

“How Do We Know the Bible is True?” (part 1 of 2)



Although skeptics and agnostics tend to ask this, even the most dedicated Christian may be asking this question too. Because it is such a vital question to the Christian faith, it should be explored.

To answer the question correctly, we must clarify the question. If the question is; “How do we know the Bible is [historically] accurate and truthful?”¹, then we take one approach. If the question instead is; “How do we know the Bible is truly God’s Word in written form?”², then we would take a slightly different approach. Either way, the fundamental point of the question is whether or not the Bible should be taken seriously, or just written off as another work of literature with no extraordinary value.

We will first seek to answer the question of Scriptural reliability, and in the next issue of our newsletter we will build upon what we learned in this first part as we wrestle with the question of Scriptural authority. However, before go much further, we need to realize that virtually everything in life takes an element of faith, or trust. Think about it; when you pour milk on your cereal in the morning, you are exercising faith that the manufacturer filled the container with milk and not something poisonous. This analogy extends to so many other areas of life. So, in our discussion of the reliability and authority of the Bible, we must acknowledge that some degree of faith³ or trust must be involved in order to accept the Bible as God’s Word – completely truthful and accurate. However, this faith doesn’t need to be “blind” faith, or unreasonable faith. Rather, there are many good reasons why our faith that the Bible is something more than just a collection of fables and moral teachings is a legitimate and reasonable faith.

The issue of scriptural reliability is one that is quite complex and would take a lot more space than we have in this column. However, there are a few fundamental things to know and understand.

There are several ways the reliability of the Bible can be verified. To start with, we might look at the amazing uniformity and consistency through the 66 books that make up the Bible even though they were written over the course of some 1500 to 2000 years by at least 40 different writers.⁴ Anyone who spends some time reading and studying the Bible on a regular basis will notice this fact.

When compared with other significant writings from ancient history, the Bible stands above the rest in its textual reliability. For example, there are around 20,000 manuscript copies of the New Testament, and the earliest one dates within 100 years of its original.⁵ Contrast that with *The Gaelic Wars*, written by the Roman Emperor about 100 years before Christ. There are less than a dozen manuscripts of this work and the oldest dates to a thousand years after the original. Additionally, writings of the Greek philosopher Aristotle from 400 years prior to Christ’s birth have even less textual support.⁶ These ancient writings are accepted by scholars as being authentic and historical, and yet people still reject the authenticity of the Bible which has exponentially greater historical and textual support.

Then there are the numerous archaeological discoveries which have confirmed the accuracy of the Bible’s accounts of historical events and locations.⁷ Books of the Bible like Luke and Acts in the New Testament, and the history books of the Old Testament have provided archaeologists a lot of material to work with as they dig around in the Middle East. Many times, skeptical archaeologists have found that the Biblical record of history lines up exactly with what they find in the field. As Brannon Howse has said “[a]rchaeologists used to dig to disprove the Bible, now archaeologists read the Bible to find out where to dig.”⁸

There is also the logical assumption that the human writers of the Bible were truthful because they would not purposefully implicate themselves as the sinners they were unless the hand of God was guiding them to include such stories of murder, hate, deception, hypocrisy, sexual sin, etc. Why would someone record as history these rather embarrassing facts about themselves?

This is just a small sampling of examples of ways we can know that the Bible is accurate and truthful in its accounts. Knowing this, helps us to have a “reason” for our faith – that being the assurance we have that the Bible contains real and accurate history.

¹ We might term this a question of “Scriptural reliability.”

² We might term this a question of “Scriptural authority.”

³ Hebrews 11:6 “But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.”

⁴ See p. 3 of *The Bible Has the Answer* by Henry M. Morris II published by Master Books.

⁵ See p. 94 of *Exploring the Evidence for Creation* by Henry M. Morris III published by the Institute for Creation Research.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Please visit this excellent site for more information: <http://www.biblearchaeology.org/>.

⁸ See p. 107 of *Christian Worldview for Students* by Brannon Howse published by Worldview Weekend Publishing.