

Christianity and Hot Button Issues

Biblical and Cultural Challenges Christians Must Face

#2 – CAN WE TRUST THE BIBLE?

Objections to the Bible

- 1) It is full of myths, not historical facts. It records miracles and miracles are untrue. It makes unscientific claims.
- 2) It was written by fallible men. A God-inspired book is the stuff of fantasy.
- 3) It was written centuries ago and can have no relevance for us today.
- 4) It contains immoral teachings like genocide, polygamy, slavery, misogyny, etc.
- 5) We don't know which books belong in the Bible (i.e., the canon). The canon was dictated by Church authorities who suppressed the truth about other books.
- 6) It contains irreconcilable contradictions when you compare one passage to another.
- 7) It was written too long after the fact to be considered accurate.
- 8) We don't know where it came from. It has changed and been corrupted over time so we can't know what originals said. Later Christians changed it to say what they wanted it to say.

The Supernatural Character of the Bible (See Objections 1-4)

- 1) It has the most comprehensive and intelligible worldview of any religious book.
- 2) It is the most attacked book in history and continues to survive unscathed.
- 3) It has been validated by hundreds of fulfilled prophecies.
- 4) It was written by over 40 authors with varied backgrounds in 3 languages over 1500 years on 3 continents, under 6 major world empires and yet contains 1 consistent message.
- 5) It has the most superior ethic of any religion or ideology in history.
- 6) It continues to stretch the minds of the most intelligent people in history.
- 7) It has done more to transform individual lives and societies than any other book.

How Did Books form the Canon of the Bible? (See Objection 5)

- 1) OT canon well established before Christ. The TaNaK (Tanach) is an amalgam of the first letters for the 3 divisions of the Hebrew Bible (see Luke 24:44; Matt. 23:35):
 - T = Torah (Law)**
 - N = Neviim (Prophets)**
 - K = Ketuvim (Writings)** (or Psalms because it is first book of Writings)
- 2) Paul (2 Pet. 3:15-16) and Luke's (1 Tim. 5:8; cf. Luke 10:7) writings regarded as Scripture.
- 3) Do NT books have stamp of Apostolic authority? Some books were rejected specifically for this reason including *'The Shepherd'* of Hermas in late 2nd c.
- 4) Do they represent eyewitnesses to resurrection of Christ?
- 5) Do they have historical, intellectual, & spiritual credibility? Some books are ridiculous. E.g., *Gospel of Peter* - Jesus stood sky high after resurrection and his cross started talking.
- 6) By middle of 3rd century all 27 books recognized, but no dispute by middle of 4th century.
- 7) Most disputed books: Hebrews, Revelation, James, Jude, 2 Peter, 2 & 3 John.

Alleged Contradictions in the Bible (See Objection 6)

- Was there 1 angel at the empty tomb? (Matt. 28:2-7) **OR** 2 angels [men?]? (Luke 24:4-7)
- Did Judas hang himself? (Matt. 27:5) **OR** did he jump off a cliff? (Acts 1:18)

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The Reliability of the Bible (See Objections 7-8)

Historical Evidence:

- 1) Bible is written as history (Gen. 1-11; Luke 1:1-4) and consistently affirmed by archeology.
- 2) Events written by people who lived in & knew the geography, customs, & culture of area.

Illustration 1: Ossuaries (bone boxes). See Matthew 8:22.

Illustration 2: Knowledge of common names in Gospels and Acts:

Source: Williams, <i>Can We Trust the Gospels?</i> , p. 65	Palestinian Jews	Gospels/ Acts
Simon & Joseph (most popular men's names)	15.6%	18.2%
Men with 1 of 9 most popular names	41.5%	40.4%
Mary & Salome (most popular women's names)	28.6%	38.9%
Women with 1 of 9 most popular names	49.7%	61.1%

- 3) Testimony is based on eyewitness who could verify facts (1 Cor. 15:3-8; 1 John 1:1-3)

People are willing to die for something they believe to be true. But very few people are willing to die for what they know to be a lie.

Polycarp (69-155), pastor & disciple of the Apostle John: "Eighty and six years I have served Him, and He has done me no wrong. How then can I blaspheme my King and Savior?"

Transmissional Evidence:

- 1) OT scribal rules include: a) Must use authorized master copy; b) Each word verbalized aloud; c) Each letter, word and paragraphs counted. Middle letter, word and paragraph must correspond with master copy; d) unusable copies buried in ground to disintegrate.
- 2) Dead Sea Scrolls (ca. 250 BC) accurately match authoritative Masoretic text of 1100 AD.
- 3) Gospels likely represent independent oral traditions memorized and maintained by the Apostles. Once Christianity spread, it became necessary to write everything down. Apparent discrepancies between the Gospels argue for authenticity. No collusion is indicated.
- 4) NT (50-95 AD) has more manuscript (5,800+ copies) evidence than any other ancient writing by far. Closest is Homer's *Iliad* (850 BC) which has 1,900+ copies. Earliest NT copy dates to around 125 AD (John 18:31-33), about 40 years after it was written. The earliest copy for the *Iliad* dates to 415 BC, about 425 years after it was written.
- 5) Lectionaries (liturgies for public reading), early translations (about 10 languages), and Patristic quotations (about 1 million), give overwhelming evidence for original reading.
- 6) 75% of variants = misspelled words. 24% not meaningful. 95.5% agreement. See John 3:3 (some copies missing def. art.); John 5:3b-4 (5th c. scribes added explanatory note for v. 7).

Resources:

- Doctrine of Scripture: Kevin DeYoung, *Taking God at His Word*; John MacArthur, *Final Word*.
- Supernatural character of Scripture: Nathan Busenitz, *Reasons We Believe*.
- Canon of Scripture: Timothy Paul Jones, *Why Should I Trust the Bible?*
- Reliability of Scripture: Jones, *Why Should I Trust the Bible?*; Peter J. Williams, *Can We Trust the Gospels?*; Lee Strobel, *The Case for Christ*.
- See PDF handouts on KBC website: 'Original Bible' and 'Indestructible Book.'
- Alleged Bible contradictions: Norman Geisler & Thomas Howe, *Big Book of Bible Difficulties*.