

IS THE BIBLE TRUE?

Luke opens his account of the life of Jesus with these words: “Many people have written accounts about the events that took place among us. They used as their source material the reports circulating among us from the early disciples and other eyewitnesses of what God has done in fulfillment of His promises. Having carefully investigated all of these accounts from the beginning, I have decided to write a careful summary for you, to reassure you of the truth of all you were taught.” (Luke 1:1-4)

The Gospel records of the person and work of Jesus are the focal center of the entire Bible. Everything we believe today depends upon them. If they are true, then we know assuredly that, “This Jesus whom God raised up is both Lord and Christ.” (Act 2:36) If they are not true, then we can know nothing of the kind with any certainty. There are some teachers today who say, “It doesn’t matter whether or not the Gospels give accurate history – all that matters is that they provide a high ideal by which to pattern our lives. It does not have to be true history to be great religion.” But that is so wrong. Beware of such a lie. If the Gospel records are not true, then our faith is in vain. History is extremely important. Our faith is rooted in history. The Gospels are not primarily a set of ideals of conduct. They are first a message of facts: real, true, unique facts of what God has done for us and made known to us. It is, of course, a message to be believed; and that faith is to be genuine and deep enough to control our lives. We are to know these things so that we may act upon them. But the Gospel account cannot adequately impact our lives unless we are convinced that it is true.

Can we believe the Gospel records? Do they give us an accurate historical picture of Jesus’ life and teachings? God doesn’t ask us to accept them without evidence. He doesn’t want us to just blindly believe, without any reason for believing. We want to start at the very beginning to answer the question: “Can we believe the Gospels?” We begin by assuming that the Bible is not from God, not inspired. We want to examine it – particularly the four Gospels – the same way any historian would examine any historical record to determine if it is reliable and accurate. I want you to pay close attention as we consider the case for the reliability of the Gospel records. Many of us are believers – and perhaps you’ve always accepted the Bible as historically true. But each of us needs to know why we believe, for God commands us: “Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have” (1 Pet 3:15) – and – there are some who have always wondered about the validity and credibility of Scripture. I want to share with you why I believe that the four Gospels provide the surest kind of history. Knowing why we believe gives our faith stability and strength. There are ...

I. THREE TESTS THAT HISTORIANS USE TO EXAMINE THE RELIABILITY OF ANY HISTORICAL BOOK

First – The authorship of the book – who wrote it?

Second – The date of the book – when was it written?

Third – The text of the book – is what we have what the author wrote?

We want to apply these same tests to the Gospel records. We start with a look at ...

A. THE AUTHORSHIP

The Gospel writers didn’t sign their books like authors do today. They had no interest in receiving royalties or winning Pulitzer Prizes. So – we have to turn to the writing of the early Christian leaders (called the church fathers) – and see who they say wrote the Gospels.

The first Gospel is attributed to Matthew by both Papias, in 140 A.D. and by Irenaeus in 180. Papias was a student of the apostle John. In addition, several early Christian writers in the first half of the second century quote from the first Gospel, and attribute the quote to Matthew. These are listed on your outline under authorship.

The second Gospel was written by Mark, according to statements made by second century writers Papias, Justin Martyr, and Irenaeus.

The third Gospel and the book of Acts were written by the same man -- the physician Luke. Both Justin and Irenaeus tell us that, as well as the Muratorian Fragment of the Gospels and the Anti-Marcionite prologue to the Gospel that circulated with it around A.D. 160. The fourth Gospel contains a good deal of internal evidence of John's authorship, as he refers to himself as the "beloved" disciple. John's student, Papias, ascribes the last Gospel to John, as do Irenaeus and the Muratorian Fragment. Also, both Ignatius and Justin attribute quotations from the Gospel to the apostle John. Many other quotations could be cited from the early church fathers, but these should be sufficient to show that certainly the Gospels were written by Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. Next, we want to look at ...

B. THE DATE OF THE BOOKS

This study obviously ties in closely with the study of the authorship, because – if we understand who the authors were, we know approximately when they wrote. The majority of the early Christian writers indicate that Matthew wrote first, closely followed by both Mark and Luke – sometime between A.D. 50 and 62. John came 20 to 30 years later, around A.D. 80 or 85. The importance of identifying the authors and the dates they wrote is this: An historical record will tend to be more reliable if it is written by someone who knows his subject and who lives at or near the same time in history.

Matthew and John were both apostles of Christ and lived with Jesus throughout His ministry – so they provide eyewitness accounts of Christ's life. Mark and Luke were friends and travelers with the apostles. Papias – who was a friend and student of the apostle John – quotes John as saying that Mark was Peter's interpreter and secretary, and that he wrote the Gospel as Peter preached it. Peter lived with Jesus for over three years.

And we know, from the book of Acts, that Luke spent many years traveling with the apostle Paul as his physician and co-worker. Luke would have had abundant opportunities to talk with and interview the rest of the apostles – and that is exactly what he said he did in the introduction to his Gospel.

A third thing we must examine in seeking to discover the historical reliability of a book is ...

C. ITS TEXT

Have the words, which these eyewitnesses recorded, been passed down through the centuries without being altered extensively? Do we have what they wrote?

This study is known as textual criticism and is a very important study. We do not have any of the originals that the apostles and their companions wrote. All that we have are copies. This fact, alone, shouldn't disturb us, for we have no originals of any book of antiquity.

One reason for this is that the most ancient manuscripts were written on papyrus, a type of early paper that doesn't endure very well.

It wasn't until the fourth century A.D. that vellum, a leather made from animal skins, came into popular use. It much better withstood the tests of time, but was a great deal more costly to use.

In addition to this, when the apostles and their contemporaries wrote, they didn't have printing presses to roll out thousands of copies. And they couldn't run their xerox machines because there was no electricity! They wrote one copy – and sent it ... the church receiving it would make a copy – and send it on to others. Eventually, they established Scriptoriums – where scribes would stand at rows of desks and make copies of Scripture while someone read it to them. Thus, several hand-made copies could be produced simultaneously.

Many of these copies are extant today – in fact – we have over 5300 manuscripts of the Greek New Testament in whole, or in part. In addition, there are over 19,000 early translations into Latin, Coptic, Armenian, and Syriac that are available. And – all but eleven verses of the New Testament are quoted in the writings of the early church fathers.

Hundreds of men and women – known as textual critics – spend their lives examining all these records, as well as new discoveries of Bible manuscripts – to compare the wording. When the texts disagree as to wording – it's called a variant reading. There are several reasons why variations occur.

Though the scribes were very careful in their job – you can imagine how difficult it would be to listen to someone read, and then write every word exactly.

The Greek language is an inflected language – which means that one word has several different endings by which the reader determines if it is a noun, a verb, a participle, etc. For example, 'agape' – the word for "love" – can be read agapaw, agapaein, agapes, agapen, agapemen, agapete – and several other ways, all of which have a slightly different implication.

And, there are homonyms also – like we have in English. If you were a scribe – and the reader said: "Steal." How would you write it? Steel – the metal, Steal – like a crook; or Stele – the carved design on a façade. The word has three spellings and three meanings! "Idol" is another word with three spellings and three meanings. (Idyll, Idle)

Another reason for variants is a copier's error. If someone in Jerusalem made a single error – and sent the copy on to Alexandria where they had a Scriptorium – and the scribes copied it there, there would be several copies made with that error.

One further reason involves the source of the copies, and the fact that they were handwritten. If you looked at my study Bible, you would find my handwritten notes all over – in the margins, between the lines – wherever I had space to write.

But you could easily tell which were my notes because the text was printed and my notes were handwritten.

But – if an archaeologist in Ephesus finds a copy of some early Christian preacher's study Bible – which was handwritten in the first place – how is he going to be able to tell which words are the preacher's personal notes – and which are the words of the Bible text? Some variants get in that way.

In comparing all these manuscripts and translations the textual critics consider which manuscripts are the oldest (closest to the original in time), which manuscripts are notorious for additions, where the manuscripts originated, plus the number that agree on the wording – and they then determine the most likely text.

Geisler and Nix, who are textual critics, say: “Only about 1/8 of all variant readings have any weight at all – as most of them are merely mechanical matters, such as spelling or style. Only about 1/60 rise above trivialities. Mathematically, this would compute to a text that is 98.33% pure.”

There is not one single doctrine that is jeopardized by any variant reading. Richard Bentley, another critic, writes: “The real text of the sacred writers is competently exact ... nor is one article of faith or moral precept either perverted or lost.” The case for the reliability of the New Testament text is stronger than that for any other ancient writing.

The scribes who copied the manuscripts were very careful because they believed they were dealing with the Word of God and not merely the word of men. We’re even told that they had the words numbered so they would not omit anything.

A good proof of how careful they were was discovered in 1947-48 when the “Dead Sea Scrolls” were found. Prior to 1948 the earliest copy of Isaiah that we had dated to 900 A.D. Now – Isaiah originally wrote in 750 B.C. That meant that 1650 years had elapsed between what he wrote and what we had. The Isaiah manuscripts found in 1948 dated to before 200 B.C. – 1100 years earlier than the copies previously available.

Yet there was no significant variation – through 1100 years of copying, the text had remained virtually unchanged – that’s how careful the Biblical scribes were.

Let’s compare the New Testament documents with other historical accounts;

Julius Caesar wrote “Gallic Wars” around 50 B.C., but the earliest copy available today is 950 years later – and there are 10 copies from the 10th century A.D.

Plato and Aristotle, the famous Greek philosophers, lived and wrote in 350 B.C. – but there are very few copies of their writings available today. The earliest we have are from the 13th to 15th centuries – several hundred years after they originally penned their works.

Getting closer to the New Testament days, we might consider the two famous Roman historians who wrote around 100-115 A.D., Tacitus and Seutonius. Historians rely upon their records for insights into the empire’s history – but the oldest copies in existence are 800 to 1000 years after they wrote. And, again, there are not many copies for textual critics to look at – only 20 of Tacitus’ and 8 of Seutonius’ works.

The same holds true of the writings of Pliny, the Roman governor of Bythnia in A.D. 75, over eight centuries elapsed between his originals and the seven copies available. If we average these out we find that these secular authors wrote about 900 years prior to the earliest extant copies – and there are only an average of ten reproductions available to compare for verification of the text.

But, when we look at the New Testament documents, there is an amazing difference. A portion of a manuscript of Matthew has been found that dates to AD 60, within 10 years of the original. There are two papyrus copies of John’s Gospel that date back to the second century, both under 100 years from the original writing. John Ryland’s is within 45 years. The Chester Beatty papyrus contains most of the New Testament books – only 100 years or so after they were penned. There are also five complete vellum copies of the entire New Testament available today that date to within 3 or 4 hundred years of the apostolic writings. From a time span perspective, there is really no comparison to the secular works.

On top of all this – all but eleven verses of the New Testament are quoted in the writing of the early church fathers between 110 and 350 A.D.

And, get this – the secular writings averaged around ten copies each, most coming from about the tenth century – there are over 5300 copies of the New Testament in Greek dating from before the tenth century ... not ten, but 500 times ten! From a numerical perspective, there is really no comparison to the secular works. And, to compare apples with apples and count all the copies (Greek, Coptic, Latin, Syriac, etc) there are 24,633 - thousands of times more than any other book of antiquity.

The point is: people believe the historical validity of Caesar and Tacitus – which have far less textual attestation than the writing of the apostles. In fact, the textual verification of the New Testament is beyond comparison – yet some people persist in assuming that the Bible has been changed as it was passed on through the ages.

I suggest that is has nothing to do with objective examination, but with subjective feelings. Seutonius makes no demands on my life – but the New Testament does, so many prefer to accept the secular and doubt the spiritual.

As you can see – there really is no comparison between the Bible text and any other work of antiquity. The case for the reliability and accuracy of the Biblical writings is beyond question.

That takes care of the three tests that historians use to determine credibility – the authorship, the date, and the text. NOW, Let's examine the Gospels themselves to see ...

II. WHY WE CAN ACCEPT THEM AS HISTORICALLY TRUE

First – consider ...

A. THE HONESTY OF THE WRITERS

As we saw in Luke 1:1-4 – the Gospel writers claim to give us an accurate and true account. They were all either eyewitnesses or careful historians. They were men of utmost character. They believed themselves what they wrote – and carried it out in their lives. They wrote in the first century – not long after the events of which they wrote occurred. There were still many other eyewitnesses around. If what they recorded was not factual, it would have easily been opposed and smothered by the truth of their opponents.

For example – four decades ago – November 1963 – an event occurred in Dallas that many of us are still around to remember. Via television, we were eyewitnesses. But suppose some guy writes a book and submits it to a publisher today with the elaborate details regarding John Kennedy's death by poisoning in 1963. Would it get published? It would get thrown in the trash because there are too many of us still around who know what happened. The same is true of these Gospel writers and their contemporaries.

They had no motive for falsehood. The Jews were against them – and the Romans weren't far behind. To fabricate such an account would mean certain persecution, and probably death. They wrote what they had seen and heard and had become convinced of – and were killed for their testimony. (1 Jn 1:1-4) Men don't die for what they know to be a lie!

Next – consider ...

B. THE INTELLIGENCE OF THE WRITERS

Their thoughts are well organized.

They are sober and simple narratives – there is no taste of the Greek and Roman mythology so popular in their day ... no fantastic and imaginative stories. Even the accounts of miracles are related matter-of-factly and simply – without a lot of attention called to them.

We should also notice the use of the historical method by Luke in his introduction. (Lk 1:1-4) (1) He states his primary source – he interviewed eyewitnesses. (2) He gives his method – he researched the facts, checked them out, and sought to write an orderly account. (3) Then he states his purpose – to provide a true and factual record of what actually happened.

Thirdly, let's consider ...

C. THE NUMBER OF THE WITNESSES

We might very well be skeptical if one person had written about Jesus' life, and we had no other information about Him. But here are four accounts. Two are by eyewitnesses, and the other two use eyewitnesses as their primary source. Three were written within 30 years or less of the subject's life, and the other about 50 years later. But, the number of the witnesses only holds evidential value if they don't contradict one another, so we ...

D. NEED TO CONSIDER THE AGREEMENT OF THESE WITNESSES

These four accounts are so similar that they are often accused of copying from each other. Yet, they are so independent and different in recounting many details, that sometimes they are accused of contradicting one another. The writers make no attempt to explain the differences or to prove what they say.

On close study, they are seen to agree perfectly, but not with the kind of surface agreement that would appear if they were made up to agree or if they were copying from one another. Only true and independent accounts tend to both differ and be similar.

In his book, "Christ and the Scripture," Kenneth Kantzer writes: "Accurate detailed accounts by eyewitnesses interviewed independently will necessarily give us data which, without further questioning, can't be fit together. We can cross-examine contemporary witnesses, but we live too late in history to press the Biblical witnesses for a harmonization of their testimony.

Several years ago the mother of a friend of ours was killed. We first learned of her death through a trusted, mutual friend who reported that the woman had been standing on a street corner when she was hit by a bus and fatally hurt. She died a few minutes afterwards. A little later, we learned from the grandson of the dead woman that she had been involved in a collision, was thrown from the car in which she was riding and was killed instantly.

The boy was quite definite; this was all the information he had. His story was not only clear and positive, but he had secured his information directly from his mother, the dead woman's daughter. No further word was available from either source, so which were we to believe? We trusted both our friends, but we certainly could not put the data together. Much later we learned that after the woman was hit by a bus and fatally hurt, a passing car picked her up and headed for the nearest hospital, on the way colliding with another car. The injured woman was thrown from the car and died instantly. This story presents no greater difficulty than any recorded in the Gospels. Such coincidences occur repeatedly; they are inherent in any independent detailed descriptions of events. The only significant difference between this story and the accounts of the four evangelists is that we cannot cross-question Biblical witnesses."

There is no possible way that they could have been written in collusion with one another – they differ too much. And – there is no possible way they could have been fabricated independently of one another – they agree on too much. The only alternative is that they are true and factual accounts – written independently by four different men, each using his own style and vocabulary, and each emphasizing the details most important to him.

For example, Mark tends to give the highlights of Jesus' life – a brief account that doesn't go into a lot of detail. In the words of detective Joe Friday: "Just the facts, sir." Luke, on the other hand, is a detail person, very thorough, as we'd expect a doctor to be. His education is also very apparent in his Greek vocabulary and style. Matthew writes primarily for the Jewish audience, and thus gives many Old Testament references and prophecies. John writes later, leaving out of his account many of the things included in the earlier three, and addressing the Romans – emphasizing what Jesus said, and he is very careful to explain Jewish customs to his Gentile readers. Apart from these differences in style and purpose, the four Gospels are in complete harmony. Not only do they agree with one another, there is also ...

E. AGREEMENT WITH OTHER SOURCES OF KNOWLEDGE WE HAVE ABOUT CHRIST

They are in perfect harmony with ...

1. THE REST OF THE NEW TESTAMENT WRITINGS

The Gospels record nothing contrary to what we learn of Jesus in the Acts or the Letters of Paul. Throughout the New Testament Scriptures, He is pictured exactly as we see in the Gospels.

2. SECULAR HISTORY ...

also confirms the Gospel records.

There are many references to Jesus in non-Christian writings from the first and second centuries:

- a. **THE TALMUD** – a collection of Jewish historical traditions.
- b. **SEVERAL BOOKS BY JOSEPHUS** – a Jewish historian who wrote in A.D. 70 to 80.
- c. **THALLUS** – a Roman historian who wrote in A.D. 50-55.
- d. **ARCHAEOLOGISTS** have uncovered a letter from around A.D. 75, written by a Jew named MARA BAR SERAPION to his son, in which he explains some of the things happening in Palestine.
- e. **PLINY** – The Roman governor of Bythnia, talks about Jesus in a document from A.D. 75.
- f. **TACITUS** and g. **SEUTONIUS** – a Roman historians writing in A.D. 115 to 120, also discusses Jesus.

These secular records tell us several things: that Jesus lived in Palestine; that He was put to death as a criminal by Pontius Pilate; that He performed many amazing miracles; they name some of His disciples; discuss the destruction of Jerusalem as Jesus prophesied; and they say that He was worshipped as God.

The secular history of that day confirms what we know of Christ from the Gospel records.

There is also perfect agreement with ...

3. ARCHAEOLOGY

The testimony of the Gospels conforms to all available archaeological data about the land, the rulers, the coinage, the customs, etc. And, the more archaeologists learn – the more the truth of Scripture is confirmed. There has never been an archaeological discovery that has shown the Bible to be in error – but there have been many that have shown the Bible to be true and historians to be in error. One of the best examples is the familiar Christmas account in Luke 2:1-3 – “Now it came about in those days that a decree went out from Caesar Augustus, that a census be taken of all the inhabited earth. This was the first census taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. And all were proceeding to register for the census, everyone to his own city.”

A little over a century ago those verses were thought to be wrong in several ways: 1) The Romans never took an empire-wide census. 2) They didn't begin to take a census until well after the days of Caesar Augustus. 3) Quirinius didn't govern Syria until several years after the birth of Christ. 4) When the Romans did conduct a census, they went to where people lived (like the US does today) and didn't require people to return to their hometowns.

At that time a young British archaeologist was aware of these – and other reputed errors – especially in Luke's writing. He devoted his life just to study the archaeology and history of the places Luke wrote about in his Gospel and The Acts. An unbeliever at first, his goal was to prove once and for all the errors in Luke's writings. He wanted to forever lay to rest the idea that the Bible was true.

To make a long story short – Sir William Ramsey found that every statement – not only in Luke 2 – but also throughout Luke's writing in his Gospel and The Acts – was absolutely confirmed as true. Ramsey wrote: “Luke is an historian of the first degree.” As a result of his research, Ramsey became a Christian – and a prolific writer of archaeological books confirming the historical accuracy of the Bible. We close with ...

F. THE CIRCUMSTANTIAL EVIDENCE FOR THE VALIDITY OF THE GOSPEL ACCOUNTS

The effects produced must have an adequate, factual, historic cause behind them.

1. THE EXISTENCE AND SPREAD OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH through the centuries ... not spread by force.

2. THE CHANGE OF THE DAY OF WORSHIP FROM SATURDAY TO SUNDAY among those who had always kept the Sabbath as holy ...

3. THE LORD'S SUPPER as an abiding memorial still celebrated by millions every Sunday ...

4. AND BAPTISM as the act of initiation into the Christian faith ...

Each of these points to an original cause – rooted in a valid historical setting ... and that cause was the life and teachings of Jesus of Nazareth, which is recorded in the four Gospels. Nothing has changed the world so much as the facts recorded in these books ... we even date history from them today. Every available piece of evidence points to the fact that the Gospels record well-founded, historical events – and that they are reliable, accurate, and trustworthy records of what actually occurred.

What does this mean to us? It means that we can read the Gospels – and find out what Jesus really did and said. It means that we have a solid basis and foundation for our faith. As we'll see – if Jesus did and said the things the Gospels record – then He is God ... He has a claim on our lives ... and we need to perk up our ears and listen to Him ... open our minds to His truth ... and commit our hearts to follow Him as Lord and God.

Over and over we are warned in the Scriptures to test the utterances of men and spirits to find out what is true. The best defense against falsehood is God's truth embodied in His word. God's word is sharp enough to cut to the heart of false teaching and bright enough to confidently illumine our way.

Some may rely on traditions and the words of fallible men – but we can never go wrong when we place our trust in the Word of God. If we stand on God's Word, we can be sure that ultimately we will prevail. Why can we be sure – because, as Paul declares to Timothy: "All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; that the child of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work." (2 Tim 3:14-17)

Here Paul undeniably affirms that the Bible is God's Word, inspired by the very breath of the Lord of the universe. But why would he say this? To this point we have accepted the Gospel records only as accurate history. We considered the evidence for their historical reliability and found them – beyond a reasonable doubt, to be trustworthy records of what actually happened in the past. But are these Gospels, and the other books of the Bible, from God? Did He inspire men to compose them? Some would have us believe that a bunch of men, at the urging of Constantine in the fourth century, decided to put these 66 books into the Bible and declare it divine. But I will show you that they were considered God-inspired from the very moment they were penned.

When we looked into the historical records of the Gospels we found that Jesus was and is God. We discovered that He made many amazing claims, which only God could truthfully make. Upon further examination, we observed how those claims were substantiated and confirmed by His character, His fulfillment of prophecy, His miracles, and His resurrection from the grave. The evidence demands the verdict that Jesus is the very God He claimed to be.

Therefore He has authority. He Himself said, "All authority has been given to Me in Heaven and on earth." (Mt 28:18) Authority simply means "the right to command obedience, the right to be listened to as the expert." Consequently, we can look to Jesus' teaching to find the answer to our question: is the Bible God's Word? We can trust whatever Jesus says about it. We'll consider ...

III. THE OLD TESTAMENT SCRIPTURES ...

first -- for these 39 books were the very ones that Jesus and His contemporaries used. What did our Lord say about them? To begin with – He viewed them as ...

A. RELIABLE AND HISTORICALLY TRUE

Our modern age is one that refuses to accept many of the Old Testament accounts. Some people call the stories myths or parables. (#113)

A kid came home from Sabbath school and his father asked what he had learned. "The Rabbi told us a wonderful story about the Jews that were chased out of Egypt and came to the Red Sea. When they saw the Egyptians following them, they built a bridge over the sea and crossed it. But when the Egyptians kept coming, they put dynamite under the bridge and when the Egyptians got on it, they blew up the bridge and the Egyptians all died."

“The Rabbi told you this story?” the father asked incredulously.

“No,” the kid answered, “but if I told you what the Rabbi said, you’d never believe it.”

I think it’s very interesting to see that Jesus, in His teaching, referred to some of the very accounts that people today most often discount – and He accepted them as historically true.

1. THE CREATION ACCOUNT. (Gen 1-3)

Jesus said: “Have you not read, that He who created them from the beginning made them male and female.” (Mt 19:4)

2. THE FLOOD OF NOAH’S DAY. (Gen 6-8)

He again confirms the Genesis record in Luke 17:27: “They were eating, they were drinking, they were marrying, they were being given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the Ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all.”

Then, one of the greatest fish stories of all time, that of ...

3. JONAH THE PROPHET. (Jonah 1-4)

Christ believed the whole account and says: “For just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the sea-monster; so shall the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. The men of Nineveh ... repented at the preaching of Jonah.” (Mt 12:40-41) He also confirms the many ...

4. OLD TESTAMENT ALLUSIONS TO THE DESTRUCTION OF THE CITY OF SODOM

Saying: “On the day that Lot went out from Sodom, it rained fire and brimstone and destroyed them all.” (Lk 17:29; Gen 18-19; Deut 29:23; Isa 1:9, 13:19; Jer 49:18; Lam 4:6; Amos 4:11) Often in the Old Testament we’re told of ...

5. THE GLORY AND MAGNIFICENCE OF SOLOMON AND HIS KINGDOM. (1 Kgs 10; 2 Chron 9)

In His Sermon on the Mount, Jesus, too, referred to “Solomon and all his glory.” (Mt 6:29)

And, can you believe in a bush that keeps on burning, but is not burned up? That’s what Moses saw in Exodus 3 when God called him to lead His people, Israel – and Jesus believed it, referring to God speaking from ...

6. the Burning bush ...

in Mark 12:26.

Some of the other Old Testament accounts that Jesus spoke of as historically true are:

7. Moses lifting up of the brass serpent in the wilderness to stop the plague that was destroying the people. (Num 21:1-9; Jn 3:14)

8. CAIN'S MURDER OF HIS BROTHER, ABEL. (Gen 4:1-16; Mt 23:35)

On another occasion, as Jesus was teaching on the danger of disobedience, He issued this solemn warning: "Remember ...

9. LOT'S WIFE!" (Lk 17:32)

He was referring to the account in Genesis 19 when Lot and his family fled for their lives from Sodom. God had told them not to look back, but she did – and was turned into a pillar of salt.

A teacher told that story in Sunday School and one kid said, "I can't believe that story." Another kid said, "Oh, I can. Just last week my mom was going to the store – and she looked back – and turned into a telephone pole!"

Whether you can believe it – or not – Jesus did, and used it to support His message. He also believed

10. THE STORY OF ELIJAH WHO STOPPED THE HEAVENS FROM RAINING FOR 3 ½ YEARS ...

bringing famine to the land -- then going to a widow's house and providing her an unending supply of bread and oil. (1 Kgs 17:7-16; Lk 4:25-26)

11. AND THE HEALING OF NAAMAN'S LEPROSY IN THE DAY OF ELISHA. (2 Kgs 5:1-16; Lk 4:27)

We could go on and on, but I think it's clear that Our Lord believed without question in the historical reliability of the Old Testament text. Furthermore ...

B. JESUS BELIEVED AND TAUGHT THAT THE OLD TESTAMENT SCRIPTURES WERE INSPIRED BY GOD.

Look as the way He used them. One example is Matthew 22:31-32: "Have you not read that which was spoken to you by God, saying, 'I am the God of Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob'? God is not the God of the dead but of the living."

He quotes from ...

1. Moses' writing ...

in Exodus 3:6, but He doesn't attribute the quotation to Moses, He says, "What God said to you." What Moses wrote was God's Word. He does the same thing in Mark 7:1-13. He is talking to the Pharisees about ...

2. Moses' Law ...

regarding purification from uncleanness and about the fifth commandment on honoring father and mother. It was Moses who wrote these laws, (Ex 20:12; Deut 5:16; Lev 11-17) but notice what Christ says: “You have a fine way of setting aside the commands of God in order to observe your tradition...” (Mk 7:9,13). Jesus believed that Moses’ writings were the Word of God. But, it was not only Moses’ writings He referred to in this way. He speaks of ...

3. THE PSALMS ...

in a similar fashion. Listen to Mark 12:36 – “David himself said by the Holy Spirit,” and then He quotes from Psalm 110 (1), stating very plainly that David wrote these Psalms by the influence and inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Then, in John 10:35 He makes a statement regarding ...

4. THE ENTIRE OLD TESTAMENT:

“The Scripture cannot be broken.” That is, it is eternal, inviolable, and unchangeable – even as its author is. He’s referring to the same 39 books of the Old Testament that we use today. They are the Scriptures – sacred writings that come from the Eternal God.

At the outset of His public teaching Jesus emphasized the high view He had of the Scriptures. He wanted His audience to know from the start that they were ...

5. binding and authoritative as God’s Revelation.

He declared: “Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the prophets; I did not come to abolish, but to fulfill; until Heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass away from the Law, until all is accomplished.” (Mt 5:17-18) Throughout His ministry He used and quoted the Old Testament Scriptures as the absolute standard and authority by which people were to live. Why? Because Jesus undeniably saw the Scriptures as the Word of God, and not merely the words or opinions of the men God used to record them. And ...

6. HE PASSED ON TO HIS DISCIPLES THIS SAME HIGH VIEW OF THE SCRIPTURE

We heard Paul’s words to Timothy earlier. Peter reflects the same view, when he says: “But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one’s own unloosing, for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.” (2 Pet 1:20-21) Because the Old Testament was true and inspired by God, Christ also taught that it was ...

C. AUTHORITATIVE – I.E. – it was to be believed and obeyed. In ...

1. JOHN 5 (v. 39-47)

He rebukes the Jewish scholars because, though they studied the Scriptures, they didn’t accept Jesus as the Christ. The Scriptures pointed to Him, and if they truly followed the Word, they would have put their faith in Jesus. He says: “These Scriptures testify about Me, yet you refuse to come to Me to have life ... For if you believed Moses, you would believe Me; for he wrote of Me. But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe My words?” (Jn 5:39, 46-47) Christ clearly expected them to believe and obey the word of Scripture. In the story of the rich man and Lazarus ...

2. LK 16:19-31 ...

Jesus stressed the need for people to obey the Scripture. The rich man died and was in the Torments of Hades. He begs the Lord to send Lazarus back to earth from Paradise to warn his five brothers, so they won't end up like him. Jesus says: "They have Moses and the prophets' writings, let them listen to them." (Lk 16:29) The Word of God is authoritative, if people follow it, they will be saved from such torment. He goes on to say: "If they do not listen to Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded if someone rises from the dead." (Lk 16:31) Clearly, He expected the written Word to be obeyed. Christ constantly appealed to the Scriptures as ...

3. THE FINAL AUTHORITY ...

to answer men's questions. "A certain lawyer stood up and put Him to the test, "Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" and Jesus said: "What is written in the law? How does it read?" (Lk 10:25-26) Another time, "A certain ruler questioned Him, 'Good teacher, what shall I do to obtain eternal life?'" Again, Jesus appealed to the recorded Word: "You know the Commandments, 'Do not commit adultery, do not murder, do not steal, do not bear false witness, honor your father and mother.'" (Lk 18:18-20)

Especially in His own temptations do we see Jesus' (Mt 4:1-4) appeal to the authority of the Scriptures, three times defeating Satan by His quotation of passages from Deuteronomy. (8:3, 6:16,13) Indeed, He said: "Man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God." (Mt 4:4)

And, in that temptation account, Jesus uses a phrase that is frequently used throughout the Bible to emphasize the eternal authority of the Scripture. Before quoting a passage from Scripture, Jesus used a verb tense meaning, "It has been written and stands forever written." Without doubt, Christ viewed the Old Testament writings as God's authoritative Word. He also spoke of their ...

D. PROPHETIC RELIABILITY

Over and over again our Lord used the phrase "Must be fulfilled," when He talked about the Old Testament prophets' writings. He stated: "All things which are written about Me in the Law of Moses and the prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled." (Lk 24:44) The Jews commonly used the phrase "The Law and the prophets" to designate the entire Old Testament Scriptures, which began with the Law and closed with the prophets. That is what Christ is doing here. The Old Testament must be fulfilled because it is the Word of God, and the writers were God's mouthpieces. We've already considered a few of the over 250 Old Testament prophecies that Jesus specifically fulfilled in amazing detail. Now, let's look at a few other prophecies from the Old Testament.

1. ISAIAH'S PROPHECY OF CYRUS ...

is a good one. (Isa 44:28 – 45:25) In 750 B.C., Isaiah predicted that a man would be born named Cyrus. He would become a great king of Persia, would subdue many nations and would rebuild Jerusalem and set the Israelite captives free.

When Isaiah wrote that, Jerusalem had not been destroyed, its people had not been captured. Persia was a little Podunk country nowhere close to being a world power. In fact, it was 200 years later when Persia rose to world dominance, under (guess who?) Cyrus the Great.

Jerusalem was destroyed by Babylon, and its people deported in 586 B.C., 170 years after Isaiah's prediction. When Persia defeated Babylon, Cyrus was the one who issued the decree allowing Nehemiah and Ezra to return to Palestine with over 50,000 of the exiled Jews (Ezra 2:64-65) to rebuild the city and its temples.

How did Isaiah know all these details – down to the birth of Cyrus – 180 years before he was even conceived? The answer is: He wrote as God moved him.

2. EZEKIEL'S PROPHECY REGARDING THE CITY OF TYRE

There are several specific details he predicts in chapter 26. God would bring many nations against Tyre (v. 3), who would be against her successively, not unitedly – beginning with Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon (v. 7). The city would be completely destroyed: “They will destroy the walls of Tyre and break down her towers; and I will scrape her debris from her and make her a bare rock, ... and she will become spoil for the nations.” (Ezek 26:4-5) He goes into great detail describing the ramps, siege work, and battering rams Babylon would use to devastate her (v. 8-11). Then He says: “They will break down your walls and demolish your fine houses, and throw your stones, timber, and rubble into the sea.” (Ezek 26:12) “And I will make you a bare rock; you will be a place for the spreading of nets. You will be built no more, for I the Lord have spoken,” declares the Lord God. (Ezek 26:14)

This prophecy was made about 586 B.C. It began to be fulfilled eleven years later. In 575, Nebuchadnezzar set up siege works against the city. The people of Tyre, which was on the Mediterranean coast, put all their possessions into boats and moved their city out to a small island just off the mainland. The Babylonians completely wrecked the abandoned city, without gaining much plunder.

Then, 240 years later, another nation – the Greeks, under Alexander the Great – came against Tyre. In 334 B.C., as Ezekiel had said, they took the rubble of the old coastal city and laid it in the sea, building a causeway out to the island city. Tyre was taken, the inhabitants were sold as slaves, and the city was looted and destroyed. The ancient city has never been rebuilt, and for centuries fishermen have used the bare rock for the spreading of their nets – exactly as Ezekiel foretold!

3. BABYLON ...

itself is yet another example of how Old Testament prophecy was accurately fulfilled. Both Isaiah (13:19-22) and Jeremiah (51:1-60; 25:12-14) predict this city's end – Isaiah about 200 years beforehand and Jeremiah 70 years before, when Babylon ruled the world.

They predicted Babylon would fall suddenly and be destroyed completely by the Medes (Jer 51:8, 28). It would never again be inhabited by humans (Isa 13:20, 25:12; Jer 51:37), but would be the dwelling place of all types of wild beasts (Isa 13:21-22; Jer 51:37). No shepherd will ever make their flocks lie down there and no Arab will ever pitch his tent there (Isa 13:20). The city would be a perpetual waste and no stone would ever be taken from the ruins to build another city.

Every one of these statements has come to pass. The locals avoid the area due to legends that it has a curse upon it. We don't have time to look at more prophecies, although there are many more. Suffice it to say that we find the same thing with every one – things written centuries beforehand fulfilled in meticulous detail, because the prophets who wrote them were recording God's revelation to them. Certainly the combined evidence of Jesus' statements and His view of the Old Testament's reliability, inspiration, authority, and its own prophetic record should be sufficient for us to believe that these 39 books came to us from God.

But what about the writings of the New Testament? There are 27 books in the New Covenant Scriptures – 22 of them were written by the Apostles of Christ, 3 were written by companions of the Apostles, and two were recorded by Jesus' own brothers. Are the ...

IV. NEW TESTAMENT WRITINGS ...

also God's word? Again, we turn first to Jesus Himself for the answer. The most important thing to consider is ...

A. WHAT JESUS PROMISED TO THE NEW TESTAMENT WRITERS ...

for these promises serve as the foundation for our acceptance of these books as Scripture. The night before His crucifixion, Jesus gathered the Apostles together in the upper room, and told them what His Spirit would do for them. Listen to what Jesus promised these men who would lead His church:

"The Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My Name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you." (Jn 14:26) "When the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, that is the Spirit of Truth, who proceeds from the Father, He will bear witness to Me." (Jn 15:26)

"But when He, the Spirit of Truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come. He shall glorify Me; for He shall take of Mine, and shall disclose it to you." (Jn 16:13-14) There are six specific promises in these verses regarding what the Holy Spirit would do for the Apostles:

1. HE WOULD TEACH THEM ALL THINGS ...

I.E. – spiritual things they needed to know for leading and building His church. The Holy Spirit would teach them "everything necessary for life and godliness." (2 Pet 1:3)

2. HE WOULD BRING TO THEIR REMEMBRANCE ALL THAT JESUS SAID

Have you ever wondered how the Gospel writers could recall all those words in the red letters in your Bible – without the benefit of a tape recorder? The answer is in this promise.

3. HE WOULD BEAR WITNESS TO THEM OF CHRIST ...

would take from Christ and make it known to them. They would have the mind and wisdom of Christ, would speak and write with His authority.

4. HE WOULD GUIDE THEM INTO ALL TRUTH ...

provide them with accurate facts and prevent them from error as they communicated His will to men.

5. WHATEVER THE SPIRIT HEARD FROM JESUS, HE WOULD SPEAK TO THEM

Their words would be Christ's words. This is why the book of Acts begins with Luke saying: "The first account I composed, Theophilus, about all that Jesus began to do and teach." (Acts 1:1) Jesus was still teaching and working throughout the book of Acts, but in the person of His Apostles.

6. HE WOULD DISCLOSE TO THEM THINGS TO COME ...

enable them to know the future, as we see especially in the Revelation of John. A part of Biblical teaching reveals the future because God, its Author, knows what the future holds.

If you look back over these verses you'll see that the very things Christ said about the Old Testament Scriptures, He promised the writers of the New Testament records, their words would be His Words:

infallibly accurate, historically and spiritually true, prophetically reliable, and unquestionably authoritative as the Word of God. Did the Apostles realize what Jesus was promising them? Let's see ...

B. WHAT THESE WRITERS CLAIMED ABOUT THEIR WRITINGS

1. PETER

"You should remember the words spoken beforehand by the holy prophets and the commandment of the Lord and Savior spoken by your Apostles." (2 Pet 3:2) He first equates the Words of the Old Testament prophets with the words of the Apostles in the New Testament. Just as the Old Testament was God's Word, so is the New. Then, He says flatly that the Apostles spoke the Commandments of the Lord. Their words were Jesus' Words. Again, in His first letter, He says: "For you have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, through the living and abiding Word of God. ... And this is the word that we've preached to you." (1 Pet 1:23, 25) What the Apostles taught was nothing less than the living and lasting Word of God.

2. THE APOSTLE PAUL ...

also understood this. He tells the Corinthians: "If any one thinks he is spiritual, let him recognize that the things which I write to you are the Lord's Commandment." (1 Cor 14:37) Earlier in the letter he reminds them that he is writing by the authority of the Lord and His Spirit. (1 Cor 7:10,40) To the Thessalonians, he is very emphatic and clear: "And for this reason we also constantly thank God that when you received from us the Word of God's Message, you accepted it not as the word of men, but for what it really is, the Word of God, which also performs its work in you who believe." (1 Thess 2:13) Regarding the authority of the Apostles' teaching, he says in Galatians 1:8: "But even though we, or an angel from Heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to that which we have preached to you, let him be accursed." And, to drive the point home, he repeats the words twice. The Apostles' words were the authority, that's why we find the early church in Acts 2:42 "continuing steadfastly in the Apostles' teaching."

That leads us to the third line of evidence.

C. THE EARLY CHURCH RECOGNIZED THE NEW TESTAMENT WRITINGS AS SCRIPTURE

Listen to ...

1. PETER

"Our dear brother Paul wrote to you with the wisdom God gave him ... as also in all his letters, in which are some things hard to understand, which the untaught and unstable distort, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures, to their own destruction." (2 Pet 3:15-16) Not only does Peter specifically state that Paul's letters came from God's wisdom, but he clearly implies that what Paul wrote was accepted on equal footing with the rest of the Scriptures.

2. PAUL ...

himself, in writing to Timothy, (1 Tim 5:18) quotes Luke side by side with Deuteronomy – and calls both of them Scripture. "For the Scripture says, "You shall not muzzle the ox while he is threshing," (Deut 25:4) and "The laborer is worthy of his wages." (Lk 10:7) Both Moses and Luke are regarded equally as God's Word.

3. JUDE ...

the earthly brother of Jesus, quotes from Peter “You beloved, ought to remember the words that were spoken beforehand by the Apostles of Our Lord Jesus Christ; that they were saying to you, ‘In the last time there shall be mockers, following after their own ungodly lusts.’” (Jude 17-18; 2 Pet 3:3) He obviously accepted Peter’s words as authoritative and binding upon the church and encourages them to both remember and heed what the Apostles taught.

We can also discover the view of the early church concerning the New Testament records by seeing statements from early Christians in the days after the Apostles. One of the earliest Christian writers following the Apostles was ...

4. CLEMENT OF ROME

About A.D. 96 he quotes from Paul and says: “The blessed Apostle Paul ... wrote under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit,” showing clearly that Paul’s letters were accepted as Scripture from the earliest days of the post-Apostolic church. (To Corinth)

5. JUSTIN MARTYR ...

a prominent leader in the church, wrote about their assemblies in 140 A.D. He says that, when the church met, “the memoirs of the Apostles – or – the writings of the prophets are read,” thus showing the early church’s acceptance of the New Testament writings on an equal basis with the Old Testament Prophets. (Apology I:67) The fact that all the New Testament books are quoted by ...

6. THE EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITERS ...

in the second and third centuries is abundant proof that the church accepted them as authoritative and God-sent. In fact, all but eleven verses of our New Testament are referenced in the writings of these early church fathers. They clearly believed that the New Testament records were the very Word of God – just as Jesus had promised and the writers themselves had claimed. Before we close, let me mention briefly a few other pieces of ...

V. CONFIRMATORY EVIDENCE FOR THE VALIDITY OF THE BIBLE

Consider ...

A. THE BIBLE’S GROWTH and ACCEPTANCE IN THE FIRST CENTURY

This was the time when it could have been most easily disproved if it was not true. If I wrote a book on Saddam Hussein’s victory in the Gulf War – do you think it would sell? Do you think it would gain wide acceptance and Oprah would call me to be on her show? There are too many people around who know the truth.

Yet, in the very day when the New Testament writings could be most easily discredited, was the time of its greatest growth and acceptance. Its popularity, unlike that of the Moslem Koran, was never spread by force. Its writers and followers were treated as outcasts and were persecuted and killed. Its precepts were thoroughly opposed to the prevailing morality of the first century Roman world – yet still it grew in its acceptance and turned that world upside down. Why? Because it came from God!

A second confirmation comes from ...

B. ARCHAEOLOGY

Nelson Gluek, a prominent archaeologist, has gone on record saying that every available archaeological discovery to date has served to confirm the authenticity and historical accuracy of the Scriptures. No discovery has ever controverted one statement – and many have shown previously accepted ideas of historians to be wrong and the Bible to be right. Let me give just one example, from Luke’s writings in the Gospel and the Acts. There were several statements in those records, which, before 1850, were held by historians to be in error. He calls the Thessalonian officials “Politarchs” in Acts 17:6-8, a title previously unheard of. In chapter 14:1-7, Luke indicated Iconium to be a city of Phrygia, not Lycaonia as historians believed. And, in Luke 3:1, he names Lysanias as Tetrarch of Abilene in 27 A.D., while the only Lysanias history had recorded was killed in 36 B.C.

But the most glaring errors were thought to be in his most familiar passage – the one read each Christmas in Luke 2:1-6. The experts said: 1) There was never an empire-wide census taken by Rome. 2) When Rome did take a regional census, they did not require people to return to their hometown for it (as Mary and Joseph did). 3) Quirinius was Governor of Syria several years after the birth of Christ. A young British nobleman named Sir William Ramsay, now considered one of the greatest archaeologists of all time, decided to devote his life to researching and excavating the countries covered by Luke in his two books. Once and for all he would prove the Bible to be in error.

Over the years, he discovered that every statement Luke made was correct. Thessalonian officials were called “Politarchs,” Iconium was in Phrygia, there was another Lysanias who ruled Abilene from 14-29 A.D. And – he found evidence in Egypt that the Romans conducted an empire-wide census every 14 years, with the first one about the time of Jesus’ birth; citizens did have to return to their ancestral homes for these, and Quirinius was Governor of Syria twice – the first time beginning in 7 B.C.

But this was not all Ramsay found in his research. He found Jesus as Lord of His life. His excavations led him to believe the validity and authority of the Bible – and to the God who authored it. He wrote: “Luke is an historian of the first degree ... this author should be placed along with the greatest of historians.” Ramsay went on to become a very prolific writer of books showing the historical accuracy of the Bible.

On your outline are just a few of the many other archaeological discoveries over the years that have confirmed the reliability of the Biblical accounts. In short, what Scripture says about various countries, cities, rulers, customs, and coinage – has all been substantiated by archaeological data. There is also ...

C. CONFIRMATION FROM SECULAR HISTORY

There are seven sources from the writings of non-Christians that confirm the historical reliability of the New Testament records: These writings and their dates are listed on your outline. They confirm that Jesus lived in Palestine in the first century, that He had an amazing ministry in which He performed many miracles, that He was worshiped as a god (and even name some of His Disciples), and that He was put to death as a criminal by Pontius Pilate, but was said to have risen from the grave.

They give accounts of the destruction of Jerusalem, the rapid spread of the Christian faith throughout the Roman world, and the terrible persecutions inflicted on the church. They confirm that Herod lived with Herodias, his brother’s wife; mention the ministry and death of John the Baptist; substantiate the fact that the Jews didn’t have the authority to sentence a man to death; and refer to the Jews banishment from Rome by the Emperor Claudius.

In closing, I want to mention four other pieces of ...

VI. Circumstantial Evidence

First, think about ...

A. THE AMAZING UNITY OF THE BIBLE

Here is a library of 66 books, recorded by over 40 different men, coming from many different backgrounds. It was written on three different continents, in three different languages, over a period of 1500 years – and covering over 4,000 years of history ... yet it tells one continuous story without contradiction. There is no way it could be a book composed by merely human authors! And then, consider ...

B. ITS INDESTRUCTIBILITY

How many through the centuries, have tried to discredit and destroy it? Antiochus Epiphanies, in 175 B.C., sought to wipe out every copy of the Old Testament Scriptures and the people who followed them. The powerful Roman Empire leveled ten general persecutions against the Christians and their Scriptures in the first three centuries. The Roman church burned thousands of Bibles – and some of their translators – in the 14th to 16th centuries. Infidels and skeptics have, in every century, done their best to deny and do away with this book. Yet the Bible lives, long after its opponents are gone – and stands as testimony of God’s miraculous deliverance of it to us.

We could discuss so many other confirmatory evidences of the Scripture’s Truth.

C. ITS AGREEMENT WITH SCIENCE AND KNOWLEDGE OF THINGS THAT SCIENTISTS DIDN’T KNOW FOR CENTURIES

1. The Earth is Round

Isaiah, (40:21-22) in 750 B.C., mentions that God “sits enthroned above the circle of the Earth” – yet it was 1492 A.D. before Columbus proved that the Earth was round rather than flat.

2. The Earth is Suspended on Nothing

Job - in the oldest book in the Bible, written about 1600 B.C. - says that God “suspends the Earth on nothing and wraps up the water in His clouds.” (Job 26:7-8) But it was a long time before men discovered that this Earth was not supported by Atlas, or held up on the backs of turtles – that it was hung in space, and that the clouds above were composed on water vapor. In 1910 Fridtjof Nansen became the father of the modern science of Oceanography. He first became aware that there might be ...

3. currents in the ocean ...

when he was reading Psalm 8:6-8, written in 1000 B.C., where David mentions, “The paths of the sea.”

Along with these is the ...

D. Bible's power to change PEOPLE's lives and its unique moral teachings

Nearly every law system in the world is based on the Mosaic law of the Old Testament. All these confirmatory evidences are helpful, but the main reason we believe the Bible is God's Word is because Jesus said it. He claimed that the Old Testament records were from God, and He promised the New Testament writers that the Holy Spirit would inspire them to write the Word of God. If we believe Jesus, we'll believe the Scriptures.

What does all this mean to us? It means that the weight of historical, objective evidence points to the Bible as the inerrant, infallible, inspired Word of God. That means that God speaks to our hearts in this book. It is the mind of God revealed to man, the very standard of right and wrong, of truth and error, and the manufacturers' manual of how we can best function to enjoy a full and fruitful and satisfying life. The words in this book are a "Lamp for our feet and a light for our path." (Ps 119:105)

They provide us with guidance and with the wisdom that leads to salvation. They are the divine food for our physical, emotional, and spiritual well being and are able to build us up to maturity in our faith – keeping us from sin, and drawing us ever nearer to God.

We should read the Word, heed the Word, hide the Word in our hearts, and live according to the Word each day. Peter says: "Like newborn babes, long for the pure milk of the Word, that by it you may grow in respect to salvation, if you have tasted the kindness of the Lord." (1 Pet 2:2-3) Have you tasted the kindness of the Lord?