Gospel accounts?

“What was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands, concerning the word of life” (1 John 1:1)

“If modernists applied to the Bible the same standards that historians and textual scholars apply to secular literature of ancient times, the biblical records would be accepted as some of the most reliable and credible of all ancient documents.”<sup>12</sup>

## G. External Evidence: Confirmation from history and archeology (#12)

### 1. Confirmation from History

“Now in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea...and Lysanias was tetrarch of Abilene” (Luke 3:1)

Dr. John McRay (NT scholar and archeologist): “An inscription was later found from the time of Tiberius, from AD 14 to 37, which names Lysanias as tetrarch in Abila near Damascus – just as Luke had written.”<sup>13</sup>

Luke’s statement of government leaders by the title “politarchs”

“For a long time people thought that Luke was mistaken, because no evidence of the term ‘politarch’ had been found in any ancient Roman documents. However, an inscription on a first-century arch was later found that begins, ‘In the time of the politarchs’, you can go to the British Museum and see it for yourself...and archeologists have found more than thirty-five inscriptions that mention politarchs, several of these in Thessalonica from the same period Luke was referring to. Once again the critics were wrong and Luke was shown to be right.”<sup>14</sup>

---

<sup>11</sup> Case for Christ, 46.

<sup>12</sup> Peter Kreeft. Handbook of Christian Apologetics (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1994), 205.

<sup>13</sup> Case for Christ, 97.

“If Luke was so painstakingly accurate in his historical reporting on what logical basis may we assume he was credulous or inaccurate in his reporting of matters that were far more important, not only to him but to others as well.”<sup>15</sup>

## 2. Confirmation based on Archeology

“One prominent archeologist carefully examined Luke’s references to thirty-two countries, fifty-four cities, and nine islands, finding not a single mistake.”<sup>16</sup>

Australian archeologist Dr. Clifford Wilson contends, “Those who know the facts now recognize that the New Testament must be accepted as a remarkably accurate source book for those times, as evidenced by its use of words that characterized the days when Jesus walked the streets of Jerusalem and traversed the plains of Galilee.”<sup>17</sup>

Famous British Archeologist Sir William Ramsey declares, “Luke is a historian of the first rank; not merely are his statements of fact trustworthy; he is possessed of the true historic sense...this author should be placed along with the very greatest of historians.”<sup>18</sup>

Jewish scholar Nelson Glueck affirms, “It is worth emphasizing that in all this work no archeological discovery has ever controverted a single, properly understood Biblical statement.”<sup>19</sup>

“Archeology has not yet said its last word; but the results already achieved confirm what faith would suggest, that the Bible can do nothing but gain from an increase of knowledge.”<sup>20</sup>

## H. Confirmation based on Messianic Prophecy (#13)

**Table 4: Messianic Prophecy<sup>21</sup>**

Born of the seed of a woman (Gen 3:15/Matt 1:20)	Born of a virgin (Is 7:14/Matt 1:18)
Descendent of Abraham (Gen 22:18/Matt 1:1)	Descendent of Isaac (Gen 21:12/Lk 3:23,34)
Descendent of Jacob (Num 24:17/Lk 1:33)	Tribe of Judah (Gen 49:10/Heb 7:14)
Family line of Jesse (Is 11:1/Lk 3:23,34)	House of David (Jer 23:5/Lk 3:23,31)
Born at Bethlehem (Micah 5:2/Matt 2:1)	He will be called Lord (Ps 110:1/Lk 2:11)
Shall be called Immanuel (Is 7:14/Matt 1:23)	Preceded by a messenger (Is 40:3/Matt 3:1-2)
Betrayed by a friend (Ps 41:9/Matt 10:4)	For 30 pieces of silver (Zech 11:13/Mt 27:5)
Money thrown into the temple (Zech 11:13/Mt 27:5)	Money buys a grave yard (Zech 11:13/Mt 27:7)
He’d be wounded/bruised (Is 53:5/Mt 27:26)	He’d be smitten and spit upon (Is 50:6/Mt 27:38)
He’d be mocked (Ps 22:7/Mt 27:31)	He’d be crucified with thieves (Is 53:12/Mt 27:38)
His hands and feet pierced (Ps 22:14/John 19:34)	His bones not broken (Ps 34:20/John 19:33)
Heart will melt like wax (Ps 22:14/John 19:34)	His side will be pierced (Zech 12:10/John 19:34)
Garments would be divided (Ps 22:18/John 19:23)	Vinegar given to him ((Ps 69:21/Mt 27:34)
Darkness over the land (Amos 8:9/Mt 27:45)	Buried in rich man’s tomb ((Is 53:9/Mt 27:57-60)

“Other books claim divine inspiration...but none of those books contains predictive prophecy.”<sup>22</sup>

<sup>14</sup> Case for Christ, 98.

<sup>15</sup> John Ankerberg and John Weldon. Ready with an Answer (Eugene: Harvest House, 1997), 272.

<sup>16</sup> Norman Geisler. When Critics Ask (Wheaton: Victor Publishing, 1992), 385.

<sup>17</sup> Clifford Wilson. Rocks, Relics and Biblical Reliability (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1977), 120.

<sup>18</sup> Rocks, Relics and Biblical Reliability, 114.

<sup>19</sup> Josh McDowell. The New Evidence (Nashville: Nelson Publishers, 1999), 370

<sup>20</sup> Frederic Kenyon. The Bible and Archeology (New York: Harper & Row, 1940), 279.

<sup>21</sup> Josh McDowell. The New Evidence That Demands a Verdict (Nashville: Nelson Publishing, 1999), 168-193.

Peter Stoner in his book “Science Speaks” calculates the statistical probability that any man in human history could fulfill these messianic prophecies provided that the writers of the Old Testament wrote based on their own human wisdom.

1. Chance that any man would fulfill just 8 prophecies: 1 in  $10^{17}$

Take the state of Texas (~262,000 square miles) and bury it two feet deep in silver dollars. Then take one silver dollar and mark it with a red X. Mix the entire state up with bulldozers. Go to a randomly picked city, a randomly picked place and randomly pick one silver dollar. The chance that you’ll get the red X silver dollar is the same chance that any man in all of human history would fulfill just 8 prophecies.

2. Chance that any man would fulfill 48 prophecies: 1 in  $10^{157}$

If you were to take one inch of electrons and count them at the rate of 250/minute, it would take you 19,000,000 years to count. Take one cubic inch of electrons which would take you 19 million x 19 million x 19 million years to count ( $6.9 \times 10^{21}$  years) at 250/minute. Take one electron and put a red X on it and place it into the cube and mix it up. While blindfolded randomly select one electron, the chance that you will get the red X one is the same chance that any man in human history would fulfill 48 prophecies.

## I. Confirmation based on Historical Prophecy (#13)

1. Cyrus, King of the Medo-Persian Empire issuing a decree to rebuild Jerusalem

Isaiah the Prophet wrote his book ~700 BC

Predicted the name of the King and the content of the decree he would issue!

“It is I who says of Cyrus, He is My shepherd! And he will perform all My desire. And he declares of Jerusalem, she will be rebuilt, and of the Temple, your foundation will be laid.” (Isaiah 44:28)

This prophecy was fulfilled ~558 BC (142 years after the prediction was made)

2. The Destruction of the city of Tyre: (Ezekiel 26:1-21)

Many nations will be against Tyre (26:3)

Nebuchadnezzar will destroy the mainland city of Tyre (26:8)

The city will be like a bare rock (26:4)

Fishermen will dry their nets on the banks of the city (26:5)

Debris from the city will be thrown into the sea (26:12)

The city will never be rebuilt (26:14)

The city will not be restored (26:21)

Nebuchadnezzar laid siege (585 BC) to mainland Tyre three years after the prophecy was made. After a thirteen-year siege the city made peace with the attacker. When he broke down the walls of the city he found that most residents had moved out to an island a half-mile from the mainland. It was at this time that the attacker destroyed the mainland city.

---

<sup>22</sup> The New Evidence, 12.

In 333 BC Alexander the Great attacked Tyre but had no navy to get to the island city. He destroyed the mainland city and through the debris into the sea and build a 200 ft. wide roadway to the island city. The city eventually fell one year later in 332 BC. It continued to be attacked over and over for 1600 years by various nations until it was finally destroyed.<sup>23</sup>

J. Confirmation based on miracles (#15)

1. Jesus changed water into wine. (John 2:7-11)
2. Jesus healed the paralytic. (Mark 2:5-12)
3. Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead. (John 11:43-44)
4. Jesus calming the sea. (Luke 8:22-25)
5. The creation of the universe from nothing is a metaphysical miracle.
6. The resurrection of Jesus from the dead is a biological miracle.
7. The writing of the Bible is a literary miracle.

K. Confirmation based on the Resurrection (#16)

1. The testimony of Simon Greenleaf

“It was therefore impossible that they could have persisted in affirming the truths they had narrated, had not Jesus actually risen from the dead, and had they not known this fact as certainly as they knew any other fact...If then their testimony was not true, there was no possible motive for its fabrication.”<sup>24</sup>

2. The testimony of Frank Morison

The book: “Who Moved the Stone?”

3. The testimony of British Chief Justice, Lord Darling

“In its favour as living truth there exists such overwhelming evidence, positive and negative, factual and circumstantial, that no intelligent jury in the world could fail to bring in a verdict that the resurrection story is true.”<sup>25</sup>

3. The testimony of Saul of Tarsus

L. The ability to transform lives! (#6) Put it to the test! Read the Bible and find out for yourself!

M. Professional testimony from an Expert

Lee Strobel in his interview with NT manuscript expert Bruce Metzger (Case for Christ) asked, “All these decades of scholarship, of study, of writing textbooks, of delving into the minutiae of the New Testament text – what has that done to your personal faith?”

---

<sup>23</sup> Josh McDowell. Evidence That Demands a Verdict (San Bernardino: Here’s Life, 1979), 274-275.

<sup>24</sup> Simon Greenleaf. An Examination of the Testimony of the Four Evangelists by the Rules of Evidence Administered in the Courts of Justice (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1965 reprint), 28-30.

<sup>25</sup> The New Evidence, 194.

Dr. Metzger: “Oh, it has increased the basis of my personal faith to see the firmness with which these materials have come down to us, with a multiplicity of copies, some of which are very, very ancient.”

Lee Strobel: “So, I started to say, scholarship has not diluted your faith –‘he jumped in before I could finish my sentence.”

Dr. Metzger: “On the contrary, it has built it. I’ve asked questions all my life, I’ve dug into the text, I’ve studied this thoroughly, and today I know with confidence that my trust in Jesus has been well placed.”

Lee: He paused while his eyes surveyed my face, then added for emphasis...

Metzger: “VERY WELL PLACED!”

**Table 1: Comparison of Ancient Manuscripts**

<u>Author</u>	<u>Date Written</u>	<u>Earliest Copy</u>	<u>Time Interval</u>	<u># Manuscripts</u> <sup>26</sup>
Plato	400 BC	900 AD	1,300 yrs	7
Caesar	100-44 BC	900 AD	1,000 yrs	10
Tacitus	100 AD	1100 AD	1,000 yrs	20
Aristotle	384-322 BC	1100 AD	1,400 yrs	49
Sophocles	496-406 BC	1000 AD	1,400 yrs	193
Demosthenes	383-322 BC	1100 AD	1,300 yrs	200
Homer	800 BC	400 BC	400 yrs	643
NT	45-95 AD	125 AD	25 yrs (P <sup>52</sup> )	
		250 AD	150 yrs (most NT)	
		325 AD	225 yrs (NT)	24,970

**Table 2: Messianic Prophecy**<sup>27</sup>

Born of the seed of a woman (Gen 3:15/Matt 1:20)	Born of a virgin (Is 7:14/Matt 1:18)
Descendent of Abraham (Gen 22:18/Matt 1:1)	Descendent of Isaac (Gen 21:12/Lk 3:23,34)
Descendent of Jacob (Num 24:17/Lk 1:33)	Tribe of Judah (Gen 49:10/Heb 7:14)
Family line of Jesse (Is 11:1/Lk 3:23,34)	House of David (Jer 23:5/Lk 3:23,31)
Born at Bethlehem (Micah 5:2/Matt 2:1)	He will be called Lord (Ps 110:1/Lk 2:11)
Shall be called Immanuel (Is 7:14/Matt 1:23)	Preceded by a messenger (Is 40:3/Matt 3:1-2)
Betrayed by a friend (Ps 41:9/Matt 10:4)	For 30 pieces of silver (Zech 11:13/Mt 27:5)
Money thrown into the temple (Zech 11:13/Mt 27:5)	Money buys a grave yard (Zech 11:13/Mt 27:7)
He'd be wounded/bruised (Is 53:5/Mt 27:26)	He'd be smitten and spit upon (Is 50:6/Mt 27:38)
He'd be mocked (Ps 22:7/Mt 27:31)	He'd be crucified with thieves (Is 53:12/Mt 27:38)
His hands and feet pierced (Ps 22:14/John 19:34)	His bones not broken (Ps 34:20/John 19:33)
Heart will melt like wax (Ps 22:14/John 19:34)	His side will be pierced (Zech 12:10/John 19:34)
Garments would be divided (Ps 22:18/John 19:23)	Vinegar given to him ((Ps 69:21/Mt 27:34)
Darkness over the land (Amos 8:9/Mt 27:45)	Buried in rich man's tomb ((Is 53:9/Mt 27:57-60)

<sup>26</sup> Josh McDowell. The New Evidence That Demands a Verdict (Nashville: Nelson, 1999), 38.

<sup>27</sup> Josh McDowell. The New Evidence That Demands a Verdict (Nashville: Nelson Publishing, 1999), 168-193.