Bible-It Is True - Is the Bible True, Reliable, etc.? Is the Bible God's Word?

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This is a shorter version that I will post on gpclements.com

Started 1/18/2018, Last Edit 1/28/2023

Sources:

1) “Is the Bible True?” by Jeffery L. Sheler 1989

2) “ESV Study Bible” by Crossway Bibles 2008

3) “The International Inductive Study Bible” by Precept Ministries 1993

4) “Bridges, Christians Connecting with Muslims” by Fouad Masri 2004

5) A few observations by Greg Clements

6) Web Sties

1. **“Is the Bible True?” by Jeffery L. Sheler 1989**

Chapter 2 Canon and Content

page 17 Dead Sea Scrolls and other old manuscripts verify OT that we have.

Josephus was confident of the OT integrity

page 18 The 24 books of OT were standard by 135 A.D.

page 19 First steps to have official list of NT books started around 140 A.D.

page 20 By 4th Century the list of NT books was set

Chapter 3 Author and Authority

page 26 Books of Moses: Moses wrote some but others contributed

page 27 1st 5 books authority doesn’t rely on Moses being the author

page 28 Historical books of OT use written material that has not survived

page 30 The doctrinal influence of scholars can affect their conclusions

page 31 Many NT books do state the author

page 31,32 Justin Martyr, 150 A.D., wrote that Matthew and Luke - memoirs of the Apostles

page 32 Bishop Papias wrote between 100 and 130 that Mark is accurate

Bishop Irenaeus, 180 A.D., wrote that Luke wrote his Gospel … and John wrote his Gospel while in Ephesus

Tertullian, 2nd Century, called Luke an author

Other authors earlier than 180 A.D. quote from John as an authoritative source

2nd Century... Clement of Alexandria wrote that John was divinely moved by the Spirit to write his Gospel

page 32,33 Papias and Polycarp knew John personally and said John remembered the words of those who saw Jesus … and wrote in agreement with scripture.

page 36 Oldest copy of Paul's letters in NT is dated around 200 A.D.

page 41 Biblical authority rests on the writings being inspired by God.

Chapter 4 History and “His Story”

page 42 Each book of the Bible was written using language and culture for those who first read the book

page 43 Read the Bible in the light of the time of the writing and the literary style

page 45 Writers of the Bible were creating a book that used history for teaching people. The writers were concerned with “what does it mean.”

page 48 Genesis … Christianity, Judaism, and Islam all teach of a divine creator and that humans are special in the created universe.

page 49 1997 Gallup poll results … 44% of Americans have a literal view for creation as written in Genesis; 39% believe God played a role in creation; 10% say there was no divine role

1988 Pope John Paul … Science “can purify religion from error and superstition,” and religion “can purify science from idolatry and false absolutes.”

(glc Google search for Gallup poll

2017 38% believe God created man in present form; 38% believe God guided man's development; 19% believe God had no role in man's development

Gallup poll result: The Bible consists of fables and legends: “yes” responses were

1976 13% 2017 26%

Gallup poll result: Do you believe in God? “yes” responses were

1944 96% 1967 98% 2017 87%

)

Part Two The Bible and Archaeology

Chapter 5 The Stones Cry Out

page 60 1993 discovery at city of Dan … inscription names David … other fragments name Jehoram and Ahaziah

Chapter 6 Bibles and Spades

page 65 1838 ... over 100 biblical locations identified from surveys and excavations

1890s … systematic excavations … strata date back over 3,000 years

page 67 Biblical archaeology is not used to “prove the Bible is true.”

page 68 but it does give context for times and places

Chapter 7 The Patriarchs

page 72 No archaeological evidence related to biblical texts for the period 2000 to 1500 BC.

page 73 the biblical figures were not geopolitical figures

There is circumstantial evidence that supports biblical texts about the patriarchs.

page 74 Biblical accounts agree with known practices for contracts, treaties, inheritance, etc. of the time periods

Chapter 8 The Exodus

page 78 Slaves and nomads don't leave much evidence. e.g. They didn’t have a city.

page 79 inscriptions from Egypt indicate Syro-Palestinian people in the land in the 14th and 15th centuries BC. Inscriptions in mid 15th Century BC show slaves from Canaan and Syria making bricks.

Chapter 9 The Conquest

page 88 Hazor ruins have been found. This matches Joshua 11:11.

page 89 Ai and Jericho … open questions not completely settled by archeology.

page 90 discoveries at Jericho agree with biblical account.

page 91 evidence for sudden increase in population in the region in 12th century BC. (as Israel moving into the land)

Chapter 10 Israel's Monarchy

page 98 Philistines existence confirmed by Egyptian records and four Philistine cities.

page 101 Several kings of Israel and Judah are recorded in records found for Assyria and Babylon.

page 102 Egyptian records confirm Egyptian conquests in Palestine 945 to 924 BC. (2 Chronicles 12)

page 104,105 Tunnels described in Bible confirmed with inscription in the tunnel.

Found records confirm Hezekiah payment of tribute to Assyria.

page 106,107 Babylon records confirm kings and events in Israel.

Chapter 11 A New Era The Days of Jesus

page 110+ There is much archaeological data for the time of Jesus and start of Christianity.

page 115,116 Location of Jesus tomb likely known. Constantine built church there.

page 117 Remains of synagogue in Capernaum have been found.

page 118 Remains of “house church” in Capernaum. Structure dates to 63BC but renovations in middle of 1st Century AD. perhaps Peter's house

page 119 Archaeology confirms historical background of gospels.

Chapter 12 Into the Future The Promise of Biblical Archaeology

page 120 The Bible is connected to knowable history.

The Bible has helped archaeologists make discoveries

Part Three The Bible and the Dead Sea Scrolls

Chapter 13 Secrets from the Desert

page 125 Scrolls discovered in 1947. Work is continuing in publishing the last of the writings.

page 126 Scrolls probably written from 250BC and 65 AD; 202 biblical documents; at least fragments of all OT books except Esther; ¾ of documents not biblical writings

page 132 More scrolls discovered from 1948 to 1956.

Chapter 14 Scrolls, Scholars, and Scandals … covers publishing the scrolls

Chapter 15 Scriptures Fixed and Fluid Dead Sea Scrolls and OT

page 150 Oldest manuscripts, before DS scrolls, of OT were from 9th Century AD.

page 151 OT amazingly accurately preserved over 2,000 years of copying and distributing.

No change to meaning of the text, only 13 small changes for all of Isaiah.

page 152 Some “new” Psalms, written later than David period.

Qumran documents state that David wrote Psalms through prophesy from God.

page 153 Jesus held Psalms in high regard, quoted from them, said they were from the spirit. (Luke 24:44 and Mark 12:35)

page 155 Some newer translations use some of Dead Sea Scroll material …

page 157 Some of the scrolls are commentaries on the OT.

page 158 OT canon set near end of 1st Century when Jews were in danger

page 159 Bible is still changing in language with new translations to keep it useable

Chapter 16 Rediscovering Christianity's Roots

page 160,161 No Christian documents in Dead Sea Scrolls but references to … Messiah will return, bread and wine ceremony, baptism … but they were not Christians

page 169 Essene community …, some ideas similar to start of Gospel of John and passage in 2 Cor 6:14-7:1.

Part Four The Bible and the Historical Jesus

Chapter 17 In Search of Jesus

Chapter 18 The Quest and Its Origins

page 177 Some skepticism about Jesus in 17th 18th Century and much more in 19th Century.

page 182 External sources give some cultural background but NT is source for descriptions of Jesus.

Chapter 19 Jesus and His Seekers

describes the scholars of today, some critical, some support traditional Christianity's

Chapter 20 Nativity and Nuance

page 196 NT passages on nativity and origin of Jesus show early church was interested .

Matthew and Luke believed it was true.

page 197 Better translation … birth occurred before the the Quirinius census (6 AD).

page 200 Wrathful Herod is consistent with record by Josephus.

page 203 Matthew and Luke, written separately, have same key facts of nativity … Isaiah prophecy, born in Bethlehem, virgin Mary, Joseph in line of David.

Chapter 21 Message and Miracle

page 207 Oral traditions in NT times were taken seriously with memorization. It is possible sayings of Jesus were written down before the Gospels were written.

page 208 the Gospels have the intent of Jesus’ message - maybe not the exact words.

page 209 Historical studies can't prove or disprove the recorded miracles.

page 209 But nonbiblical sources and impact on history support the recorded miracles.

Josephus recorded that Jesus was known as “a doer of amazing deeds” and a teacher who “won over many Jews and many of the Greeks.”

Babylonian Talmud records “on the eve of Passover, Yeshu was hanged … because he practiced sorcery and led Israel astray.”

page 211 Details in the accounts of the miracles lend support to accepting them. Some details could have been used by Jesus' critics against belief in Jesus. Miracles continue into the book of Acts as disciples follow Jesus’ example.

Raising of Lazarus is supported …the Arabs named it “the place of Lazarus.”

page 213 Jesus' miracles fit in with his message to the people....kingdom of God, freedom and restoration for the people

Chapter 22 Death and Resurrection

page 221 Roman historian Tacitus, 110AD, wrote that Pilate executed the Christ during the reign of Tiberius. Babylonian Talmud mentions execution of Jesus.

page 226 Opponents of Christianity did not argue that the tomb was empty, they argued as to how it became empty.

page 228 Evidence points to gospel writers using some independent sources that gives more credibility to the account.

page 230 NT strongly gives the message that the tomb was empty and Jesus appeared several times after his resurrection.

There was a radical change in behavior of disciples … fear before crucifixion, boldness after the resurrection.

Part Five The Bible Code and Prophecy

Chapter 23 The Amazing Bible Code ..analysis of text by computers

Chapter 24 Cracking the Code

The Bible does not have more compact or localized ELS messages than other works of literature.

page 247 Many different Hebrew words can be formed from short letter groups. It is just a matter of where you put the spaces between words and how many letters you put in each group.

page 250 The hidden code theory misleads people on the purpose of the Bible. The Bible has enough prophetic statements in the plain text.

(glc) Don't trust in the “Bible Code” messages.

Part Six The Bible and Belief

Chapter 25 Is the Bible True Conclusion

page 253 Many Bible statements are theological, not historical

page 254 Yet...”we have found the Bible consistently and substantially affirmed as a credible and reliable source of history.”

Early church leaders personally knew some apostles and accepted the authenticity of NT authors. They also accepted the OT as inspired by God.

Outposts of Christianity also accepted authority of NT books that became the canon. This was before (by over 100 years) any official decree on the list of the canon.

“The Bible is affirmed by the weight of evidence from archaeology.”

page 255 “The Bible is affirmed by the testimony of the Dead Sea Scrolls.”

“The Bible is affirmed by the intense scholarly scrutiny

page 256 “...historical accuracy is an essential feature of the Bible's integrity and authority.”

The Bible doesn't just teach about history, it teaches us about God.

1. **“ESV Study Bible” 2008 by Crossway Bibles**

page 2507 The Bible and Revelation

The Inspiration of Scripture

The Bible is “God-breathed.” 2 Timothy 3:16

Prophets speak from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit. 2 Peter 1:20,21

The Innerancy of Scriptures

“...the Bible is truthful and reliable … in its original manuscripts.” Titus 1:2 2 Samuel 7:28, Proverbs 30:5, Psalms 12:6, 119:42, John 17:17

Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy: “...We further deny that inerrancy is negated by Biblical phenomena such as a lack of modern technical precision, irregularities of grammar or spelling, observational descriptions of nature, the reporting of falsehoods, the use of hyperbole and round numbers, the topical arrangement of material, variant selections of material in parallel accounts, or the use of free citations.' (Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy, Article XIII

page 2508 The Clarity of Scriptures

...some passages of Scripture are hard to understand. 2 Peter 3:15

...the Spirit illuminates … 2 Timothy 2:7

OT command to teach your children God's commands … Deuteronomy 6:6,7

Jesus based his teaching on OT scriptures … Matthew 12:3,4; 19:14; 21:42; 22:31; etc.

Disagreements over meaning come from the interpreters, not the scripture.

“Ordinary believers are capable of comprehending Scripture...”

And, God provides teachers … 1 Corinthians 12:28; Ephesians 4:11

The Sufficiency of Scriptures

The Bible has all the words from God needed to know God personally and all we need to hear from God to live an abundant, godly, life. Psalm 19:7-9; 2 Timothy 3:15

2 Timothy 3:16-17; Deuteronomy 4:2; 12:32; Proverbs 30:5,6; Revelation 22:18,19

Holy Spirit leads and guides people. Romans 8:14; Galatians 5:16,18,25

This guidance does not contradict the Bible.

Jesus' View of Scriptures

Jesus took the OT as authoritative “...not a dot will pass from the Law until all is accomplished.” Matthew 5:17,18

Jesus quotes from OT. Matthew 5:12; 11:23,24; 12:41,42; 24:37-39; Luke 4:25-27; 11:50,51; John 8:56-58; Matthew 19:1-12; 22:39; 27:46; Mark 7:1-13; Luke 10:25,26

Matthew 27:46; see Psalm 22:1

Jesus viewed his life as fulfilling OT. Matthew 26:54; Mark 8:31

Jesus fought temptation with OT. Matthew 4:1-11

Jesus explained OT to disciples. Luke 24:13-17, 44-47

Jesus took his own words as the word of God “...heaven and earth will pass away but my words will not pass away.” Matthew 24:35; see Matthew 5:17-18; John 14:10,24

page 2577 The Canon of Scripture

canon: “1) standard of faith and practice; 2) correct collection and list of inspired books”

page 2578 Dead Sea Scrolls have interpretation of OT but no new books for the OT.

page 2579 OT Canon set by 165 BC (24 books in 3 sections).

“Jesus and NT authors quote OT about 300 times...some cases are unclear whether the statement is just using similar words to OT.

Many of the quotes show the author viewed OT has having divine authority: “it is written” “scripture says” “God says.”

Josephus viewed other old writings not in OT canon as “not worthy of equal credit.”

Jewish view in early AD was that no more prophetic writings were given after the end of the OT canon.

Canon of the New Testament

“God, who spoke in many and various ways in times past, chose to speak in these last days to mankind through his Son. (Hebrews 1:1,2,4)

“the word made flesh” John 1:14

page 2580 circa 95AD: “The apostles received the gospel for us from the Lord Jesus Christ; Jesus the Christ was sent forth from God. So then Christ is from God, and the apostles are from Christ. Both, therefore, came of the will of God in good order.” 1 Clement 42:1,2

“The early church did not choose the books of the NT that it preferred. The church received and recognized what God had provided in books handed down from the apostles and their immediate companions.” Irenaeus, “Against Heresies” 3, preface; 3.1.1,2

The four Gospels had universal acceptance. Around 110AD Ignatius of Antioch echos words of Gospel of John. He also knew Matthew and maybe Luke. Papias of Hierapolis in Asia Minor had traditions for origin of Matthew's and Mark's Gospels and probably Luke's and John's. In 2nd century AD Justin Martyr in Rome said the “4) Gospels “memoirs of the apostles” were read and preached in Christian services.

2 Peter 3:16 refers to Paul's letters and accepts them as scripture.

Clement of Rome had a collection of some of Paul's letters.

Ignatius of Antioch and Polycarp of Smyrna in 2nd century had some of Paul's letters and accepted Paul writing 1 & 2 Timothy and Titus.

By end of 2nd century 21 of 27 NT books were widely accepted. Hebrews authorship was questioned, James, 2 Peter, 2 and 3 John, and Jude had minimal attestation in writings of church leaders.

By 3rd century NT collections included these books. Eusebius said that they were “known to most.”

Some 2nd Century writers wrote in parallel to NT books and some claimed apostle authority.

In 240 AD Origen certified all 27 NT books but recognized disputed status of the 7 books (Hebrews, James, 2 Peter, 2 and 3 John, Jude, Revelation).

60 years later Eusebius had very similar view. He did not have more than the 27 books.

367 AD bishop of Athanasius of Alexandria listed the 27 books of NT with no reservations and named others as useful for teaching.

393 AD 397 AD 419 AD Three African Synods affirm 27 book NT Canon and Vulgate is formed with the 27 books (Jerome's Latin translation).

Eastern churches did not accept the seven books (see above) until 6th century.

page 2585 The Reliability of Bible Manuscripts

Old Testament

There are over 3,000 Hebrew OTs, 8,000 manuscripts of the Latin Vulgate, over 1,500 manuscripts of the Septuagint, and over 65 copies of the Syriac Peshitta. None are the “1st edition.”

page 2587 Conclusion: “high level of confidence that close access to the original texts does indeed exist.” “significant variants affect far less than 1% of the words of the ESV (OT) text and even among that 1 percent, there are no variants that would change any point of doctrine.”

The Reliability of the New Testament Manuscripts

page 2587 “Christians can, in fact, have a very high degree of confidence that what they have in their hands today is the Word of God.”

“When it comes to quantity of copies, the NT has no peer.”

Over 5,700 Greek NT manuscripts (mostly fragments) exist, dated from early 2nd Century to 16th Century.

Over 20,000 handwritten copies of the NT in various languages.

Much of NT repeated in quotations in sermons, writings, etc. of ancient teachers ( church fathers ).

Over a million quotes of NT in other writings.

Less than 20 copies on average for old Greek and Latin writings.

Over 10 NT manuscripts were written within 100 years of end of NT writings.

Around 50 manuscripts written within 200 years of NT completion.

99 manuscripts earlier than 400 AD exist. (oldest complete NT is Codex Sinaiticus)

page 2588 There are textual variations (expected with so many copies). But most text alterations are accidental and trivial.

There are two large text variants in NT: Mark 16:9 – 20 and John 7:53-8:11. Oldest manuscripts do not have these passages. No essential NT truths are lost if these variants are not authentic.

page 2589 Almost all study Bibles alert the reader to notable text variants.

“...the deity of Christ, his resurrection, his virginal conception, justification by faith, and the Trinity are not put in jeopardy because of any textual variation.”

“...modern English … translations can be trusted as reproducing the very words of God.”

Archaeology OT

page 2592 “...archaeology has time and again supported and confirmed the biblical record...”

Archaeology NT

page 2594 ...archaeology supports the historical reliability of the NT …

1. **The International Inductive Study Bible**

page 2085 Understanding the Value of God's Word

“All scripture is inspired by God” 2 Timothy 3:16

Men “moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God” 2 Peter 1:21

“... the original writings, often called autographs, are infallible – without error.”

The original scrolls were replaced by codices...folded sheets stitched together.

page 2086 During the copy process if a single error was found the whole page was destroyed. “...accuracy has been confirmed by the multiple number of copies, by the Septuagint, and by the Dead Sea Scrolls.” There are more than 5,000 copies that have either all of the NT or portions of it. Minor variations that have been found do not change any points of doctrine.

Bishop Athanasius compiled the first list of the 27 books of the NT.

The quantity and quality of copies of the Bible are much greater than any other document from the time period. There is a relatively short time elapsed between the original writing and the copies of the books that have been found (e.g. Dead Sea Scrolls).

“There are no contradictions in what they wrote.” (40 different authors for 66 books, written over a time span of almost 2,000 years)

page 2087 “More recent archaeological evidence has affirmed the historicity of the Bible...” “Extrabiblical writings also affirm what the NT teaches about the historicity of Jesus Christ and other NT characters.”

1. **“Bridges, Christians Connecting with Muslims” by Fouad Masri 2004**

page 62 Mark 13:31 “Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away.” (NET)

page 63 Three stages of the development of the Bible are presented starting on page 63.

1. The Eyewitness Stage (A.D. 1 - 100)

Mary, Joseph, Shepherds, Wise Men Matthew 1:18 - 2:23

John the Baptist Matthew 2:24 - 17

Ministry of Jesus Matthew 4:12 ff - 25:46

Transfiguration Matthew 17:1 - 13 Peter, James, John

Arrest, Death on the Cross, Resurrection Matthew 26:1 - 28:20 Disciples, Mary

Magdalene and Mary

After the Resurrection Acts 1:1-11 Disciples and other for 40 days

After A.D. 33 the books of the New Testament are written by those who had

personal testimonies and experiences with Jesus, and those who had contact with

those who personally witnessed the activities. (disciples, Paul, Luke).

If the New Testament was altered during the time up to A.D. 100 this would have

been corrected by the eyewitnesses. Christians were going to their deaths saying

Jesus rose from the dead.

1. The Persecution Stage (A.D. 100 - 325)

Partial manuscripts have been found from this time period...fragments that have been

found are from all books in the New Testament

The manuscripts of church leaders written during this time have many quotes from

New Testament books, and all of those quotes have the same words.

Lectionaries have portions of the Torah, Psalms, and New Testament passages

that are in agreement with older fragments of the Bible that have been found.

Analysis of the early translations of the New Testament show they came from a

common source

1. The Translation Stage (A.D. 325 to the present)

A.D. 325 Codex Sinaiticus (whole New Testament ) is found at a monastery on Mount

Sinai

A.D. 350 Codex Vaticanus, in the Vatican

A.D. 400 Codex Alexandrinus in Alexandria, Egypt

The translations we have today used the Greek manuscripts. The words and phrases

differ somewhat based on the purpose of the translation but the basic message and

meaning of the translations are the same.

**5) And then, consider these passages of scripture.**

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2 Timothy 3:14-17 “”14 You, however, must continue in the things you have learned and are confident about. You know who taught you 15 and how from infancy you have known the holy writings, which are able to give you wisdom for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. 16 Every scripture is inspired by God and useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, 17 that the person dedicated to God may be capable and equipped for every good work. (NET)

1 Peter 1:23 “You have been born anew, not from perishable but from imperishable seed, through the living and enduring word of God.” (NET)

2 Peter 1:12-21 “**12** Therefore, I intend to remind you constantly of these things even though you know them and are well established in the truth that you now have. **13** Indeed, as long as I am in this tabernacle, I consider it right to stir you up by way of a reminder, **14** since I know that my tabernacle will soon be removed because our Lord Jesus Christ revealed this to me. **15** Indeed, I will also make every effort that, after my departure, you have a testimony of these things.

16 For we did not follow cleverly concocted fables when we made known to you the power and return of our Lord Jesus Christ; no, we were eyewitnesses of his grandeur. 17 For he received honor and glory from God the Father, when that voice was conveyed to him by the Majestic Glory: “This is my dear Son, in whom I am delighted.” 18 When this voice was conveyed from heaven, we ourselves heard it, for we were with him on the holy mountain. 19 Moreover, we possess the prophetic word as an altogether reliable thing. You do well if you pay attention to this as you would to a light shining in a murky place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts. 20 Above all, you do well if you recognize this: No prophecy of scripture ever comes about by the prophet’s own imagination, 21 for no prophecy was ever borne of human impulse; rather, men carried along by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.“ (NET)

Matthew 24:35 “Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away.” (NET)

Luke 1:1-4 “Now many have undertaken to compile an account of the things that have been fulfilled among us, **2** like the accounts passed on to us by those who were eyewitnesses and servants of the word from the beginning. **3** So it seemed good to me as well, because I have followed all things carefully from the beginning, to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, **4** so that you may know for certain the things you were taught.” (NET)

glc - Most of the books of the New Testament were written while the eyewitnesses to Jesus’ ministry were alive. If these writings contained errors those witnesses would have corrected the writings.

1. **Web Sites (February 2018)**

1. “How Accurate is the Bible?”

<https://bible.org/article/how-accurate-bible>

2.“The Authority of the Bible”

<https://bible.org/seriespage/1-authority-bible>

3. “Is The Bible Reliable? - Seven Questions”

<https://bible.org/article/bible-reliable%E2%80%94seven-questions>

4. “Lesson 1: The Bible: The Word of God”

<https://bible.org/seriespage/lesson-1-bible-word-god>

5. “4. The Bible: The Written Word of God”

<https://bible.org/seriespage/bible-written-word-god>

6. “How I Know Christianity is True”

<https://bible.org/article/how-i-know-christianity-true>

7. “How Do We Know the Bible Is True?”

<https://www.focusonthefamily.com/faith/the-study-of-god/how-do-we-know-the-bible-is-true/how-do-we-know-bible-is-true>

8. “Biblical Scripture: Truth or Tale?”

<https://www.josh.org/scripture-true/>