

Teen Winter Retreat—Message Three—What About the Bible?

Introduction

- Opening Question: Why do you believe the Bible to be true?
- If Christians can demonstrate that the Bible is truthful in all areas in which it can be validated, we have before us the most powerful and compelling evidence for the truthfulness of Christianity.
- Every apologetic argument rests on the reliability of the Bible, including the existence of God, as well as the deity and resurrection of Jesus Christ.
- If the Bible alone can sustain its truth claims in areas in which it can be investigated, then it is reasonable to trust it in spiritual matters.

The Uniqueness of the Bible

- Bible is unlike any other book every written religious or otherwise.
- Consider the following unique features of the Scriptures:
 1. Written over a 1,500 year span.
 2. Written by more than 40 authors from every walk of life, kings, military leaders, peasants, philosophers, fishermen, tax collectors, poets, musicians, statesmen, scholars, and shepherds.
 3. Written in different places:
 - Moses in the wilderness
 - Jeremiah in a dungeon
 - John while in exile on the isle of Patmos
 4. Written at different times:
 - David in times of war
 - Solomon in times of peace and prosperity
 5. Written on three continents:
 - Asia
 - Africa
 - Europe
 6. Written in three languages:
 - Hebrew
 - Aramaic

- Greek
7. Written in a wide variety of literary styles:
 - Poetry, historical narrative, song, romance, personal correspondence, memoirs, satire, biography, autobiography, law, prophecy, parable, and allegory.
 8. In spite of its diversity, the Bible presents a single unfolding story: God's redemption of human beings.
 9. The number of Bibles sold reaches into the billions.
 10. More copies have been produced of its entirety as well as selection portions than any other book in history.

Is the Bible Accurate and Trustworthy?

So we have established that the Bible is unique and unlike any other book of history but do we have accurate copies of the Bible is it trustworthy?

1. **The Reliability of the Old Testament:** There are basically three primary points that establish the reliability of the Old Testament, transmission, archaeology, and fulfilled prophecy.
2. *Transmission*—These copyists knew that were duplicating God's Word, so they went to incredible lengths to prevent effort from creeping into their work. The whole process of recopying the bible was controlled by strict religious rituals, and the scribes carefully counted every line, word, syllable, and letter to ensure accuracy.
 - Prior to the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls in 1947 the oldest existing Old Testament manuscripts was the Massoretic Text which dated around 900 AD
 - Fragments and two copies of the book of Isaiah were found and dated around 150 BC, a thousand years earlier.
 - A comparison of the two sources proved to be word for word identical with our stand Hebrew Bible in more than 95% of the text. The 5% variation consisted chiefly of obvious slips of the pen and variations in spelling.
3. *Archaeology*—At one time many scholars dismissed some of the Old Testament as mythical because they had no outside confirmation of the people, places, or events in doubts.
 - Read examples from page 36 of *Defending Your Faith*

- No archaeological discovery has ever controverted a Biblical reference. In other words, in every instance where the Bible could be checked-out historically against extra-biblical sources, the Bible has always been found accurate in what it reports.
4. *Fulfilled Prophecy*—Fulfilled prophecies give clear attestation to the hand of God in human history and are some of the most important evidences for the historical reliability and truthfulness of the Old Testament.
- Josh McDowell in his book *Evidence That Demands a Verdict* outlines sixty one prophecies made in the Old Testament that were fulfilled by Jesus Christ during his first coming they include the following: Born of the Seed of the woman, Born of a virgin, Son of God, Tribe of Judah, Family Line of Jesse, House of David, Born at Bethlehem, Presented with gifts, Crucifixion, Resurrection, Ascension, and many more.
 - Professor Peter Stone did a statistical analysis of the probability of eight of these prophecies being fulfilled by one person and concluded that it was 1 in 10¹⁷. Read the rest of the illustration from page 193 of *Evidence That Demands a Verdict*

What About the New Testament?

There is also much evidence to support the reliability of the New Testament. Let's consider the following three areas: eyewitness testimony, space of time between the events recorded the earliest surviving documents, and the number of available witnesses compared with other works of antiquity.

1. *Eye Witness Testimony*—The New Testament writers were either eyewitness themselves or interviewed eyewitness to the events they recorded.
 - Luke 1:2
 - I Corinthians 15:4-8
 - II Peter 1:16
 - We convict people in a court of law everyday in this nation based on the testimony of eyewitnesses.
2. *Good Eyewitness Testimony*: The New Testament documents are written within 35 of the events recorded. No other religious or secular document from antiquity can make such a claim.
 - Luke 1—Acts 1—Acts 28
3. *Short Time Gap*—Many other religious documents have tremendous time spans between when they were transmitted orally and when they were eventually

written down. For example, the says of Buddha were not recorded until five hundred years after his death.

- Use charts to map comparisons.
 - The New Testament documents unlike other ancient works whether secular or religious, not enough time elapsed between when Jesus spoke and when his words were recorded to allow for misrepresentation or the development of legendary material about him.
4. *Copies Galore*—There are more manuscripts of the New Testament than there are of only 10 other works of ancient history combined.
- Use chart to show the number of copies of the New Testament compared with Homer's *Iliad*.
 - There are over 86,000 known quotations of Scripture made by the church fathers. Even if we did not have any copies of the New Testament we could still reconstruct all but 11 verse of the entire New Testament from material written within 150 to 200 years from the time of Christ.

Conclusion

- These factors as well as the testimony of Non-Christian sources, fulfilled prophecy, and archaeology all scream that the Bible is a trustworthy historical document.
- There is more evidence for the reliable of the New Testament text than any ten pieces of classical literature combined.
- The Bible is in better textural shape than the thirty-seven plays of William Shakespeare written in the 17th century after the invention of the printing press.
- All of this demonstrates the huge bias that people have against the Bible in their thinking.