Can we really TRUST THE BIBLE?
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In our modern world, many are convinced that the Bible is nothing more than a silly old book. Its religious rambling is not based on fact or reality, and it is only read by the few remaining religious people who want to feel better than everyone else. It’s just a mixture of myths, fairy-tales and children’s stories, all rewritten over time. It’s irrelevant, boring and totally inaccurate. You’ve probably heard plenty of one-line ‘put downs’ about the Bible. Do any of these ring a bell?

- The Bible isn’t historically accurate.
- No other writers in history support the stories of the Bible.
- Science makes it impossible to believe in the Bible’s miracles.

If these are correct, how can we possibly take the Bible seriously? Surely it isn’t trustworthy? In fact, it could be very dangerous! So what is the truth? What possible evidence is there to support the Bible as an accurate, trustworthy book?
What is the Bible?

The Bible describes itself and its stories and teaching as being given to us by the Spirit of God. The claim within this is that, having been inspired and given by God, the Bible is totally reliable and authoritative (2 Timothy 3:16; 2 Peter 1:16-21).

In addition, Jesus, God’s own Son, said the Scriptures (written long before He appeared) were from God and tell His story. He made it clear that the Old Testament (the earlier part of the Bible) was more than just national history or religious myths (Matthew 4:1-11; 5:17-19). He believed that the Scriptures were about Him—they tell the story of God’s promise of a coming Saviour (John 5:39-40).

In many ways, the Bible is very blunt. It records the moral and spiritual failings of the people within its pages. Such honesty is important. Normally embarrassing or incriminating stories are hushed up. For them to be made public in this way suggests the Bible is a book determined to present the truth, ‘warts and all’ as it were.

But is it reasonable to think the Bible is trustworthy? Is there any external evidence that supports the claims of the Bible?
Throughout the Bible, the events recorded are linked to named people, times and places in history. Many of these places are recognisable, such as Egypt, Syria, Jerusalem and Galilee.

Engraved stones from ancient civilizations back up many Bible stories. Engraved stones or clay cylinders were the ancient world’s versions of history books. This was how they recorded events, laws or commands.

One example is the Taylor Prism (a clay cylinder dated between 705-681 BC) which confirms the Assyrian siege of Jerusalem, which the Bible describes in 2 Kings 18–19, 2 Chronicles 32 and Isaiah 36–37.

The discovery of another engraved stone, the Tel Dan Stele, confirms that Israel’s King David existed during the time the Bible says. The Cyrus Cylinder records Cyrus of Persia’s decision to let the Jews, who had been captured years before, return to their home in Israel (Ezra 1:1-3; 6:3; Isaiah 44:28; and 2 Chronicles 36:23).

The Moabite Stone records the Moab rebellion, mentioned in 2 Kings 3 of the Bible.
Historical documents also support the Bible’s testimony about Jesus. The Jewish teacher and military leader Josephus (37–c.100 AD), the Roman senator Pliny the Younger (61–c.113 AD) and the Roman historian Tacitus (c.56–117 AD) all wrote about Jesus.

Josephus calls Christ “a wise man” and “a doer of surprising works”. In a letter to the Emperor, Pliny said that Christians worshipped “Christ as a god”. Tacitus notes “Christ” as the founder of a rebellious religion (“rebellious” because it was not a religion of the Roman Empire), and mentions that He was executed under Pontius Pilate.

None of these writers were followers of Christ. Yet they all knew Jesus existed and that His followers thought He was God.

This is just a sample of all the evidence supporting the Bible, and it clearly shows that, rather than disproving the Bible’s stories, history actually supports them.
Has science really disproven the Bible?

For many, the Bible describes a world they have never seen and cannot accept. The supernatural events and miracles just don’t fit with the world around them.

The basis of this criticism is the belief that science is the most reliable way of knowing anything about our world. Some even say it’s the only reliable way. But is it the only way, or even the best way, to discover the truth of our world? Are there limits to what science can measure and test?

A virgin giving birth, a man walking on water, a person rising from the dead, a few pieces of bread feeding thousands of people—the findings of science won’t allow us to take such things seriously. Because science can’t measure these things or explain them, most people think they can’t be true.

For example, how can intelligent people believe in a virgin birth? Christians absolutely agree that virgin births are scientifically impossible. However, they believe that Jesus was born of a virgin not just because the Bible says so, but because they believe the God of the Bible is able to make that happen.
This may seem too simple, but it is the centre of the issue. The Bible tells us the truth about who God is! Christians believe something seemingly impossible happened, despite scientific knowledge, because they believe that God, the creator of the laws of nature, has the power to work outside of them. Science may well be able to measure and test the laws God created, but that doesn’t restrict what God can do. And the Bible isn’t really about the laws of this world (which is what science is all about). The Bible is all about God! Can He really be measured by science?

People who only believe in the research of science often say the universe randomly came from nothing. This point of view doesn’t need God. If there is no ‘design’ to our world, then there is no designer.

But if there is no God, there can be no miracles (things happening outside the natural laws). And if there are no miracles, something cannot spring from nothing. And if something cannot come from nothing, then our universe can’t exist . . .

Why does this matter? Because at some level we all believe in things that can’t be proven scientifically. Those who trust the Bible do not disbelieve the laws of nature; they simply believe that there is more to them than simply the laws themselves. God does things that amaze and, sometimes, confuse our human understanding. It shows He is God, and can do things that override the laws He put in place!

The truth is that everyone—those who trust the Bible and those who don’t—believe many things
that can’t be tested or proven. Science is simply not capable of answering every question. In fact, science was never designed to do so.

For example, can science prove:

- Two people are in love?
- The view from the top of a mountain is breathtaking?
- Right is better than wrong?

Science can’t explain right and wrong or give us a basis for making moral decisions. It cannot tell us what is beautiful. Even the statement “science has disproven the Bible” is a claim that cannot be proven scientifically. The Bible is not one essay or one piece of literature; it is a collection of 66 books written by 40 authors over a space of about 1500 years. Does science really claim to have disproven all of that?

Has modern science made it impossible to believe the Bible? No. Science simply tells us that there are no natural explanations for the miraculous claims of the Bible. But, when we think about it, there are no natural or scientific explanations for love either, yet no one would say that science has disproven love.

Science measures the laws of this world, but it can’t measure the God who put them in place. It doesn’t measure personality, character or morals. Yet the Bible is all about who God is, His personality, His character, His morality! Measuring God with science is like trying to use a metre ruler to gauge heat!
The preservation of the Bible

So, what about the concern that the Bible we have today isn’t the same as the original texts, written thousands of years ago? Has the original message been kept, or has it been lost in translation over time? Is it simply an untrustworthy old book, as some people claim?

The truth is that the books of the Bible are the best-preserved documents in history, by a long way. This is a bold claim. But given the evidence, it is no overstatement.

Today we have the Bible because centuries ago scribes copied the original texts in order to preserve them. They paid careful attention to detail when they copied each word, leading many scholars today to believe that the copies can be trusted as accurate replicas of the originals.

But what about the time that elapsed between the copies? Critics argue that the long length of time between when the books were first written and the oldest existing copies guarantees that mistakes were introduced into the text.

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Have you heard of the Dead Sea Scrolls? They were discovered in the late 1940s to mid-1950s. The Dead Sea Scrolls are a collection of over 950 documents and text fragments of the Bible. Most of these are copies of Old Testament books that date from the third century BC to the middle of the first century AD. Not only do the Dead Sea Scrolls give us the oldest copies of the Old Testament, they also allowed scholars to investigate differences between earlier and later copies. What they found was striking.

When comparing newer copies of Isaiah 53 (for example) and copies of the same passage in the Dead Sea Scrolls, scholars found the documents matched! There were very few differences, and none of these differences have any effect on the meaning. Even though these documents were separated by approximately 1,000 years, their similarity shows that great care was taken to copy and preserve the original biblical text.

We can also compare the Bible to other ancient, well-respected books, to see how its reliability matches theirs. For example there are 8 copies of Herodotus’ History, and the time between the original and the earliest copy is 1,350 years. There are 10 copies of Caesar’s Gallic Wars, and the gap is 1,000 years. There are 20 copies of Tacitus’ Annals, 7 copies of Pliny Secundus’ Natural History and 20 copies of Livy’s History of Rome, with historical distances of 1,000, 750 and 400 years respectively.
Despite the length of time between the original writings and the earliest copies, no one questions the accuracy or authenticity of these documents.

Research shows that the Bible stands alone as the most authenticated document in history.

So how does the Bible compare to these other ancient works? Currently we have approximately 5,500 full or partial copies of books of the New Testament. The earliest confirmed copies of the New Testament Scriptures date back to AD 114. This means that the time between our earliest copies and the date of the original writing is, at most, just 50 years.

When compared to other ancient works, the textual evidence for the Christian Scriptures is one of a kind! Research shows that the Bible stands alone as the most authenticated document in history.

The best reason to trust the Bible

If you want certain and ironclad arguments about the Bible, we don’t have them. Christian’s can’t prove beyond any doubt that the Bible is worthy of your trust and belief any more than they can prove to you that love is real or that right is better than wrong. But after looking at the evidence, we can confidently say the Bible is true and trustworthy. Why? The Bible is honest, archaeological discoveries confirm its stories, it’s more than just a ‘human book’ and Jesus Himself says the words of the Bible are true (in His teaching, Jesus referred to many stories in the Old Testament. Take a look at Matthew 12:38-41 to see Jesus talking about the Old Testament book of Jonah, for example).

This is actually the best reason of all to trust the Bible. In the pages of the Bible we encounter the most amazing story ever told. The God of the universe—our Creator and designer—chose to become a human in order to restore our relationship with Him. We have broken our relationship with God by living without Him, doing our own things, setting our own priorities and valuing ourselves above Him. This is what sin is.
God created a good world, but when humanity ignored God and kept on sinning, we brought separation and distance between Him and us. But God was unwilling to allow that separation to continue, so He did something that we could not do ourselves. Jesus, who is God, took the punishment we deserve for our sin by dying on the cross. He then rose to new life three days later, offering all who trust Him a new, unending life with God. This is the story of the Bible.

Are there good historical reasons to believe the Bible? Absolutely. But the best reason is its message about Jesus. It’s not just good news—it’s the best possible news.
The *Looking Deeper* series offers great Bible teaching for Christians. Whether you are a new Christian or a mature believer, we have a range of short Bible studies on many crucial topics and questions.

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