

# F A Q

## “Questions about the Bible”

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Selected Passages (ESV)

### QUESTION:

How do we know that the Bible is trustworthy?

### WHY THE BIBLE IS TRUE & TRUSTWORTHY

1. **The Bible passes the \_\_\_\_\_ Test:** the reliability of the copies we have of the original documents in regard to (1) the number of manuscripts and (2) the time interval between the original and still existing copy.

- **Number of Manuscripts** – Recognizing that there are no known original manuscripts in existence for the Bible or for any other ancient writing, we examine the Bible. For the New Testament, there are over 24,000 hand written copies or portions of them from antiquity now in existence. This is far more than other ancient books.

<u>AUTHOR/WORK</u>	<u>WHEN WRITTEN</u>	<u>EARLIEST COPY</u>	<u>TIME SPAN</u>	<u># OF COPIES</u>
Caesar (Gallic Wars)	100-44 B.C.	900 A.D.	1,000 yrs.	10
Plato (Tetralogies)	427-347 B.C.	900 A.D.	1,200 yrs.	7
Tacitus (Annals)	100 A.D.	1100 A.D.	1,000 yrs	20
Thucydides (History)	460-400 B.C.	900 A.D.	1,300 yrs.	8
Herodotus (History)	480-425 B.C.	900 A.D.	1,300 yrs.	8
Sophocles	496-406 B.C.	1000 A.D.	1,400 yrs.	193
Euripides	480-406 B.C.	1100 A.D.	1,500 yrs.	9
Aristotle	384-322 B.C.	1100 A.D.	1,400 yrs.	49
Aristophanes	450-385 B.C.	900 A.D.	1,200 yrs.	10
Homer (Iliad)	900 B.C.	400 B.C.	500 yrs.	643
New Testament	40-100 A.D.	125 A.D.	25 yrs.	24,000+

- **Time Interval** – Important is the time interval between the actual events, the date of writing, and the earliest known manuscript copy. For the Bible, manuscript copies or portions of them were written within 25 to 160 years after the originals. Recent dating of one manuscript of a portion of the Gospel of Matthew (the so-called Magdalen text) suggests that it was written in about A.D. 50—a mere 17 years after the crucifixion of Christ. If these findings hold up, it means that the Gospel of Mark, which predates the Matthew Gospel, was written as early as A.D. 40—only seven years or so after the crucifixion.

The interval between the historical events and the written evidence is far better for the New Testament than any other ancient manuscript. For example, the first account of Buddha's life was written 700 years after his death. The earliest copy of Caesar's works is 1000 years after being written, and the earliest available copy of Plato's works is dated 1200 years after the original. Yet we do not question the authority of these other works!

2. **The Bible passes the \_\_\_\_\_ Test:** this examines (1) the consistency of the content of the document and (2) the ability of the writer or witness to tell the truth to help determine whether that written record is credible and to what extent. Trustworthiness is closely related to the witness's nearness both geographically and chronologically to the events recorded.

- **Consistency of the Content** – The internal consistency of these manuscripts is amazing. Despite the fact that the manuscripts of the 66 books of the Bible were written by approximately 40 different writers, over 1,500 years, in three different languages, all fit together like the pieces of a giant jigsaw puzzle. There is one continual theme throughout—God's plan of salvation from sin won for the whole world by the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. This consistency itself attests to the miracle of this book.

Furthermore, considering the enormous number of ancient New Testament manuscripts, there are only nominal differences in the various copies. The data for the New Testament is impressive. Only 40 lines (or one fifth of one percent) are in question, and none of these variants affect Christian doctrine. This compares to large textual variances in other ancient writings. For example, the New Testament is 25 times more accurately copied than the Iliad, which was also "sacred" and is considered one of the best copied works of antiquity. The large number of preserved copies without disagreements in content increases the chances that the Bible we have has preserved the original texts unmarred by heretical additions.

- **Ability of the Writer or Witness** – The New Testament accounts of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus were recorded by men who had been either eyewitnesses themselves or who related the accounts of eyewitnesses of the actual events of Christ.

3. **The Bible passes the \_\_\_\_\_ Test:** this examines what sources there are, apart from the literature under analysis, that validate its accuracy, reliability, and authenticity.

- The events of the New Testament are supported by writings outside the Bible. Corroboration is available from several secular and Jewish historians of antiquity (e.g., Tacitus, Suetonius, Pliny the Younger, Epictetus, Lucian, Aristides, Josephus, etc.), as well as many contemporaries of the apostles and early Church Fathers (e.g., Eusebius, Papias, Irenaeus, Polycarp, Clement of Rome, Ignatius, Tatian).

4. \_\_\_\_\_ **confirm the biblical record.**

- Over 25,000 sites have now been discovered that pertain to the Bible. As Nelson Glueck, renowned Jewish archaeologist, said, "It may be stated categorically that no archeological discovery has ever controverted a biblical reference." Even though archeology does not prove spiritual truth, archeological confirmation is an amazing testimony to the accuracy of the Bible.

5. **Biblical** \_\_\_\_\_ **have proven to be accurate.**

- There are over 2,000 accurately fulfilled predictions in the Bible including some 300 specific details and implications about the life, death, and resurrection of Christ. For example, Isaiah 53 beautifully describes the life of Christ 700 years before it took place! Even the town of Jesus' birth was foretold in the Old Testament (Micah 5:2). And there are no prophetic failures. The Bible contains page after page of history written in advance. The skeptic must come to grips with this evidence.

6. **Authors who were under the** \_\_\_\_\_ **of the Holy Spirit wrote the Bible.**

- Theologically, "inspiration" is used for the condition of being directly under divine influence.
  
- See 2 Timothy 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:19-21; 1 Corinthians 2:12-13

## CENTRAL TRUTH

The Bible stands up to tests and standards that are applied to any ancient document to determine its accuracy and reliability.

\*\* LifeGroup Study questions are available for pick up at the Information Center located in the lobby. They are also available online at [www.ynccla.org](http://www.ynccla.org).

\*\* CDs of today's message as well as previous weeks' sermons are available in the YNCC office. Sermons are also viewable online at [www.ynccla.org/sermons](http://www.ynccla.org/sermons).

