

WHY SHOULD I TRUST THE BIBLE,

Why? Questions for Christianity #5

◆**Intro:** I remember years ago, when I was restoring my 1965 Ford Mustang I bought one of those pseudo-leather steering wheel covers. In those days, of course, the steering wheels were hard plastic, not so comfortable and protected as today. So here's this nice, red leather strap and you have to weave/wrap this matching, smooth cord around the wheel to hold it in place. One maybe 3' circle cover. One maybe 17' cord to wrap it with. Well, it's not rocket science. I already know I won't need all this cord. I cut some off and proceeded to wrap the wheel. Hah, any dummy could do this. I got 3/4 of the wheel wrapped and I was out of cord! At that point I decided to read the instructions. "You will need the entire length of cord provided." Oh, so they've done this before! I had to tie a knot in this hard, smooth plastic cord and continue. For 8 years I drove that car with a hard, obnoxious bump under one part of a really cool looking, red leather grip all because I knew more than other people knew!

◆What if there was an instruction manual for being a human, and what if we could read it *before* we cut our cords? ...and then there weren't so many uncomfortable bumps to endure, and we'd look back and say "Boy I'm glad I read that!"? Friends, *the Bible is that instruction manual for being human according to design and today we're going to talk about why we can trust it.*

◆""Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew

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and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash.”” Matthew 7:24-27, NIV.

◆ My neighbor (Highland) and I were talking some years ago, and I told him something from the Bible. He said, “Well, how much of the Bible can you trust anyway?” People wonder and doubt it. Is it reliable? Who says it’s any better than any other book? Lets begin by making one correction.

◆ **1. We don’t trust the Bible because it is extremely popular, although it is.** The Bible is the number one best-selling book in the world. It sells over a billion copies worldwide every year. It was the number one New York Times best-selling book for so long that they took it off the list. It's always the top. Americans alone spend over two hundred million dollars a year on Bibles. But the question isn't, “Is it popular?” The question is, “Can I trust it? Is it reliable for my life?”

◆ Rap is also popular, that doesn’t automatically qualify it as a reliable life-guide. In some pacific islands, head-hunting is popular. It’s popularity does not in any way reliably insure your good future. A few years ago Dan Brown’s novel *The DaVinci Code*, was hugely popular (I enjoyed reading it myself), but it was laughable in it’s blatant historical errors: dates wrong on the

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Dead Sea Scrolls; content wrong on what the Council of Nicea talked about; saying that the gnostic gospels were pro-women when in reality they are the exact opposite.. For anyone who knows the data, reading the novel was like grading a bad paper. Popularity doesn't mean something is trustworthy or even helpful.

◆ So we know that people are, and have been for centuries, very interested in the Bible. Now why might that be? Could it be because so many have found it helpful and trustworthy? Could it be it has some kind of power to alter a person's life? Let talk about it and at least scratch the surface.

◆ **2.** Suppose we play the telephone game. I tell one person something, they pass it down the row, and we'll see how it ends up at the other end. We all know how things get changed in translation. Some folks assume that because the Bible has been passed along for such a long time that it is vastly different from what was first written! But **The Bible is trustworthy because it is accurately preserved ; what we have today is the same text as was originally written so long ago.**

◆ **A.** When the Dead Sea Scrolls were found in 1947 the world looked upon some of the oldest OT documents ever discovered dating back to 100-200BC. That all happened in a place called Qumran. Sandi and I were there. [**show pix**] The Qumran people segregated themselves off from the



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rest of the world to be pure and to preserve God's word. When Rome conquered the land they hid their precious writings in these caves.

◆ You can imagine that there were no copy machines in those days, no scanners on their phones. Texting in those days was, well, writing the text down letter by letter. That's what a scribe did. People have claimed that scribes made lots of mistakes and there are all kinds of errors in the Bible, yet the Dead Sea scrolls have proven otherwise. When scholars took the scrolls and laid them up against our modern versions (a gap of about 1000 years), they realized the texts were virtually identical. They found fragments from every book in the Old Testament except Esther. Next time someone makes "the-Bible-has-changed-over-time" challenge, you can simply tell them it hasn't, the research is conclusive. ALSO when confronted with the vast number of OT prophecies Jesus alone fulfilled, folks just assumed they were written *after* his life, so as to look like he fulfilled them. The Dead Sea scrolls has killed that idea too.

◆ How was such phenomenal accuracy possible? The people of the ancient world believed the Bible was the inspired word of God.

◆ *"For the lips of a priest ought to preserve knowledge, and from his mouth men should seek instruction--because he is the messenger of the LORD Almighty." Malachi 2:7, NIV.*

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- ◆ The Jewish scribes would copy a page by writing one line across. Then comparing the original, they would literally count the letters forward, backward and forward again to make sure there were no mistakes. Then they would go to the next line and do the same. [In Qumran, if they made a mistake, they rolled the whole document up and threw it away, and started over! That's how serious they were.]
- ◆ So, to begin, we at least can trust the Bible on one level because what we have today is the same as when it was written! It did not undergo massive revisions.
- ◆ **B.** Ready for more? In ancient literature, the book with the second most ancient (handwritten) copies/ translations in modern existence is Homer's *Iliad*, with 643 MSS. The first complete, pieced together & preserved text of Homer dates 2200 years after Homer wrote it. (No scholar doubts the authenticity of these.)
 - ◆ The Roman Hist of Livy, 59BC-AD17, has only 20MSS, only 1 of these as old as 4th Century AD.
 - ◆ The History of Thucydides (460-400BC), is known by only 8 MSS, the earliest dates around 900AD...yet no scholars question the authenticity of these even though the earliest MSS of these is over 1300 years after the originals!
- ◆ The book with the most ancient handwritten copies & translations of the original, with the shortest time between the writing and date of copy? The New Testament, with over 24,000 ancient copies of ancient manuscripts, in Greek and Latin, which

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still exist today, some date from within 25-35 years of when they were originally written!

◆[Earliest complete copy of Bible is from 325-350AD, Codex Vaticanus, in Rome (235-270 yrs after original). Codex Sinaiticus has whole NT, dates from 340 and can be seen in the British Museum. It's words are identical to fragments dating from the First Century.]

◆**3.** Ok, so we have what was written. But did they write down true things way back then? Which brings us to another reason we can trust the Bible. **The Bible is trustworthy because it has archeological and historical support.** Whereas there is no archeological backing to the Mormon holy book and it's claims, as you research the reliability of the Bible you will find that scientific discoveries just keep backing it up.

◆**A.** For example, there was a time when scholars said that there was no way Moses could have written the first five books of the Bible. Why? Because no archeological evidence showed that they could even write before 1400 BC so there is no way Moses could have written the first five books of the Bible. That's what scholars said until they found the Elba tablets in 1975 and realized, "Wow, we have writing documented one thousand years before Moses actually lived." Over twenty thousand different fragments and pieces of written literature were found. Scholars thought that was interesting.

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◆**B.** Other scholars said, "The Bible isn't true because the Bible talks about the Hittite civilization. There was no evidence in all of our excavations in the Middle East of a Hittite civilization, yet the Bible keeps talking about it. It's just made up in the Bible." Well that was good and great until archeologists found the former capital of the Hittite civilization and dug it up.

◆**C.** Then some scholars said that the Bible plays loose with history. It's bad history because of what we read in the book of Daniel. It talks about the King of Babylon being Belshazzar. Belshazzar wasn't the King of Babylon. All of our reference material, all the archeological material, shows that Nabonidus was the King of Babylon, not Belshazzar. That was good and great until they discovered some archeological evidence that showed that Nabonidus was the King of Babylon, but for ten years he went to Arabia. When he went to Arabia it said he put his son in charge of the kingdom. Guess what his son's name was? Belshazzar. Guess when the time period of that was? Right when Daniel would have been in Babylon and the book of Daniel would have been written.

◆ The reliability of the Bible has stood the test of time for thousands of years. In fact, it was an archeologist at John Hopkins University, D.F. Albright, who said the

◆ "excessive skepticism shown toward the Bible has progressively been discredited. Discovery after discovery has established the accuracy of the numeral details. It has

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brought increased recognition to the value of the Bible as a source of history.”

◆**4. The Bible is trustworthy because it’s writers were eye-witnesses.** The possibility of telling the truth about some event is related to the nearness of the witnesses both in time and space. How do we know if we should believe a man knows about Kennedy being shot? Was he alive in the '60s? What he at the parade? By the motorcade?

◆We’ve already seen how close the biblical writers were to the biblical events. When the New Testament documents were written hundreds of people who actually knew The disciples were still alive. Not only that, they were on the spot. Luke writes

◆*“Many have undertaken to draw up an account of the things that have been fulfilled among us, just as they were handed down to us by those who from the first were eye-witnesses and servants of the word. Therefore, since I myself have carefully investigated everything from the beginning, it seemed good also to me to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, so that you may know the certainty of the things you have been taught.” Luke 1:1-4, NIV.*

◆Eyewitnesses are not quoting myth, or legends. Those take hundreds of years to develop. The Roman media, and the Jewish media of the day hated Christians as much as the media of today. They would not let a mere made up story gain momentum with obvious public inaccuracies.

◆**5. The Bible is trustworthy because it is realistic and honest.** (unlike Greek myths)

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◆A. A lot of people think that the Bible is just all about sugary sweet people who never did anything wrong, a kind of fantasy about unreal people who never have problems, or have power of the gods (greek myths). It's out of touch, they say. The people who say this clearly haven't ever read the Bible. The Bible is honest and real to life. God's people are regular folks, dysfunctional like all the rest of us! The first couple, perfect people in a perfect setting, do exactly the wrong thing. Noah, the most righteous man of his generation, gets drunk and curses his own grandson. Isaac plays favorites between his sons Jacob and Esau. They are bitter enemies for twenty years. Jacob does the same thing and Joseph's brothers want to kill him but end up selling him into slavery. The greatest King of Israel kills a man and takes his wife... Ortberg says, "These people need a therapist. These are not the Walton's. They need Dr. Phil, Dr. Laura, Dr. Spock, Dr. Seuss...they need somebody"

◆Here's my point: the lives in the Bible are the same, real, messy lives we have. The Bible talks about the kind of living you and I find ourselves in every day, and shows God's way through it.

◆B. For example, Corinth was the Sin City of the ancient world. Every perverted thing you could imagine was going on in Corinth, alone the coast of Greece. Already over thirty-three taverns have been excavated in the city of Corinth, and there are probably many, many more. If you were a prostitute in the ancient world

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they had a nickname for you. They would call you a Corinthian girl. In fact, the word to practice fornication in the Greek language literally comes from a derivative of the word Corinth.

◆ Now, in the NT there are two letters written to that city tackling all kinds of issues: how to handle money, how to handle sex and marriage, how to be a church, how to get along in relationships, how to understand hardships, your calling, use of your talents. You see, the Bible is not mythological. It is real and practical. That's something trustworthy.

◆ **Conclusion:** Now if the Bible is well preserved, well attested by eye-witnesses, archeology, and history; if it is realistic and honest; if it is like an instruction manual for how to live well – THEN

◆ 1) You needn't be ashamed to speak of it. Science and scholarship are on your side!

◆ 2) Get a good modern translation and read. Listen if you don't have one, we'll give you one. Read it daily. You say, "Well I can't remember things, so what's the point?" It's a lot like eating, I don't remember most of the meals I've eaten in my life either, but they all kept me alive. Do you want an alive soul? Ps19:7-8!

◆ 3) Investigate the person of Jesus. He's the main plot of all 66 books that make up The Book. When each of us die, it will be on the test! We'll talk all about him in two weeks.