

# **The Bible– Part 1**

*Josh McDowell*

## I. Introduction.

- A. To undermine Christianity one has to undermine the historicity of the Bible.
- B. But this backfires - it is true and accurate historically
- C. Two questions.

## II. Is the Bible we have today what was written down?

### A. The first step to test historicity is to apply the bibliographical test.

1. It asks questions of any manuscripts from history - handwritten copies instead of a printed copy (prior to the printing press).
2. The problem is that manuscripts would deteriorate - they were made from papyrus. The oldest copies are very fragile.
3. It first asks how far the manuscript is from the original (the autographa).
  - a. Generally the older the copy, the closer it is to the original writing.
  - b. Compared to secular history the Bible has much older manuscripts.
    - 1) Our earliest manuscripts of Aristotle, Plato, Thucydides, etc all are over one thousand years newer than the date of the original writing.
    - 2) The New Testament's earliest manuscripts, however, are within eighty years of the original writing and many complete manuscripts exist within two hundred years of the original writing.
    - 3) There is more evidence time-wise for the authenticity of the biblical writings than any other manuscript in antiquity.
  - c. How do you tell the time?
    - 1) By studying the form.
    - 2) By studying the different forms of punctuation used.
    - 3) By studying the graphic or artistic design.
    - 4) The color and texture of a document.
4. It second asks how many manuscripts there are of any given kind.

- a. When there are more documents it is easier to validate the original reading.
  - 1) Only ten manuscripts for Caesar, only seven for Pliny, only seven for Plato, only eight for Thucydides, only eight for Herodotus, etc.
  - 2) When it comes to the New Testament there are over twenty-four thousand.
  - 3) The number two book with historical documents is the Illiad with only over six hundred.
- b. With many manuscripts you can reconstruct the entire document with greater accuracy.
- c. However, even with every manuscript destroyed, the church father's quotations compromise every verse in the New Testament with the exception of eleven verses. You cannot do this with any other book.
- d. The best scholars say that the authenticity of the original New Testament can be established.

### III. Was what was written down true?

A. Yes. The writers of the New Testament wrote as eye-witnesses or they recorded eye-witness accounts. (Acts 1:3, 1 John 1, 2 Peter 1:16)

- 1. Luke is considered among the best ancient historians. (Luke 1:1-3)
- 2. He was a recorder of the accounts.

B. The truth was presented in the context of knowledgeable witnesses.

- 1. The writers wrote in the presence of hostile witnesses.
- 2. If the eye witnesses had given a wrong account, their witness in the First Century would have immediately been discounted. (Acts 2:22)
- 3. Paul's testimony before Festus: the king knew of these facts which Paul spoke about. (Acts 26:24-26)
- 4. The New Testament community is probably the best witness for accuracy.

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## STUDY GUIDE

### *Part 1: What do you see?*

1. What are the two questions asked by the bibliographical test? How does this demonstrate that our current New Testament is an accurate reflection of the original?

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2. What are the two reasons that we can trust validity of the New Testament writers' testimonies? What circumstances allowed for documents to be better substantiated?

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3. Look up two of the following Scripture passages:

- Acts 1:3
- 2 Peter 1:16
- Acts 2:22
- Acts 26:24-26

How do these passages uniquely demonstrate the historical character of the Scriptures?

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### *Part 2: What do you think?*

1. Why is it that we no longer possess any of the original manuscripts? Why are the manuscripts we possess considered early enough?

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2. Why is it that the number of manuscripts makes a difference in determining what the original was? In comparison with other ancient documents, why is the New Testament so firmly established?

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3. If the New Testament witnesses had spoke falsely in an environment that was hostile to their testimony, what would have been the result? Why is it that it seems as if no one in the First Century questioned the facts that were being presented?

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***Part 3: What will you do?***

1. What kind of attitude toward the Scriptures should this message invoke in skeptics? How has this information affected your attitude?

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2. Based upon the information presented, how can you comfort a believer or challenge a nonbeliever as to the veracity of the Scriptures?

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3. If the historical life, death and resurrection of the Second Person of the Trinity are accurately recorded in history, what role should those records play in your life? What will you do to make Scripture study a regular part of your day?

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