

How Can We Know the Bible is True? A Simple Apologetic – 1

Ravi Zacharias states succinctly...

“The Bible is not simply a self-referencing book. The Bible is a book about history, and geography, and events that can be tested from outside the Bible itself. Unlike the Quran which is a self-referencing book. Meaning by that, how do you know that the Quran is the word of god, Muhammad said so. How do you know that Muhammad is right; because the Qur’an says so?”

The Bible is not like that – the Bible has internal consistency – the Bible is externally provable and historically reliable

1. The Bible has internal consistency

- The Bible is not a book with chapters
- The Bible is a collection of 66 books
- Written by 40 authors
- Written on 3 continents
- Written in 3 languages
- Over a period of more than 1500 years
- Bible is completely consistent in all it affirms about God
- The Bible is unique among all the literature of the earth

Jesus Himself, when He spoke of the Scriptures – He spoke of it as historical record

- He referred to **Abel** (Lk 11:51) **Noah** (Mt 24:37-39; Lk 17:26, 27) **Abraham** (Jn 8:56) **the institution of circumcision** (Jn 7:22), **Sodom and Gomorrah** (Mt 10:15; 11:23, 24; Lk 10:12), **Lot** (Lk 17:28-32), **Isaac and Jacob** (Mt 8:11; Lk 13:28), **mamma** (Jn 6:31, 49, 58), **the snake in the desert** (Jn 3:14), **David eating the consecrated bread** (Mt 12:3, 4; Mk 2:25, 26; Lk 6:3, 4), **David as a psalm writer** (Mt 22:43; Mk 12:36; Lk 20:42, **Solomon** (Mt 6:29; 12:42; Lk 11:31; 12:27), **Elijah** (Lk 4:25, 26), **Elisha** (Lk 4:27), **Jonah** (Mt 12:39-41; Lk 11:29, 30, 32), and Lk 11:51, to name a fewⁱ **Solomon** (Mt 6:29; 12:42; Lk 11:31; 12:27), **Elijah** (Lk 4:25, 26), **Elisha** (Lk 4:27), **Jonah** (Mt 12:39-41; Lk 11:29, 30, 32), and **Zechariah** Lk 11:51, to name a fewⁱⁱ
- This shows that Jesus saw the OT as being historically true, authoritative, and divinely inspired

When speaking to the disciples on the road to Emmaus in Lk 24:27 the Lord walked them through the Tanakh

Luke 24:27

27 And beginning with **Moses** and all the **Prophets**, he **interpreted** to them in **all the Scriptures** the things concerning himself.

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Vincent's Word Studies in the New Testament says of the word "interpreted" in verse twenty-seven...

He (Jesus) "interpreted: throughout" dia. Imperfect, he "went on" interpreting from passage to passage. ⁱⁱⁱ

- "Moses and all the prophets" as well as "all the Scriptures" refers collectively to the entire Old Testament
- The Bible itself claims to be the inspired word of God and therefore comes with the authority of God

According to Wayne Grudem, it is the biblical testimony that "all the words in Scripture are God's words (Grudem)". ^{iv}

Grudem further explains...

"Of course, I do not mean to say that every word in Scripture was audibly spoken by God himself, since the Bible records the words of hundreds of different people, such as King David and Peter and even Satan himself". Grudem continues, "But I do mean that even the quotations of other people are God's reports of what they said, and, rightly interpreted in their contexts, come to us with God's authority."

- This understanding of the Bible being God's words can be seen in statements from the Old Testament prophets
- Phrases such as "Thus says the Lord" are a pure claim to divine inspiration
- When a prophet used a phrase such as that they were stating that the words that were to follow were to be taken with authority as if they had come from God Himself
- This was indeed true if the prophet was a prophet sent by God
- If a prophet spoke in God's name, every word that they spoke had to come from God, or they would be considered a false prophet (cf. Num 22:38; Deut 18:18-20; Jer 1:9; 14:14; 23:16-22; 29:31-32; Ez 2:7; 13:1-16). ^v
- The Bible teaches that God cannot lie (2 Sam 7:28; Titus 1:2; Heb 6:18)
- "Therefore, all the words in Scripture are claimed to be completely true and without error in any part (Num 23:19; Pss 12:6; 119:89, 96; Prov 30:5; Mt 24:35)" ^{vi}

2 Tim 3:16-17

16 All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, 17 that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work.
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2. The Bible is externally provable and historically reliable

There are numerous external ways to test the trustworthiness of the Bible we are going to touch briefly on three

- The benchmark tests for the reliability of all ancient literature
- Documents written by Non-Christians of the first and second century
- Finally, the validation of archaeology

1) Benchmark tests for the reliability of all ancient literature

Josh McDowell in his book *The New Evidence that Demands a Verdict* draws a distinction concerning this subject

“What we are establishing here is the historical reliability of the Scripture, not its inspiration. The historical reliability of the Scripture should be tested by the same criteria by which all historical documents are tested”^{vii}

- “The number of manuscripts and their closeness to the original”^{viii}

“F.E. Peters states that ‘on the basis of manuscript tradition alone, the works that made up the Christians’ New Testament were the most frequently copied and widely circulated books of antiquity.”^{ix}

Josh McDowell says of this, “As a result, the fidelity of the New Testament text rests on a multitude of manuscript evidence. Counting the Greek copies alone, the New Testament is preserved in some 5,656 partial and complete manuscript portions that were copied by hand from the second through the fifteenth centuries.”^x

- There are more than 5,686 known Greek manuscripts of the NT
- Over 10,000 Latin Vulgate manuscripts
- And 9,300 other early versions (MSS)
- Finally there are some 25,000 manuscript copies of portions of the NT in existence today

Let’s draw a point of reference – the number of existing documents from other writers in antiquity

- There are far fewer existing manuscripts in other areas of antiquity
- For example, Homer’s Iliad is second in number to the NT documents with only 643 documents that are still in existence

McDowell says of this...

“No other document of antiquity even begins to approach such numbers and attestation.”

2) Documents written by non-Christians of the first and second century

- Many that desire to disprove the Scripture claim that it is only Christians that participated in the writing of the NT as well as those that wrote in the time directly after that – therefore these detractors say their witness is not credible

There are several sources outside of the faith that reference Christian history

a. Tacitus – Roman senator and historian (56 AD – 117 AD)

1. He was one of the more accurate historians of the ancient world

The following is his account of the great fire in ancient Rome

"Consequently, to get rid of the report, 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 Pilatus, and a most **mischievous superstition**, thus checked for the moment, again broke out not only in Judæa, the first source of the evil, but even in Rome, where all things hideous and shameful from every part of the world find their centre and become popular."

2. It is thought that the *mischievous superstition* that the historian mentions probably refers to the resurrection of Jesus Christ

b. **Suetonius** – Chief Secretary to the Emperor Hadrian (who reigned from AD 117-138)

1. Suetonius confirms the testimony of Scripture in Acts 18:2

Acts 18:2

2 And he found a Jew named Aquila, a native of Pontus, recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla, because Claudius had commanded all the Jews to leave Rome. And he went to see them,
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2. In his writings Suetonius affirmed this as a historical event which did actually occur in AD 49

"Since the Jews constantly made disturbances at the instigation of Chrestus, he expelled them from Rome." (Suetonius, *Life of Claudius*, 25.4)

3. When speaking of the events after the great fire at Rome

"Punishment was inflicted on the Christians, a body of people addicted to a novel and mischievous superstition." (Suetonius, *Life of Nero*, 16)

3) **The validation of archaeology**

Nelson Glueck, esteemed Jewish archaeologist has said...

"It may be stated categorically that no archaeological discovery has ever controverted a biblical reference." He continued by speaking of "the almost incredibly accurate historical memory of the Bible, and particularly so when it is fortified by archaeological fact." (Glueck, RDHN, 31)

A statement from F.F. Bruce concerning the Gospel of Luke

"Where Luke has been suspected of inaccuracy, and accuracy has been vindicated by some inscriptional evidence, it may be legitimate to say that archaeology has confirmed the New Testament." (Bruce, ACNY, as cited in Henry, RB, 331)

3. The Inerrancy of Scripture

- If, as the Bible claims, it is inspired (God breathed), then it follows that it must be inerrant, or without error

A short definition of inerrancy from Wayne Grudem ^{xi}

“The inerrancy of Scripture means that Scripture in the original manuscripts does not affirm anything that is contrary to fact”

- The definition focuses on truthfulness or falsehood in the language of Scripture
- This simply means that the Bible always tells the truth regarding everything it talks about
- This does not mean that the Bible tells every fact in existence, or any subject in particular
- Rather, the definition means that what the Bible does say about any topic is true

Josh McDowell defines inerrancy as well – McDowell states...

“Inerrancy means that when all the facts are known, the Scriptures in their original autographs, properly interpreted, will be shown to be wholly true in everything they affirm, whether this has to do with doctrine or morality or with the social, physical, or life sciences” ^{xii}

He goes on to state...

“The bottom line is that the Bible has been breathed by God. He used men to write out exactly what He wanted them to write. He kept them free from error but at the same time used their unique personalities and styles to convey exactly what He wanted.”

4. Summation – What have we learned?

- The Bible is unique – Set apart from any other literature that now exists – has ever existed – or will ever exist
- The Bible is internally consistent, having a continuity or connectedness that could only exist in a document of divine origin
- Jesus Himself spoke of Scripture as truth that had been experienced and lived through events and by people in an actual historical/time/space instances
- Phrases such as “Thus says the Lord” are a claim to pure divine inspiration
- We’ve learned that, the Bible is externally provable and historically reliable
- Further, that it can be tested by certain benchmarks – Among these are
 - The tests for the reliability of ancient literature
 - Documents written by non-Christians of the first and second century
 - The validation of archaeology
- We spoke about the fact that if the Bible is inspired as it claims – Then it must also be inerrant
- And that, this assertion of inerrancy entails truth – Or that the Bible, in its original manuscripts, does not affirm anything that is not true

End Notes:

ⁱ *Inerrancy*; Norman L. Geisler, Ed; Chapter 1; Christ's View of Scripture, John W. Wenham; pp. 6-7; Zondervan; Grand Rapids

ⁱⁱ *Ibid*; pp. 6-7

ⁱⁱⁱ From Vincent's Word Studies in the New Testament, Electronic Database. Copyright © 1997, 2003, 2005, 2006 by BibleSoft, Inc. All rights reserved.

^{iv} *Systematic Theology, An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine*; Wayne Grudem, p. 73; Zondervan; Grand Rapids

^v *Ibid*; p 74

^{vi} *Ibid*; p. 90

^{vii} *The New Evidence that Demands a Verdict*; Josh McDowell; p. 33; Nelson

^{viii} *Ibid*; pp. 34-38

^{ix} *Ibid*; p. 34

^x *Ibid*; p. 34

^{xi} *Systematic Theology, An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine*; Wayne Grudem, p. 90; Zondervan; Grand Rapids

^{xii} *The New Evidence that Demands a Verdict*; Josh McDowell; p. 338; Nelson