

Bible

Apologetics

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“All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work” - 2 Tim. 3:16 (NASB).

“But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them...” - 1 Cor. 2:14 (NASB).

This means that if we show the Bible to be true in its various parts then the whole must be true and will do what Paul told Timothy it will do. The second quote above, however, shows that the man that does not know the work of God's Holy Spirit will never understand the full meaning of the Bible. But he will be able to understand a clear presentation as to how external factors show the book to be true.

It is doubtful whether any publisher has the resources to produce such a book today. Written over a period of about 1600 years (about 1,500 BC to about AD 100) with over forty authors from diverse backgrounds, most of whom did not meet, living hundreds of miles apart, in different time periods, with different lifestyles and upbringings, the fact that such a book fits together, develops themes and shows an integrated oneness, is evidence itself that the 'Editor' was not human.

Many people have dismissed the Bible, and the first question they need to ask is whether they are willing to leave behind preconceived ideas and check out the facts. If a person is willing to do that, we **must** be able to present a 'reasoned defence' showing beyond reasonable doubt that the Bible is both reliable and truthful in what it says.

What follows are some of the many ways that this can be done. Although only a sample of what can be said it gives us a flavour of the material that is available.

Reliability of New Testament Manuscripts

Scholar Bruce Metzger, who has written many books on this subject, informs us in "The Text of the New Testament", that there are nearly 5,000 copies of early Greek manuscripts containing various parts of the NT. No other ancient book or writing comes anywhere near this figure. Most of the people who want to reject the Bible, will gladly accept these other writings, yet continue denying the Bible's reliability.

Metzger and others tell us for instance that the work of Caesar written in the 1st century BC has only 10 surviving copies, the earliest dated 900 AD. Homer's writings from the 9th century BC boast 643 copies. Compare this with the New Testament written during the second part of the 1st century AD that has 5,000 copies, the earliest dated around 130 AD!

Norman L Geisler, in his book "*Christian Apologetics*", makes some interesting observations on these types of comparison:

"Several observations are pertinent...

(1) No other book is even a close second to the Bible on either the number or early dating of the copies...

(2) The average gap between the original composition and the earliest copy is over 1,000 years for other books. The New Testament, however, has a fragment within one generation from its original composition, whole books within about 100 years...

(3) The degree of accuracy of the copies is greater for the New Testament than for other books... Bruce Metzger does provide an interesting comparison of the New Testament with ... Homer's Iliad. The New Testament has about 20,000 lines. Of these only 40 are in doubt (i.e., about 400 words). The Iliad possesses about 15,600 lines with 764 of them in question. This would mean that Homer's text is only 95 percent pure or accurate compared to over 99.5 percent accuracy for the New Testament manuscript copies."

Secular Historians & Jesus

Probably the most well known of all secular historians at the time of Christ is Josephus who lived AD 37-100. He was therefore a contemporary of the Apostles and lived through the period recorded by the Book of Acts and the Epistles of the New Testament. We would therefore expect, and indeed, we would need, to find correlation between the history of the two if we want to use this as evidence. Do we? FF Bruce who has studied the history of the New Testament for many years definitely thinks we do,

"Here, in the pages of Josephus, we meet many figures who are well-known to us from the New Testament; the colourful family of the Herods; the Roman emperors Augustus, Tiberius, Claudius, and the procurators of Judea; the high priestly families - Annas, Caiaphas, Ananias, and the rest; the Pharisees and the Sadducees; and so on." *"The New Testament Documents - Are They Reliable?" - FF Bruce, p.104.*

We will also add two direct quotations from Josephus in *"The Antiquities of the Jews"*:

"The brother of Jesus, the so-called Christ, whose name was James" - XX, 9:1.
"At this time there was a wise man who was called Jesus... Pilate condemned him to die. And those who had become his disciples did not abandon his discipleship. They reported that he had appeared to them three days after his crucifixion and that he was alive; accordingly, he was perhaps the Messiah concerning whom the prophets have recounted wonders" - XVIII, 33.

One other interesting person to quote is Cornelius Tacitus a Roman historian, who wrote of Nero's attempt to relieve himself of the guilt of burning Rome:

"Hence to suppress the rumour, he falsely charged with the guilt, and punished with the most exquisite tortures, the persons commonly called Christians, who were hated for their enormities. Christus, the founder of the name, was put to death by Pontius Pilate, procurator of Judea in the reign of Tiberius: but the pernicious superstition, repressed for a time, broke out again, not only throughout Judea, where the mischief originated, but through the city of Rome also" - *Annals XV, 44.*

Geisler lists many others that could be called upon, including; Greek satirist, Lucian (2nd century); Roman historian, Suetonius (c. AD 120); Pliny the Younger (c. AD 112); Samaritan-born historian, Thallus (c. AD 52), and the Jewish Talmud completed by AD 500 - *Ibid, p.324.*

Archaeological Finds

Archaeology is the science of antiquities and although, of course, it has meaning far beyond the Biblical realm it is one of the clear 'proofs' of the truth and reliability of Scripture.

It is in the last 100 years that Biblical sites have been excavated properly. Before that, critics of the Bible scoffed at many of the stories and place names. However today cities such as Jericho, Samaria, Bethel, Shiloh, Bethshan, Gezer, Nineveh, Babylon and Ur are no longer just bumps on the landscape, but well excavated sites confirming the Biblical record. Here we just want to give you a flavour of the sort of evidence that is available. Further study into this subject can, of course, be very rewarding.

Ekron is mentioned more than 20 times in the Old Testament as one of the five Philistine cities: Ashdod, Gath, Ashkelon, Ekron, Gaza (1 Sam. 6:17). A five-line inscription in Phoenician script was uncovered in early July 1996, at Tel-Mikne (already thought to be Ekron). The stone block containing the name of city is the first conclusive evidence of the city from archaeological sources.

The Hittites were once thought to be a Biblical legend, until their capital and records were discovered at Bogazkoy, Turkey. Many thought the Biblical references to Solomon's wealth were greatly exaggerated. Recovered records from the past show that wealth in antiquity was concentrated with the king, and Solomon's prosperity was entirely feasible. It was once claimed there was no

Assyrian king named Sargon as recorded in Isaiah 20:1, because this name was not known in any other record. Then, Sargon's palace was discovered in Khorsabad, Iraq. The very event mentioned in Isaiah 20, his capture of Ashdod, was recorded on the palace walls. What is more, fragments of a stela memorialising the victory were found at Ashdod itself.

Another king who was in doubt was Belshazzar, king of Babylon, named in Daniel 5. The last king of Babylon was Nabonidus according to recorded history. Tablets were found showing that Belshazzar was Nabonidus' son who served as co-regent in Babylon. Thus, Belshazzar could offer to make Daniel "third highest ruler in the kingdom" for reading the handwriting on the wall, the highest available position (Dan. 5:16). Here we see the "eye-witness" nature of the Biblical record, as is so often brought out by the discoveries of archaeology. *Author: Bryant Wood of Associates for Biblical Research, 1995.*

Just as with cities there have been sceptics who have doubted the existence of some Biblical figures. Some of those who have since been proven to exist, through archaeological finds, include:

Shishak, the Egyptian king.

Tiglath-Pileser III and Sennacherib, kings of Assyria.

Merodach-Baladan, king of Babylon.

Darius I, king of Persia.

Augustus and Tiberius, Roman emperors.

One event that has often been looked at as a fairy story is the walls of Jericho falling down flat. Between 1907 and 1909, the first major excavation of the site took place. However, it was not until the 1950s that Kathleen Kenyon showed that the city wall had collapsed when the city was destroyed!

There is evidence for a massive fire just as the Bible says and Kenyon wrote, "The destruction was complete. Walls and floors were blackened or reddened by fire, and every room was filled with fallen bricks, timbers and household utensils; in most rooms, the fallen debris was heavily burnt."

What is even more interesting is that one part of the wall remained standing. According to the Bible, Rahab's house would not be destroyed when the rest of the city wall fell. This is exactly what archaeologists found.

OT Prophecy Fulfilled in New Testament

This to me is one of the clearest indications of the truth and reliability of the Bible. Prophecies made up to 700 years or more before Christ was born were fulfilled with tremendous accuracy. There would be no way that any man could have organised the fulfilment of these prophecies and the way they were minutely fulfilled would mean that they could only have been brought to fruition in such detail by the overview of God.

Some of the main prophecies listed with their fulfilments:

1. Messiah must be born of a virgin -
Is. 7:14 & Mt. 1:18-25.
2. Messiah's name must be Immanuel (God with us) –
Is. 7:14 & Mt. 1:23.

3. Messiah must be of the seed of Abraham -
Gn. 22:17-18 & Mt. 1:1.
4. Messiah must be of the tribe of Judah -
Gn. 49:10 & Mt. 2:6; Lk. 3:33; Hb. 7:14.
5. Messiah must be of the House of David –
2nd Sam. 7:12-13 & Mt. 1:1.
6. Messiah must be born in Bethlehem -
Mic. 5:2 & Mt. 2:1.
7. Messiah must have a distinct forerunner/messenger -
Is. 40:3; Mal. 3:1 (only 1st mention) &
Mt. 3:1-12; 11:10; Mr. 1:1-8; Jn. 1:23-34.
8. Messiah must be the LORD's Messenger –
Mal. 3:1 (only 2nd mention) & Hb. 3:1.
9. Messiah must be *the* Good Shepherd –
Is. 40:11 & John 10.
10. Messiah must cleanse the temple -
Mal. 3:1 & Mt. 21:12-13.
11. Messiah must be betrayed for 30 pieces of silver –
Zech. 11:12-13 & Mt. 26:15.
12. Messiah must be executed by Roman crucifixion -
Ps. 22:14-18 & Mt. 27:22-36.
13. Messiah must have a horrendous death -
Is. 53 & Mt. 27.
14. Messiah must be pierced in his side –
Zech. 12:10 & John 19:34.
15. Messiah must not have a single bone broken –
Psalm 34:20 & John 19:33-36.
16. Messiah must rise from the dead -
Ps. 2:7 & Acts 2:24-33; 13:33-35.
17. Messiah must rise on the third day –
Jonah 1:17; Mt. 12:40; 16:21; 17:23;
20:19 & Acts 10:40-41; 1st Co. 15:4.
18. Messiah must ascend into heaven -
Ps. 68:18 & Acts 1:9-11.
19. Messiah must sit at the right hand of God -
Ps. 110:1 & Hb. 1:1-3.
20. Messiah, though Man's Victim, must be God's Victor:
the "Chief Cornerstone" – Ps. 118:22-24; Is. 28:16
& Acts 4:11; 1st P. 2:6-7.

OT Quoted in New Testament

"Of the twenty-two (twenty-four) books numbered in the Jewish Old Testament some eighteen are cited by the New Testament. There is no explicit citation of Judges, Chronicles, Esther, or the Song of Solomon, although Hebrews 11:32-34 refers to events in Judges, 2 Chronicles 24:21-22 is alluded to in Luke 11:51. Song of Solomon 4:15 may be reflected in John 4:14, and the feast of Purim established in the Book of Esther was accepted by the New Testament Jews.

Virtually all of the remaining books of the Old Testament are cited with divine authority by the New Testament. Jesus himself cited Genesis (Mt. 19:4-6), Exodus (Jn. 6:31-32), Leviticus (Mt. 8:4), Numbers (Jn. 3:14), Deuteronomy (Mt. 4:4,10), and 1 Samuel (Mt. 12:3-4).

He also referred to Kings (Lk. 4:25-27) and 2 Chronicles (Mt. 12:42; Lk. 11:51). Ezra and Nehemiah are referred to in John 4:9. The psalms are frequently quoted by Jesus (see Mt. 13:35; 21:42; 22:44; Jn. 15:25; 17:12), Proverbs is quoted by Jesus in Luke 14:8-10 (see Prov. 25:6-7), and Song of Solomon may be alluded to in John 4:14. Isaiah is often quoted by Christ (see Mt. 13:14-15; 15:8-9; Lk. 4:18-19). Likewise, Jesus alludes to Jonah (Mt. 16:4), to Jeremiah (Mt. 21:13) and to Ezekiel (Jn. 3:5, see Ez. 36:24-27).

He specifically quoted Daniel by name (Mt. 24:15). He also quoted passages from the twelve minor prophets (Mt. 12:7; 17:10-11; 26:31; Lc. 12:53). Other books, such as Joshua (Hb. 13:5), Judges (Hb. 11:32), and Jeremiah (Hb. 8:8-12), are mentioned or quoted by New Testament writers.

The teachings of Ecclesiastes are clearly reflected in the New Testament (cf. Gal. 6:7-8 and Eccl. 11:9-10; or Hb. 9:27 and Eccl. 3:17)"

NL Geisler, pp.355/356.

I believe that quote alone sums up the evidence for this point and once again we see beyond reasonable doubt that the Bible is a unique book full of truth that is reliable.

Personal Experience

Never forget to use this aspect as a final proof whatever else you have said. In other words, you have proved the truth of the Bible for yourself. What has God said to you that has been worked out in your life. What have you learnt from the Scripture that is a foundation for your life today. By itself this may be subjective but along with the other aspects that you have been sharing it will be seen that it is not just theory or mental ideas but reality too.

Of course, you may get accused that such evidence is only subjective and some of it will be. When God speaks through His Word to an individual then it is known to that person and may thus just be the testimony that comes from within. However, when God's Word is worked out in your life and changes take place then the power of the Word of God can be seen and evidenced by others. No longer is it just subjective but now it can be objective and can be tested and seen to be true.

Source: ***"The Evidence Bible"***.