

Is The Bible Reliable?

“Is the Bible reliable?” This is a fair question to ask of any document and the Bible should be no different.

Let's examine this by looking back at the origins of the Bible. The Bible contains 66 books, over 40 different authors, and was written over a time span of 1500 years¹. The standards for a considering a document to be historical include some of these elements. Do we have originals or copies of the originals? What is the time length between those copies if we don't have originals? What supporting evidence is there that this document can be corroborated by outside sources?

There is no original Bible in existence, which may seem shocking on its surface. Let's look at ancient literature and compare it with the Bible. Homer's Iliad was written in 900 B.C and the earliest copy we have is in 400 B.C². The gap is 500 years and there are over 600 copies of this great work. Likewise works of Caesar have a 1000 years difference with 14 copies, Plato has a time span of 1200 years with 7 copies, and Aristotle has a time span of 1400 years with 49 copies³. These are all acceptable for works of the ancient world, without an original in existence. The New Testament was written from 40A.D-100A.D and the earliest copy we have is from 125 A.D⁴. The gap is only 25 years and there are over 24,000 manuscript copies of the Bible in existence today in languages such as Hebrew, Greek, and Aramaic. The Bible compared to other works of literature stands head and shoulders above them and they are accepted as a historical document.

Any historical document that has strong internal or external evidence against it would be unreliable. Granted there are hard passages in the Bible, but the Bible doesn't contradict itself. The external evidence of archeology is helpful in corroborating the Bible's truthfulness. For example, at one point scholars said that Moses couldn't have written Genesis because there was no writing at the time⁵. Now, there are thousands of documents to prove that there was writing as far back as 3000 B.C. Moses, having grown up in Pharaoh's palace, would have known how to write.

There are so many manuscripts available one can easily check the truthfulness of the scriptures using these copies. So if there was an error in transmission it would be readily acknowledged. In fact, there are some variants errors but none that change any major doctrine. The Bible's trustworthiness is continually confirmed by the discovery of ancient manuscripts. The Codex Sinaiticus was written in 350 A.D. and has almost all the New Testament and some of the Old Testament;⁶ it can be located in the British Library. The Dead Sea Scrolls contain fragments from a majority of the 39 books of the Old Testament.⁷ The Codex Sinaiticus and the Dead Sea Scrolls help demonstrate that the Bible we now have is reliable and trustworthy because of their similarities.

The objective evidence shows that the Bible passes for a reliable historical document with flying colours. The Bible stands above other accepted ancient documents, it has reliable internal and external support, and it has numerous manuscripts so that anyone can check the truthfulness of the Bible. We encourage you to investigate the claims of the Bible yourself and the Messiah to whom the Bible speaks of.

¹ McDowell, Josh. Evidence That Demands a Verdict Volume 1. Here's Life Publishing, Inc. 16

² McDowell 43.

³ McDowell 42.

⁴ McDowell 43.

⁵ Solomon, Lon. Christianity 101 Track 2 mp3.(8:45). McLean Bible Church.

⁶ McDowell 47.

⁷ Cole R. Dennis, & Clendenen, E. R. (2003). Dead Sea Scrolls. In C. Brand, C. Draper, A. England, S. Bond, E. R. Clendenen & T. C. Butler (Eds.), Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary (C. Brand, C. Draper, A. England, S. Bond, E. R. Clendenen & T. C. Butler, Ed.) (401). Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers.