

Why We Believe

Week 2: The Bible

Why Should We Consider the Bible?

- I. It is the most published most read most translated book in the history of the world.
 - A. Each year millions of copies are made.
 1. In 2004 the whole Bible had been translated into >400 languages, the New Testament into >1,000, and work is ongoing in ~2,500.
 2. There have been approximately 700 translations into English.
 - B. It has stood the test of time.
 - C. It has survived despite persecution.
 - D. It is unique in its use of prophecy.
 - E. It is unique in its historical accuracy.
 - F. It is unique in its influence on society
 - G. It claims important things about itself:
- II. The Bible's Claims
 - A. Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation. For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit. II Peter 1:20-21
 - B. All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness. II Titus 3:16
 - C. And the words of the LORD are flawless, like silver refined in a furnace of clay, purified seven times. Psalm 12:6
 - D. It is easier for heaven and earth to disappear than for the least stroke of a pen to drop out of the Law. Luke 16:17
 - E. I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life. I John 5:13
 - F. Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." John 14:6
- III. How do We Know that We have what was Written?
 - A. In history we test a document using:
 1. Internal tests.
 2. External tests.
 - B. Internal Tests
 1. The Bible is the best documented text from antiquity.
 - a. The Iliad is the second best documented text from antiquity. It has 643 manuscripts and manuscript fragments with a 30 percent by-letter variability. There are major variations in themes, characters, and plots.
 - b. The Bible has 26,000 manuscripts and manuscript fragments dating from antiquity with a 2 percent by-letter variability. There are no variations in themes, characters, or plots.
 - c. Most ancient Greek manuscript's earliest copies are over 1000 years after the original writing
 - d. Most Latin manuscripts earliest copies are just under 1000 years after the original writings.

- e. Many New Testament books have numerous complete copies within 250 years of the original writings.
- f. All New Testament Books have complete copies within 400 years of their original manuscripts.
- g. Additionally there are many small passages within decades of the original writings.
- h. There is a very high degree of internal agreement between various authors within the Bible.
- i. You have numerous points for internal checking: Kings vs Chronicles and the four Gospels, etc.

IV. External Tests

- A. The Bible's historical accuracy is supported by:
- B. Flavius Josephus (Jewish Historian)
- C. Tacitus (Roman Historian)
- D. Thallus Circa (Historian AD 52)
- E. Suetonius (Roman Historian)
- F. Pliny the Younger (Governor of Bithynia)
- G. Lucian (Greek writer and historian)
- H. Mara Bar-Serapion (Syrian Historian)
- I. The writings of the early church fathers
- J. Numerous geographic and political references
- K. Archeology

V. How do We Know that We have the Right Books in the Bible?

- A. Books were chosen based on their authorship, authenticity, consistency with the rest of scripture, prophecy, and their acceptance by the people of God.
- B. This process was formalized at several points in history, generally as a response to outside pressure like: persecution or heresy. These included:
 - 1. The Council of Jamnia 90 A.D. (Old Testament only).
 - 2. The Synod of Hippo in A.D. 393 listed the 27 books of the New Testament (but these books had been widely accepted by the Church and church leaders for centuries)

VI. What About the Apocrypha?

- A. The O.T. Apocrypha is a group of Old Testament books that the Catholic Church accepts, but Protestants and Jews have rejected.
- B. No church council nor church father accepted the Apocrypha during the first four centuries of the church, and many spoke against it. The Apocrypha was not officially added to the canon, by the Catholic Church, until 1546 A.D. at the Council of Trent.
- C. The N.T. Apocrypha is a group of books that have never had more than a temporary local acceptance by the Church. They are not included in the Canon because they fail to meet the inclusion tests.
- D. A partial list includes: the Epistle of Pseudo-Barnabas, the Epistle to the Corinthians, the Ancient Homily, the Shepherd of Hermas, the Teaching of the Twelve, the Apocalypse of Peter, the Acts of Paul and Thecla, the Epistle to the Laodiceans, the Gospel according to the Hebrews, the Epistle of Polycarp to the Philippians, the Gospel of Thomas, the Gospel of Peter, the Gospel of James, etc.

VII. Further Reading

The Origin of the Bible, Philip Westley

Christian Apologetics, Norman Geisler

A Ready Defense, Josh McDowell

The New Testament Documents: Are they Reliable? F.F. Bruce

Evidence that Demands a Verdict, Josh McDowell