

Worthy of Trust  
October 27, 2013

I want to start this morning by asking you if you believe the Bible is true. Do you believe it accurately teaches us about God, man, sin, salvation, heaven, and hell? How many of you believe this, raise your hand?

Do you also believe that the events it states, like Noah, and Jesus' miracles really happened? How many believe this, raise your hand?

Perhaps a friend, family member, or co-worker has asked you one of those questions in the past. Or maybe someone soon will ask you. What will you say? Why do you believe it is true? Give me an answer.

Just because you believe the Bible to be true is not proof that it is true. Just because you believe something to be true does not make it true. The earth is not flat, even though most people believed that at one time. You can't prove the Bible is true just by believing it. So don't quote the Bible in trying to convince somebody to believe in the Bible. That doesn't work, even though I read of people doing it all the time.

You can't prove the Bible is true. I cannot prove that the Bible is true. But, neither can anyone prove that it is untrue.

Today, I want to make the case that there is more evidence for it being true than there is for it being untrue. I believe that the facts are in favor of its reliability. And this is a crucial issue for us. If the Bible is not reliable then Christianity has no credibility. Everything we believe, as Christians, comes from the Bible. Therefore we have to make a case for its reliability before some people will consider anything that it says.

As a Christian, you should know this, at least enough of it to start someone on the path to God. You should know some of the basic evidence for the reliability of the Bible and be able to share that with someone. I want to give you some of that evidence this morning.

There is evidence that the Bible is reliable when it reports of people, places, and dates.

One of the popular myths of unbelievers is that they believe that Archeology has disproven the Bible. The truth is very different.

While archeology does not prove the theological statements of the Bible, that is not the same as disproving the Bible. Archeology does not prove or disprove the Bible. What has been discovered over the last several centuries is that... **archeological evidence confirms the accuracy of the Biblical documents in describing people, places, and dates.**

For example, look at the following passage.

**Exodus 3:7-8 (NIV)** The LORD said, "I have indeed seen the misery of my people in Egypt. I have heard them crying out because of their slave drivers, and I am concerned about their suffering. So I have come down to rescue them from the hand of the

Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land into a good and spacious land, a land flowing with milk and honey--the home of the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites.

For centuries, outside of the Bible, there was no evidence of the Hittites having existed. Critics of Christianity used that as evidence that the Bible wasn't true. Yet archeology proved otherwise.

In 1894, an archeologist, working in Turkey, uncovered the ancient capital city of the Hittites, discovering entire sets of royal archives of the Hittite kings. This archeological discovery confirmed the historicity of the Hittites as presented in the Bible.

A second example is king David. Like the Hittites, the existence of an actual David, as important as he is in the Bible, could not be corroborated outside of the Bible. However, just a few decades ago, the archaeological find of the Tel Dan Stele confirmed King David of Israel. This Aramean victory stele (inscribed stone) discovered in 1993 at Tel Dan and dated c. 850–835 BC, contains the phrase "House of David".

These are just a couple of the many people, places, and dates that are mentioned in the Bible that archeology has confirmed. Note this comment by Nelson Glueck (1900–1971) a Jewish archaeologist. His work in biblical archaeology resulted in the discovery of 1,500 ancient sites.

***“It may be stated categorically that no archaeological discovery has ever controverted a Biblical reference. Scores of archaeological findings have been made which confirm in clear outline or exact detail historical statements in the Bible. And, by the same token, proper evaluation of Biblical descriptions has often led to amazing discoveries.”***

Dr. Nelson Glueck, *Rivers in the Desert*, (New York: Farrar, Strous and Cudahy, 1959), 136.

Again, archeology does not prove the theological statements of the Bible. However, archeology has consistently proved the historical reliability of the Bible as it reports people, places, and dates.

A second area of evidence concerns the presence of God acting in history. We see this in the number of prophecies that came true after their prediction. While critics of the Bible object that people wrote prophecies after the events they predict happened, this cannot be sustained.

You could certainly claim that for some prophecies. I preached earlier this year about the prophecies about King Cyrus of Persia. Isaiah predicts that Cyrus will allow the Jews to return from Babylon to Jerusalem. Some critics of the Bible claim someone other than Isaiah wrote this part of the book after Cyrus let the Jews return to their homeland.

However, other prophecies are not so easy to dismiss. Take the example of the city of Tyre.

### **Ezekiel 26:4, 14 (NIV)**

They will destroy the walls of Tyre and pull down her towers; I will scrape away her rubble and make her a bare rock...

I will make you a bare rock, and you will become a place to spread fishnets. You will never be rebuilt, for I the LORD have spoken, declares the Sovereign LORD.

When Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, arrived to attack the city of Tyre, he was unable to do so. The whole community had left the city and gone to the island just off shore to live. There they were protected from invasion. However, in 332 B.C., Alexander the Great figured out a way to take the city. He had the original city torn down and used the rubble to fill in the gap between the mainland and the island. The result was that he took the city. And if you go and look at the area of the original city today, you will see that where the original city sat, it is deserted. A new city has built up all around it, but no rebuilding has ever taken place on the original spot. That is one prophecy that could not have been predicted after the fact, for it wasn't in the power of the Jews or Christians to make it happen.

There are many such prophecies concerning other places, events, and people. But the most important involve Jesus. Critics charge that Jesus intentionally did things to make it appear that His life was fulfilling Old Testament prophecies. But there was only so much He could do. He could not determine the place of his birth or early childhood. And once dead, He could not determine where His body was put. There are not just a few of such prophecies. There are dozens. The mathematical probability of so many being fulfilled is astronomical.

Fulfilled prophecies are evidence of God working in the history of the Bible times. Then a third area of evidence concerns the reliability of the documents that we have. How can we be sure they were not falsely written? How can we be sure they are nearly identical to the original copies, of which we have none?

Critics of the Bible, too, have raised these questions. Some people want to believe that the first disciples of Jesus made up the stories about Him to perpetuate their movement.

This is a ridiculous idea when you look into it. It first assumes that the disciples did not believe what they wrote, but had ulterior motives. If that is so, they failed miserably. They never became powerful, rich, or influential. They were executed for their beliefs. Why would they die for lies instead of recanting their writings?

Secondly, the documents showed the disciples in a bad light. If I were trying to fool you into believing that my leader was God's Son and He had appointed me to be his representative, I would not paint myself in a bad light. I would make myself out to be a great man of faith and great leader. The disciples of Jesus do not look so good in the gospel accounts. They tell the truth about themselves, and it is not a pretty picture. The gospels show them often misunderstanding Jesus. It shows Him put out with their lack of understanding and faith. It shows them competing with each other for His favor. Why would any of us want to follow such leaders?

A third argument against them making it all up is the differences between their gospels. If they were trying to fool us, we would surely see greater agreement in their accounts of Jesus' life. While there are similarities in their accounts, there are also significant

differences. The differences are evidence that they were not lying. They wrote from different perspectives, at different times, to different readers. That is why the gospels differ so much.

Another suggestion of Bible critics is that later Christians made up the stories of Jesus. Now, if you were trying to lie to get people to believe in Jesus as a great prophet and more, why would you leave out the best evidence for it? The best piece of evidence for later Christians to use would have been the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem. Jesus predicted this. Yet there is no mention of this destruction in the New Testament. A non-Christian critic of the Bible explains why he thinks this is so.

John A.T. Robinson in researching to disprove the reliability of the Bible said the following.

***"If they were trying to prove the legitimacy of Jesus, the perfect way to do so would be to point out that Jesus predicted the fall of Jerusalem and then point out that it did, indeed, occur. Yet there is no mention in any NT book of that happening. They did not mention it because it had not happened yet."***

This non-Christian critic of the Bible concluded that the New Testament documents were all written before the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans in 70 AD. That means it was the original disciples who wrote the New Testament documents instead of later disciples. If the original disciples wrote them then the facts they report could be verified. It also means they were putting their lives on the line to write such things.

A final bit of evidence for the reliability of the Bible books is seen in how little they changed over the centuries. Ancient documents had to be continually re-copied for they wore out. The inks and parchments they used would fade and fall apart. The only way to preserve the Bible was to keep making newer copies.

This obvious fact has led critics to challenge that the Bible was surely changed over so many centuries of being re-copied that we cannot be certain of its accuracy. Therefore we cannot trust it. This relies on the idea that stories change over time.

How many of you ever played a game in school where the teacher whispered something to the first person in the line, and that person told it to the next person, and on and on until the last person told the teacher the secret? It always changed dramatically.

Now, if each person were copying what they were reading, instead of just hearing it and passing it along verbally, we would expect far less changes. This is how the Bible was passed down, by re-copying. And if they were trying to write it carefully, as they surely were, because of how important it was to them, it would not change very much. However, if all you did most of the day was copy the Bible from old worn out parchments onto new parchments, you would get so tired of it that you could make mistakes quite easily. So we give the critics some points here. However, when it comes to comparing older and newer copies that we have today, we don't see such mistakes occurring in significant ways among the ancient Bible copies we have.

For example, up until 68 years ago the oldest copy of the Old Testament that we had was dated about 900 AD. Then in 1945 a shepherd boy discovered some caves and entering found what have been labeled the Dead Sea Scrolls. Among them was a copy

of Isaiah dating to around 100 BC, 1000 years before our oldest copy. There were very few differences between the two. Most of the changes had to do with spelling. Words today are spelled differently than they were previously. Words like honor and savior used to have a "u" in them. (**honour > honor, saviour > savior**) Most of the differences between the two copies of Isaiah were of this variety. And none of the changes made a difference in the message of the book or what it teaches. We can see that the people who made copies of the Old Testament documents over the centuries were very careful in their work.

When it comes to the New Testament documents we do even better. **We have over 13,000 full or partial copies of the New Testament documents.** That is much more than enough to verify the reliability of the documents. Again, minor mistakes and changes have occurred. But none of these affect the teachings of Christianity to any significant degree.

While we don't have any of the original documents, **the oldest of the ones we do have were written between 40 and 60 years after the originals** were written. So when it comes to the New Testament we see that the people doing the copying were being very careful. We are fairly certain that the Bible we have today is very close to the original documents.

So when we look at the facts we see evidence that the Bible is historically accurate in reporting people, places, and dates. We see through fulfilled prophecies that God has been at work in human history. And we see through a study of the document copies that we have that the documents are reliable copies of the originals.

While this is not conclusive evidence for the truthfulness of the theological claims of the Bible, it is strong evidence that something other than just human effort is involved here. You cannot use this evidence to convince someone that Jesus is the Son of God. But if you know someone who is truly searching for the truth of human existence, this is enough evidence to say there is something here. It is worth investigating further.

Every Christian should be familiar with some of these objections and answers. I don't think God expects us to be experts in these things. But as representatives of Jesus Christ we should have something other than just, "I believe the Bible is true by faith," or "I believe the Holy Spirit has convinced me of the Bible's truthfulness." We need something less subjective to give a truly searcher than that. Take of this message and become familiar with the evidence.

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We believe in the truthfulness of the Bible. Since believing, God has convinced us more than ever it is true. If you too now believe it is true, that what it teaches about Jesus and eternal life is true, then receive Jesus today as your Savior and Lord. He died for your sins. Trust this about Him and turn your life over to Him as your Lord. He will forgive your sins and you will inherit eternal life.