

Evidence For Our Beliefs About The Bible

Part 1 - Notes

February 17, 2013

Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished. Therefore anyone who sets aside one of the least of these commands and teaches others accordingly will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever practices and teaches these commands will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. Matthew 5:17-19

Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away. Matthew 24:25

How can you be sure the Bible you read is what God actually said?

The Bible writers themselves claimed repeatedly (over 3,000 times) that they were transmitting the very Word of God, infallible and authoritative.

The Bible was written during a 1500-year span through more than 40 generations by more than 40 different authors from every walk of life--shepherds, soldiers, prophets, poets, monarchs, scholars, statesmen, masters, servants, tax collectors, physicians, fishermen, and tentmakers.

God has not allowed the Bible to be lost, twisted, or distorted. Regarding the Old Testament, the Bible of his day, Jesus said,

"I assure you, until heaven and earth disappear, even the smallest detail of God's law will remain until its purpose is achieved." (Matthew 5:18)

Regarding his own words (which became scripture), he said,

"Heaven and earth will disappear, but my words will remain forever." (Matthew 24:35)

Manuscript Reliability

Doesn't the making of hand-copied reproductions open up the whole transmission process to error?

God commanded and instilled in the Jewish people a great reverence for his Word.

Listen closely, Israel, and be careful to obey. Then all will go well with you, and you will have many children in the land flowing with milk and honey, just as the Lord, the God of your ancestors, promised you. And you must commit yourselves wholeheartedly to these commands that I am giving you today. Repeat them again and again to your children. Talk about them when you are at home and when you are on the road, when

you are going to bed and when you are getting up. Tie them to your hands and wear them on your forehead as reminders. Write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates. Duet. 6:3, 6-9.

The guidelines for copying were strict:

- the scroll must be written on the skin of a clean animal
- each skin must contain a specified number of columns, equal
- The length of each column must extend no less than 48 lines or more than 60 lines
- The column breadth must consist of exactly 30 letters
- the space of a thread must appear between every consonant
- the breadth of nine consonants had to be inserted between each section
- a space of three lines had to appear between each book
- the fifth book of Moses (Deuteronomy) had to conclude exactly with a full line
- nothing, not even the smallest word, could be copied from memory; it had to be copied letter by letter
- the scribe must count the number of times each letter of the alphabet occurred in each book and compare it to the original
- if a manuscript was found to contain even one mistake, it was discarded

Dead Sea Scrolls - 223 Scripture manuscripts discovered in 1947, 1000 years older than any previously existing copies, yet identical, word for word in over 95% of the text.

Textual Reliability - by far, more existing manuscripts than any other ancient writing, with copies much closer to the time of the original writings

Aunt Sally's Secret Sauce - It is possible to determine that the manuscripts of both the OT and NT have been handed down over the centuries with precision and accuracy.

Credibility of Writers - Credibility must be granted to writers who were both geographically and chronologically close to the events they report. The overwhelming weight of scholarship confirms that the accounts of Jesus' life, the history of the early church, and the letters that form the bulk of the NT were all written by authors who were either eyewitnesses to the events they recorded or contemporaries of eyewitnesses.

These writers who had firsthand knowledge about the things of which they wrote were in effect saying, "Look, we saw this," or "We heard that. Check it out, ask around. You know it as well as we do."

"People are like grass that dies away," Peter wrote quoting Isaiah the prophet, "but the Word of the Lord will last forever" (1 Peter 1:24-25).