

502 Why Should We Believe the Bible God's Answers to Life's Questions Phil Sanders

To hear some people, the Bible is just an ancient book written by humans and filled with myths and contradictions.

- Others think the Bible is just one sacred book among many.
- Is the Bible really true? Can you trust it to give you accurate information?
- The Bible claims to be the Word of God and what will judge us in the last day. If this is true, we need to listen to everything it has to say!

Why Should I Believe the Bible?

The Bible is a unique book, unlike any other book in all history. It is the best-selling book of all time. It has made more impact on America culture and society than any other book. But can we believe the Bible's claims about Jesus the Savior... Is He Lord and will He judge us?

Occasionally someone says that we don't know whether Jesus Christ ever really lived or not.

When I hear someone say that, however, I wonder if they are merely repeating what they have heard or if they have examined the evidence for themselves.

If Jesus were not historical, the NT is certainly an untrustworthy book; but if other sources corroborate the facts we know about Jesus, the Bible has credibility.

Gary Habermas, *Historicity of Jesus*

Examined a total of 45 ancient sources for the life of Jesus outside the New Testament

Some were Christian, many were non-Christian, and some were archaeological.

He found 129 reported facts concerning the life, person, teachings, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Cornelius Tacitus (born between 52 and 54 A.D.).

Writing about the reign of Nero (54-68 A.D.), he described the great fire which destroyed Rome in 64 A.D. and told of the rumor that Nero burned the city himself in order to gain greater glory in its rebuilding. In his *Annals* 15.44, Tacitus says:

Therefore, to scotch the rumor, Nero substituted as culprits, and punished with the utmost refinements of cruelty, a class of men, loathed for their vices, whom the crowd styled Christians. Christus, from whom they got their name, had been executed by sentence of the procurator Pontius Pilate when Tiberius was emperor.

“While some believe we know almost nothing about Jesus from ancient, non-New Testament sources, this is plainly not the case. Not only are there many such sources, but Jesus is one of the persons of the ancient history concerning whom we have a significant amount of quality data. His is one of the most mentioned and most substantiated lives in ancient times.”

Professor Gary Habermas

The Historicity of Jesus (p. 251)

What of the New Testament?

Can we believe it?

If we merely looked at the New Testament as a human document, we could trust it!

Harvey W. Everest in *The Divine Demonstration* lists seven criteria by which historical testimony may be tested. Testimony is judged to be the truth when it meets these criteria:

•When the witnesses are honest, competent and have opportunity to know. (2 Pet. 1:16-18)

For we did not follow cleverly devised tales when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of His majesty. 17For when He received honor and glory from God the Father, such an utterance as this was made to Him by the Majestic Glory, “This is My beloved Son with whom I am well-pleased”— 18and we ourselves heard this utterance made from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain.

2. When the witnesses agree in the general statement, although they may differ on minor points.

a. Acts 2:22-32 Peter and the apostles were witnesses and stood together in proclaiming the facts

b. Acts 26:26 Paul argued to Agrippa that the things Jesus did were well known and "not done in a corner."

3. When there is no known motive for imposture or faking. The apostles and preachers of the first century did not become rich or honored by men because of their testimony. (“I do not possess silver and gold, but what I do have I give to you: In the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene—walk!” Acts 3:6)

In fact, history records their numerous persecutions by the Romans, their opposition from the Jews, and the difficult lives they faced to preach Jesus as the Christ. They were true believers!!!

4. When the facts recorded are strongly against the faith or interest of the narrator.

The books of Acts records the persecution of the church and those who suffered for their faith, including Stephen and James who became martyrs.

Traditions teach that all the apostles suffered death for their teachings (except the apostle John, who was imprisoned on the isle of Patmos [Rev. 1:9-10]).

5. When such witnesses are numerous.

Jesus made several appearances in the forty days after his resurrection and demonstrated himself to be the Son of God by many convincing proofs (Acts 1:1-3).

Paul said that Jesus appeared to more than 500 brethren at one time (1 Cor. 15:1-10).

6. When the recorded facts and the existing facts are related as cause and effect. The places, people, culture and circumstances recorded by the authors represented the way things really were.

The New Testament is not filled with nameless, mythical people, who could never have lived. Rather, archaeology and secular historical records support the credibility of the New Testament. The dates of the New Testament match historical realities in the world of that era.

7. When the facts recorded are sustained by existing monuments, coins, games or other public institutions.

The fact that the church itself exists is a marvelous testimony to the resurrection of Jesus Christ and to the truth of the apostles' teaching. There would never have been a church had the apostles not believed in the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

The fact that churches after twenty centuries still meet on the first day of the week, the Lord's resurrection day, is a testimony to the fact that the events of the New Testament are real.

There have been critics of the Bible through the years

Voltaire, the noted French unbeliever who died in 1778, said that in one hundred years from his time the Bible and Christianity would be swept from existence and passed into history. But what has happened?

Voltaire has passed into history; while the circulation of the Bible continues to increase in almost all parts of the world, carrying blessing wherever it goes.

Concerning the boast of Voltaire on the extinction of Christianity and the Bible, only fifty years after his death the Geneva Bible Society used his press and house to produce stacks of Bibles.

Matthew 24:35 "Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will not pass away"

1 Pet. 1:24-25 For,

"All flesh is like grass,
And all its glory like the flower of grass.
The grass withers, And the flower falls off,
But the word of the Lord endures forever."

And this is the word which was preached to you.

The gospel is an "eternal gospel."

If God is true and accurate and can be trusted, we would expect the same from the Bible.

Historically, geographically, linguistically it proves true!

Archaeology has repeatedly shown things to be exactly where and how they were supposed to be. Though critics have charged the Bible with error, such is not the case.

For instance, when Julius Wellhausen charged that Moses could not have written the first five books of the Bible, he did so because he thought that Hebrews and Egyptians could not write in 1500 B.C.

However, the "black stele" was found with the laws of Hammurabi and dating to 2000 B.C. It is now known that writing dates back to 3100 B.C. in the ancient Near East.

The critics said that there were no camels during the time of Abraham in the Near East. When they opened up the ancient graves, however, they found camel bones and camel hair.

The critics believed that there could never have been a Hittite nation, since there was no extra-biblical evidence for them. But evidence was found in Cappadocia to support the fact that there were Hittites. Evidence was also discovered in Egypt and in Haran, where clay tablets describe this sophisticated, early civilization.

When the Encyclopedia Britannica was first published, it contained so many mistakes regarding places in America that the publishers of the New American Cyclopedia issued a special pamphlet exposing the blunders of its rival.

The Bible, however, has not had the need for someone to apologize for it. The more one knows of the Bible, the more one realizes that the Bible proves true.

There are many other reasons why you can trust your Bible that we'll explore another day.

But one thing you can be sure of: (2 Tim. 3:16-17). The Bible is more than human.

All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.

Read the Bible, Meditate on it, Memorize it,
Love it, Obey it! It can make so much difference in your life.
John 7:17

"If anyone is willing to do His will, he will know of the teaching, whether it is of God or *whether* I speak from Myself.

Don't shut God out of your life. He truly is the answer to your questions. (Prayer)

Wherever the influence of the Bible is strong--people's moral lives are better; wherever it is weak there are anarchy and every evil thing. According to John Richard Green in *A Short History of the English People*:

"No greater moral change ever passed over a nation than passed over England during the years which parted the middle of the reign of Elizabeth from the Long Parliament. England became a people of the book, and that book was the Bible. It was read at church and read at home, and everywhere its words, as they fell on ears which custom had not deadened, kindled a startling enthusiasm.

As a mere literary monument, the English version of the Bible remains the noblest example of the English tongue. But far greater was the effect of the Bible on the character of the people. Elizabeth might silence or tune the pulpits, but it was impossible for her to silence or tune the great preachers of justice and mercy and truth who spoke from the Book. The whole temper of the nation felt the change. A new moral and religious impulse spread through every class."

Perhaps the problems we have in our country is because we have tuned out the Bible and have listened to our wants and desires. We got what we wanted not what we needed.

If we will listen to God, hear His Word, and obey it, our lives will change! America as a country needs to believe again, to repent of its sin, and to come to the Lord for answers.

If you are not a Christian, I pray you'll become one.

Believe with your heart,

repent of your sins,

Confess the name of Jesus,

and be baptized in the name of the Lord.

Your sins will be forgiven and you'll become a child of God.