

Why Trust the Bible?

Since the scriptures that make up the Bible are almost our only written record of Jesus' life, why should we believe them?

- The 66 books of the Bible written by about 40 different authors over many centuries, reflect the history of the Jewish people and the nation of Israel's "up and down" relationship with God, and all point to one event - the coming of the Messiah, a deliverer who will bring in an eternal kingdom. The Bible is written in different styles and languages. No other written text has continued a coherent story over such a long time through so many authors.

- The many predictions recorded by Israel's prophets have all proved to be fulfilled.

- Archaeology has continued every year to verify events and places recorded in the scriptures.

- Although we don't have the original texts, we know the scribal guidelines for copying Old Testament manuscripts were stringent. The oldest manuscript we have, the Book of Isaiah found among the Dead Sea Scrolls, has only slight variations from the next earliest manuscript written about 1,000 years later.

- The New Testament writings about Jesus were recorded by eyewitnesses soon after His death and resurrection - within the lifetime of his disciples. Later, the writings of Papias in the second century record a second generation telling stories about listening to disciples who knew apostles like John and Peter. The historical existence of Jesus is without question and attested much more completely than Julius Caesar. Only 12 ancient manuscripts exist describing Caesar's life, the oldest written more than 900 years after Caesar died.

- The Apostle Paul's first letters were written only about 15-20 years after Jesus' crucifixion.

- The Roman historian and senator Tacitus referred to Christ, his execution by Pontius Pilate, and the existence of early Christians in Rome in his final work, Annals (written ca. AD 116). The Jewish historian Josephus mentions Jesus in his works written soon after the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D.

- Surviving scraps and pieces of New Testament manuscripts date from the second century. The earliest full manuscript of the New Testament dates from 400 A.D.

- The existence of Jesus is also confirmed by opponents trying to dispute the events of Jesus' life. The Jewish Talmud and Justin Martyr's second-century debate with Trypho don't dispute the facts of Jesus' life and ministry but instead argue He performed miracles and healings through magic.

- The Bible has survived constant attempts to destroy it through persecution over the centuries.

- Finally, the Bible rings true. It is one of the only religious writings that reflect the good and bad, the successes and failures of its protagonists. The Patriarchs are criticized, their flaws exposed. David brings down Goliath but commits adultery with Bathsheba. Israel - the chosen people - turn to idolatry and their Temple is destroyed.