



Archaeology and History Attest to the Reliability of the Bible

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The Bible is still the world's best seller, and has been translated into more than 1400 languages. It was written over a period of 1500 years by kings, statesmen, prophetic seers, intellectuals, and commoners. All 66 books of the Bible are uniquely in harmony and agreement with each other.

In contrast to the fans of the Bible, critics looking for the flyspeck in the masterpiece allege that there was a long span of time between the events recorded in the New Testament and the writing down of those events. Then they say another gap exists archaeologically between the earliest copies made from the autographs of the New Testament. In reality, the alleged spaces and so called gaps exist only in the minds of the critics.

Manuscript Evidence- Notice how no other ancient book's text is questioned or maligned like that of the Bible. For instance, Aristotle's Ode to Poetics was written between 384-322BC. Our earliest copy of this work dates 1100AD, and we find there are only 49 extant manuscripts. Note that the gap between the original writing and the earliest copy is 1400 years. A second example is Plato's Tetralogies, written 427-347 BC. Our earliest copy is 900 AD, and there are only 7 extant manuscripts to study. The gap between the original and the earliest copy is 1200 years. What about the New Testament? Jesus was crucified in 30 AD. The New Testament was written between 48-95 AD. The oldest mss date to the last quarter of the first century, and the second oldest 125 AD. This gives us a narrow gap of 35 to 40 years from the originals written by the apostles. From the early centuries, we have some 5300 Greek mss of the New Testament. Altogether, including Syriac, Latin, Coptic and Aramaic, we have a whopping total of 24,633 texts of the ancient New Testament to confirm the wording of the New Testament scriptures. So the bottom line is, there was no great time period between the events of the New Testament and the New Testament writings. Nor is there a great lapse of time between the original writings and the oldest copies. This means that with the great body of mss evidence, it can also be proved, beyond a doubt, that the New Testament says exactly the same things today as it originally did nearly 2000 years ago.

Corroborative Writings- Critics also charge that there are not ancient writings about Jesus outside the New Testament. This is another ridiculous claim. Writings that confirm his birth, ministry, death, and resurrection are found in Flavius Josephus (AD 93), the Babylonian Talmud (70-200 AD), Pliny the Younger's letter to the Emperor Trajan in about 100 AD, the Annals of Tacitus



(115-117 AD), Mara Bar Serapion (sometime after 73 AD), and Suetonius' Life of Claudius and Life of Nero (120 AD). Another point of contention arises when critics of the have knowingly or unknowingly misled people by implying that Old and New Testament books were either left out of or were added into the canon of scriptures at the great ecumenical councils of the churches which met in 336, 382, 397, and 419 AD. As a matter of fact, one result of these gatherings was to confirm the Church's belief that the books already in the Bible were divinely inspired. So, what we actually find, then, was that the Church, at these meetings, neither added to nor did they take away from the books of the Bible. At the time of the early church's ecumenical councils, the 39 Old Testament books had already been accepted, and the New Testament, as it was written, simply grew up with the ancient church. Each document being accepted as it was penned in the first century was then passed on to Christians of the next century. So, this foolishness about the Roman Emperor Constantine dropping books from the Bible is simply uneducated rumor.

Fulfilled Prophecies- Prophecies that already have been fulfilled from both the Old and New Testaments also add credibility to the text of the Bible. The scriptures predicted the rise and fall of great empires like Greece and Rome (Daniel 2:39, 40). It also foretold the destruction of cities like Tyre and Sidon in Isaiah 23. Tyre's demise is recorded by ancient historians, who tell how Alexander the Great lay siege to the city for seven months. King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon failed in a 13-year attempt to capture the seacoast city and completely destroy its inhabitants. During the siege of 573 BC, much of the population of Tyre moved to its new island home approximately $\frac{1}{2}$ mile from the land city. Here it remained surrounded by walls as high as 150 feet until judgment fell in 332 BC with the arrival of Alexander the Great. The siege lasted seven months, and during that time he fulfilled the remainder of Zechariah's and Ezekiel's prophecy concerning the city at sea by completely destroying Tyre, killing 8,000 of its inhabitants and selling 30,000 of its population into slavery. With Alexander's wrath almost complete, he now dragged 4,000 desperate souls to the beach and viciously crucified them. How could he reach the island that was a $\frac{1}{2}$ mile at sea with an army of infantry and cavalry? He fulfilled the details of the prophecy (Zechariah 9:4 and Ezekiel 26:12) and scraped up the dust and rubble of the old land city of Tyre, just like the Bible predicted, and cast them into the sea, building a 200-foot-wide causeway out to the island. Alexander's death and the murder of his twin sons was also foretold in the scripture. Another startling prophecy was Jesus' detailed prediction of Jerusalem's destruction, and the further spreading of the Jewish diaspora throughout the world, which is recorded in Luke 21. In 70 AD, not only was Jerusalem destroyed by the future emperor of Rome, Titus, but another prediction of Jesus Christ in Matthew 24:1-2 came to pass. The destruction and complete devastation of the temple of God.



Messianic Prophecies- In the book of Daniel, the Bible prophesied and promised the coming of the one and only Jewish Messiah prior to the temple's demise. There is only one candidate that fits this biblical scenario just prior to 70 AD. The Old Testament prophets declared he would be born in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2) to a virgin (Isaiah 7:14), who would be betrayed for 30 pieces of silver (Zech. 1:12-13). The Bible further states that he would die by crucifixion (Psalm 22) and be buried in a rich man's tomb. (Isaiah 53:9). There was only one person that fits all of the messianic prophesies of the Old Testament who lived before 70 AD: Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of Mary.

Yes, the Bible is an amazing book. It was not written as a book of science, yet it contains many amazing scientific facts. When the rest of the world believed the earth was flat or was supported on the shoulders of the mythical god Atlas, or said that it rested on the back of an elephant who stood on the back of a turtle that was swimming in a great endless sea, the Jewish prophets wrote that (Job 26:7)M, "God hangeth the earth upon nothing," and implied that the world was round (Isaiah 40:22) when it said, "It is He that sitteth upon the circle of the earth."

Read the Bible for yourself! Don't rely on others who have told you what they think it says. It is altogether possible that an individual religious leader's interpretation is at best just that, just another man's interpretation. Don't get your facts from secondhand sources --- read the Scriptures for yourself --- and do it with an open mind.