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# The Bible

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*Answering Eight Critical Questions about the Bible*



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# ABSOLUTE TRUTH AND THE BIBLE

*What is 'absolute truth' and is the Bible it?*

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## I. A CRITICAL QUESTION TO PONDER

What does where 'up' is have to do with the Bible?

- A. **THE TASK BEFORE US** - Our journey of interacting with the inspiration, inerrancy and reliability of the Bible must start with these questions. Today, we need not only to defend the **claims of the Bible**, but we also must defend the very **meaningfulness of these claims** in a society that no longer recognizes 'up' and 'down' and absolute truth.
- B. **A CAVERNOUS GENERATION GAP** - We live in a '**says who?**' society. Twenty or 30 years ago, it would have been perfectly acceptable to answer "**says the Bible!**". But that is no longer the case. The Bible saying it no longer settles it and we now must be prepared to offer a defense of why the Bible should be trusted, believed and followed.

## II. DEFINING THE TERMS

- A. **"ABSOLUTE TRUTH"** - The belief that there are truths which are true for **all people** at **all times** in **all places**. Absolute truth is objective, universal and constant.
  - 1. Does absolute truth **exist**?
  - 2. If absolute truth exists, **what is it**?
  - 3. Does the **Bible** claim to be absolute truth?
    - a. 'Truth' occurs 202 times in 189 verses
    - b. 'True' occurs 87 times in 83 verses

- B. **"PLURALISM"** - The belief that there are many **different ideas, viewpoints** and **'realities'** that should all be **respected**. The door is left slightly open for the existence of absolute truth in a 'softer' form of pluralism.

*Example: Larry believes that a wall is white. Moe believes that the wall is tan. Curly believes that the wall is green. All three views, while different, should be respected.*

- C. **"RELATIVISM"** - The belief that the plurality of ideas, viewpoints and 'realities' should not only be respected, but also should be seen as **equally valid**. Absolute truth is outright rejected.

1. We should think in terms of **"a truth"** not **"the truth"**
2. A person's **experience** is key
  - a. "What is true for you is true for you, but what is true for me is true for me"
  - b. What works for you? What satisfies you?
  - c. Any claim that a viewpoint is right and others wrong is arrogant because it claims that your **experience** is more valid than others'

*Example: Larry believes that a wall is white. Moe believes that the wall is tan. Curly believes that the wall is green. All three views, while different, should be respected AND all three views are equally true.*

- D. **DRIVING IT HOME** - If this concept seems like rubbish to you - good! It should sound pretty squirrely to you. But if you think it is an outlandish fairy tale, go back to the last example and insert "Christianity", "Islam" and "atheism".

*Larry believes in Christianity. Moe believes in Islam. Curly believes in atheism. All three views, while different, should be respected AND all three views are equally true.*

1. The **Six Blind Men** and the **Elephant**
  - a. Side = Wall
  - b. Tusk = Spear
  - c. Trunk = Snake
  - d. Leg = Tree
  - e. Ear = Fan
  - f. Tail = Rope
2. A **Relativist** would say: The moral of the story is they are all **right** in their ob-  
servation. But they were all also **wrong** in their exclusive claims. Thus we can  
apply this parable to religion and see how each religion has some truth to it and  
all are paths to the same destination but none are completely right.
3. An **Absolutist** would say: They are **all wrong** - because it is, after all, an ele-  
phant. What they perceive the elephant to be has no bearing on what it actually  
is. The absolute truth is that the creature they felt was an elephant.
4. Let's read **John 14:6** and encounter a serious problem to this thinking. Is there  
any room for Jesus in the *Parable of the Six Blind Men and the Elephant*?

### III. TWO PROBLEMS WITH RELATIVISM

- A. **A LOGICAL CONTRADICTION** - "There is no absolute truth" is an absolute truth claim
- B. **PERSONAL PREFERENCE IS CONFUSED WITH TRUTH** - Deciding what is true is not based  
on a person's experience or preference.

### IV. TRUTH DECAY

- A. **GETTING TO THE SOURCE** - When did the line between what is true and what is not true  
become trampled?

B. Read **Genesis 3:1-4**

1. What did **God** say concerning the tree?
2. What did **Eve** say?
3. What did **Satan** say?

C. What did **Jesus** say about Satan in **John 8:44**?

## V. HOW DOES ALL OF THIS RELATE TO THE BIBLE?

A. What do the following verses reveal about 'truth'?

1. **John 1:14, 17**
2. **John 3:21**
3. **John 8:32**
4. **John 14:6**
5. **John 17:17**

B. **OUR CONCLUSION** - The Bible **claims to be absolute truth**. That leaves us with a choice to either **accept that claim** or **reject it**. But does this choice have to be made on **blind faith**?

## PART 2

# DIVINE REVELATION THROUGH THE BIBLE

*How has God chosen to reveal who He is to us?*

## I. UP TO THIS POINT...

A. **Either** there is 'absolute truth', or there is not

1. If there **is no** absolute truth (relativism) we may as well go home
2. If there **is** absolute truth, then what is it?

B. Consider **Christianity**

1. The **Bible** and **Jesus claim** to be absolute truth (John 14:6; 17:17)
2. Therefore, Christianity **stands or falls** with the Bible - they cannot be separate

## II. THREE FUNDAMENTAL TRUTHS ABOUT GOD

A. God is **INACCESSIBLE**

1. **Isaiah 55:8-9**

**Q:** According to verse 8, in what **two ways** does God differ from man?

i.

ii.

**Q:** According to verse 9, **how much** difference is there?

**Q:** What is the **likelihood** that two people who think and act entirely differently can really understand each other?

2. **1 Timothy 6:13-16**

**Q:** How does God **'dwell'**?

**Q:** Who has **seen Him** dwelling like this?

3. **Exodus 33:18-20**

**Q: Who** can see God's face?

**Q: Why** do you think this is so?

TRUTH ONE RESTATED  
**HOLY GOD IS FAR REMOVED FROM HIS UNHOLY CREATION**

B. God is **INCOMPREHENSIBLE**

1. **2 Corinthians 4:3-4**

**Q:** What has the 'god of this world' done to **unbelievers**?

2. **1 Corinthians 1:21**

**Q:** Can the **wisdom** of the world (philosophy, science) lead one to know God?

**Q:** Who's **'fault'** is this?

3. **1 Corinthians 2:14**

**Q:** What is **God's truth** to a 'natural' man?

4. **Romans 3:11**

**Q:** Who seeks after God?

TRUTH TWO RESTATED

**EVEN IF GOD COULD BE REACHED, MAN IS TOO WICKED AND FOOLISH TO FIND HIM**

C. God is **NEAR**

1. **Acts 17:27**

**Q:** While man is blindly **groping** for God through earthly wisdom, etc. where is God?

TRUTH THREE RESTATED

**GOD IS A LOVING FATHER WHO WANTS TO HAVE FELLOWSHIP WITH HIS CREATION**

But how is Holy God near?

III. TWO WAYS GOD MAKES HIMSELF NEAR

God's desire is to 'reveal' who He is to mankind.

A. **General** Revelation

1. **Psalm 19:1-6**

**Q:** In what **way** is God known?

**Q:** What is **absent** from this revelation? (v. 3)

2. **Acts 14:16-17**

**Q:** In what way is God known?

3. **Romans 1:18-21**

**Q:** What does general revelation primarily bring about?

Do you think general revelation is sufficient to lead one to salvation?

B. **Special** Revelation

1. \_\_\_\_\_

a. **Genesis 28:12**

b. **Matthew 1:20; 2:13**

2. \_\_\_\_\_

a. **1 Samuel 3:1-10**

b. **Hosea 1:1-2**

3. \_\_\_\_\_

a. **Exodus 3:2**

b. **Exodus 13:21-22**

4. \_\_\_\_\_

a. **Num 22:35,38**

b. **Deut 18:18**

5. \_\_\_\_\_

a. **John 1:14**

b. **Matthew 11:27**

c. **Hebrews 1:1-3**

6. \_\_\_\_\_

a. **2 Tim 3:16-17**

b. **2 Peter 1:20-21**

What is the best way we have today to know God?

NEXT TIME

How did infinite God adequately express Himself in the written Word?

and

How did perfect God use imperfect man to record absolute truth?

## PART 3

# INSPIRATION AND INERRANCY OF THE BIBLE

*How could imperfect men produce a perfect Bible?*

## I. THINK ABOUT THIS

### **The Bible was...**

- written over a **1,500 year** span
- written by over **40 authors** (kings, fishermen, statesmen, scholars, shepherds, military leaders, a doctor, a tax collector)
- written on **3 continents** (Africa, Asia, Europe)
- written in **3 languages** (Hebrew, Aramaic, Greek)

### **And yet the Bible...**

- stands alone as a work of **amazing unity and harmony**
- has **one central message** proclaimed in its entirety

### **How can this be?**

Could we pick 40 people from different cultures and backgrounds from a 1,500 year span to write a book in three languages and expect it to be harmonious?

## II. INSPIRATION

### A. **Two Definitions**

**Charles Ryrie:** "God's superintendence of the human authors so that, using their own individual personalities, they composed and recorded without error His revelation to man in the words of the original autographs."

**Rene Pache:** "The determining influence exercised by the Holy Spirit on the writers of the Old and New Testaments in order that they might proclaim and set down in an exact and authentic way the message as received from God. This influence guided them even to the extent of their use of words, that they might be kept from all error and omission"

B. Five **Important Points** About Inspiration

1. Inspiration included a **divine element**
2. Inspiration included a **human element**
3. Inspiration resulted in God's Word being recorded **without error**
4. Inspiration extends to the **very words** of Scripture
5. Inspiration relates to the **original manuscripts**

C. **Key Passages** Concerning Inspiration

1. The Bible declares some **3,808 times** "God said" or "thus says the Lord"
2. **John 14:26**

**Q:** What would the **Holy Spirit** do for the apostles in relation to writing the Bible?

3. **2 Timothy 3:16**

**Q:** **How much** of Scripture is 'inspired'?

**Q:** What is **another term** for 'inspired'?

**Q:** Some people say that the Bible **isn't God's Word**, but that it **contains God's Word**. How does this term give us insight into this issue?

4. **2 Peter 1:20-21**

**Q:** Prophecy is God's spoken Word. As such, all of Scripture is prophecy. Therefore, how much of Scripture is an **act of human will**?

**Q:** How did the Holy Spirit and the writers **work together** in writing Scripture?

**Q:** The phrase 'moved along' in verse 21 is the same one as 'driven along' in **Acts 27:17**. What **insight** does this offer in terms of inspiration?

5. **1 Corinthians 14:37**

**Q:** Who did Paul **credit** for his writings?

D. **False Views** of Inspiration

1. **Natural Inspiration:** There is **nothing supernatural** about the Bible. Instead it was written by men of unusual ability and insight writing a **literary masterpiece**.

a. **Definition Checklist**

|                      |     |
|----------------------|-----|
| Divine element       | x   |
| Human element        | ✓   |
| Without error        | x   |
| Words of Scripture   | n/a |
| Original manuscripts | n/a |

b. **Problems**

- i. How could they say in truth **'thus says the Lord'**?
- ii. The Bible would **lack authority**.

2. **Spiritual Illumination:** It is not the writings that were inspired, but the **writers**. Therefore, any **devout believer** could in theory write "scripture".

a. **Definition Checklist**

|                      |   |   |
|----------------------|---|---|
| Divine element       | ✓ |   |
| Human element        | ✓ |   |
| Without error        |   | x |
| Words of Scripture   |   | x |
| Original manuscripts |   | x |

b. **Problems**

- i. Who would **determine** what (or who) is inspired?
- ii. What about the **other letters** Paul wrote that aren't in Scripture?
- iii. What about Paul's **grocery list**?

3. **Partial Inspiration:** The parts of the Bible that deal with **faith and practice** are inspired, but the parts related to **science, history** and **non-faith matters** are not.

a. **Definition Checklist**

|                      |   |   |
|----------------------|---|---|
| Divine element       | ✓ |   |
| Human element        | ✓ |   |
| Without error        |   | x |
| Words of Scripture   |   | x |
| Original manuscripts | ✓ |   |

b. **Problems**

- i. How can matters of faith be **separated** from the historical narratives?
- ii. How can the Bible be trustworthy in one area while in error elsewhere?

4. **Conceptual Inspiration:** The **concepts or ideas** are inspired, but not the **words**. There may be problems with the words the writers used, but their ideas have been guarded by God.

a. **Definition Checklist**

|                      |   |   |
|----------------------|---|---|
| Divine element       | ✓ |   |
| Human element        | ✓ |   |
| Without error        |   | x |
| Words of Scripture   |   | x |
| Original manuscripts | ✓ |   |

b. **Problems**

- i. Jesus (**Matthew 5:18**) and Paul (**1 Thessalonians 2:13**) both affirmed that the **words of Scripture** are inspired.
- ii. What word can be an **error** in **John 3:16** without changing the concept?

5. **Divine Dictation:** God **dictated** each word of Scripture and men wrote them down in a completely passive manner.

a. **Definition Checklist**

|                      |   |   |
|----------------------|---|---|
| Divine element       | ✓ |   |
| Human element        |   | x |
| Without error        | ✓ |   |
| Words of Scripture   |   | ✓ |
| Original manuscripts | ✓ |   |

b. **Problems**

- i. How do we account for **distinct style** and **vocabulary** between the different authors?
- ii. Human **feelings** referenced in the Bible would be meaningless (**Romans 9:1-5**).

### III. INERRANCY

#### A. **Definition**

The Scriptures as **originally recorded** are free from error and untruth. In all of their teachings, words and thoughts, they are **perfectly true**.

#### B. Inerrancy **Allows** for...

1. **Approximations:** When the Bible reports that Jesus fed 5,000 men, does that require there to have been exactly 5,000?
2. **Free Quotations:** When a New Testament author quoted an Old Testament reference, does their quote have to be exact?
3. **Language of Appearance:** Is the Bible in error when it says the sun rose?
4. **Different Accounts of the Same Event:** Is the Bible in error when one Gospel writer included a detail about an event and another did not?
5. **Copy Mistakes:** As we will see, there are a limited number of relatively unimportant copy mistakes in the Bible as we have it. Does this compromise inerrancy?

### IV. CONCLUSION

We must hold to one of two logical syllogisms (if A and B then C)

1. God is true (**Titus 1:2; Romans 3:4**)
2. Scripture is God-breathed (**2 Timothy 3:16**)
3. Therefore, Scripture must be true

or

1. Scripture is untrue
2. Scripture is God-breathed (**2 Timothy 3:16**)
3. Therefore, God must not be true

# THE TRANSMISSION OF THE BIBLE

*How do we know we have the Bible today as it was originally written?*

## I. IT'S A FACT:

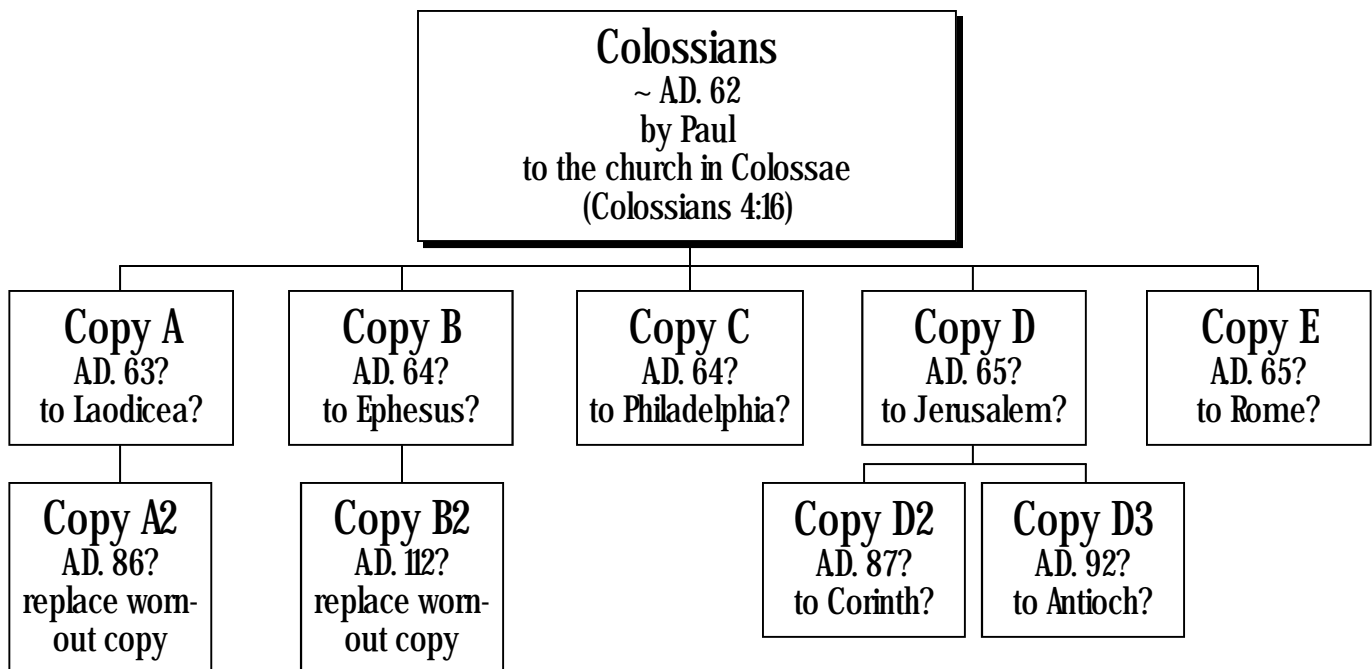
We have no existing Biblical book or fragment of a book in its original form.

## II. AN OFTEN-MADE ACCUSATION:

How can you Christians be sure that the Bible is authentic?

Isn't it possible that later Christians wrote into the Bible what they wanted it to say? Can't that explain the miracles? The prophecies?

## III. A HYPOTHETICAL LOOK AT HOW THE BIBLE WAS COPIED



## IV. THE TEST OF RELIABILITY FOR WORKS OF ANTIQUITY

### A. DO WE HAVE **MATCHING MANUSCRIPTS**?

1. **Compare** the copies you have for variances
2. The **fewer the variances**, the more sure you can be that the work is accurate
3. e.g. Does **John 3:16** say the same thing in the various copies?
4. (See the next section)

### B. DO WE HAVE A SUFFICIENT **QUANTITY** AND **GEOGRAPHICAL DIVERSITY** OF THE MANUSCRIPTS?

1. Is there a **sufficient number** of matching manuscripts to rule out 'luck'?
2. Is there **sufficient geographical** diversity to rule out 'luck'?
3. e.g. Do the numerous manuscripts in **Italy** match those in **Egypt**?
4. (See chart below)

### C. DO WE HAVE A **MINIMAL TIME GAP** BETWEEN THE OLDEST MANUSCRIPT AND THE ORIGINAL?

1. The **smaller the gap**, the more likely the manuscript is authentic
2. e.g. How many **years separate** the writing of the New Testament from the oldest manuscript we have?
3. (See chart below)

| Work                         | Date Witten | Earliest Copy<br>(incl fragments) | Time Span   | # of Copies<br>(incl fragments) |
|------------------------------|-------------|-----------------------------------|-------------|---------------------------------|
| <i>New Testament</i>         | AD. 40-100  | AD. 125                           | 25 years    | 5,300 +                         |
| Tacitus ( <i>Annals</i> )    | AD. 100     | AD. 1100                          | 1,000 years | 20                              |
| Caesar                       | 100-44 BC   | AD. 900                           | 950 years   | 10                              |
| Aristotle                    | 384-322 BC  | AD. 1100                          | 1,400 years | 49                              |
| Plato ( <i>Tetralogies</i> ) | 427-347 BC  | AD. 900                           | 1,200 years | 7                               |
| Sophocles                    | 496-406 BC  | AD. 1000                          | 1,400 years | 193                             |
| Homer ( <i>Iliad</i> )       | 900 BC      | 400 BC                            | 500 years   | 643                             |

(Diocletian's edict to destroy Christian buildings and books in A.D. 303)

## V. RELIABILITY OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

### A. COPYING THE TEXT: THE **TALMUDISTS** (A.D. 100-500)

1. Strict **rules** were employed in copying new manuscripts
  - a. The type of **paper** used
  - b. The number of **lines** written each time
  - c. The color of the **ink**
2. When a paper showed wear, it was **buried** (explains why we don't have more)

### B. COPYING THE TEXT: THE **MASORETES** (A.D. 500-1000)

1. Masoretes were **counters**
  - a. Number of **letters** in a book
  - b. Noted the **middle letter**
  - c. Number of times **a letter occurred** in the O.T.
2. Any **mistake** in copying required starting over and destroying the flawed copy

### C. EXISTING **MANUSCRIPTS**

1. *Cairo Codex* (A.D. 895): Contains the prophets
2. *Codex of the Prophets of Leningrad* (A.D. 916): Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, 12 minor prophets
3. *Codex Babylonicus Petropolitanus* (A.D. 1008): Earliest complete O.T. manuscript
4. *Aleppo Codex* (A.D. 900+): Lost and rediscovered in 1958
5. *British Museum Codex* (A.D. 950): Part of Genesis through Deuteronomy

What problem do you notice concerning these manuscripts?

D. THE **DEAD SEA SCROLLS**

1. The **Problem**

- a. The oldest dating O.T. manuscripts were from about **A.D. 900**
- b. This is about **1300+** years after the writing of the O.T.

2. The **Find**

- a. The DSS date at about **125 B.C.**
- b. The DSS contain copies of **Isaiah, Habakkuk** and others
- c. There was **minimal variance** between the DSS and other manuscripts

3. The **Conclusion**

- a. The **copying of the text was faithful** between 125 B.C. and A.D. 900
- b. The **gap** between the oldest manuscript and the originals was pushed back 1000 years
- c. The DSS provide an O.T. text (including prophecy) **BEFORE Christ** (taking the legs out of the argument that the prophecies were written into the O.T. text after His life)

VI. RELIABILITY OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

A. **INTERNAL** EVIDENCE (NEXT SESSION)

B. **EXTERNAL** EVIDENCE (NEXT SESSION)

C. **ARCHAEOLOGICAL** EVIDENCE (NEXT SESSION)

D. EXISTING **MANUSCRIPTS**

1. *John Rylands'* (A.D. 130): Portion of the Gospel of John written in Egypt.
2. *Bodmer Papyrus II* (A.D. 150-200): Contains most of John.
3. *Chester Beattu Papyri* (A.D. 200): Contains major portions of the N.T.
4. *Codex Vaticanus* (A.D. 325-350): Contains nearly all the N.T.
5. *Codex Sinaiticus* (A.D. 350): Contains almost all the N.T. and half the O.T.
6. *Codex Alexandrinus* (A.D. 400): Contains almost the entire Bible.

## VII. FORMING THE CANON

- A. CANON **DEFINED** - The term 'canon' means '**measuring rod**' and is used to describe the Bible because it depicts how books had to pass a **test** to 'measure up' to be included as part of Scripture.
- B. THE OLD TESTAMENT CANON
1. Compiled at the **Council of Jamnia** in A.D. 90
  2. Three sections (law, prophets, writings) **recognized by Christ (Luke 24:44)**
  3. The **five tests** used:
    - a. Evidence of **Divine authorship** ("thus says the Lord")
    - b. Author was a **prophet**
    - c. Accuracy of **facts**
    - d. Reception by the **Jews**
    - e. Reception by the **Church**
- C. THE NEW TESTAMENT CANON
1. Compiled at the **Council of Hippo** in A.D. 393 (although it was generally recognized much earlier)
  2. The **five tests** used:
    - a. Evidence of **Holy Spirit's** inspiration
    - b. Author was an **apostle** or close associate
    - c. **Orthodox** content
    - d. Accepted by the **Church**
    - e. Used in **worship**
  3. Early **Church Fathers' support** of New Testament books
    - a. Clement of Rome (A.D. 95): 8 books
    - b. Ignatius of Antioch (A.D. 115): 7 books
    - c. Polycarp (A.D. 108): 15 books
    - d. Irenaeus (A.D. 185): 21 books
    - e. Clement of Alexandria (A.D. 200): 24 books

## VIII. TRANSLATION ISSUES

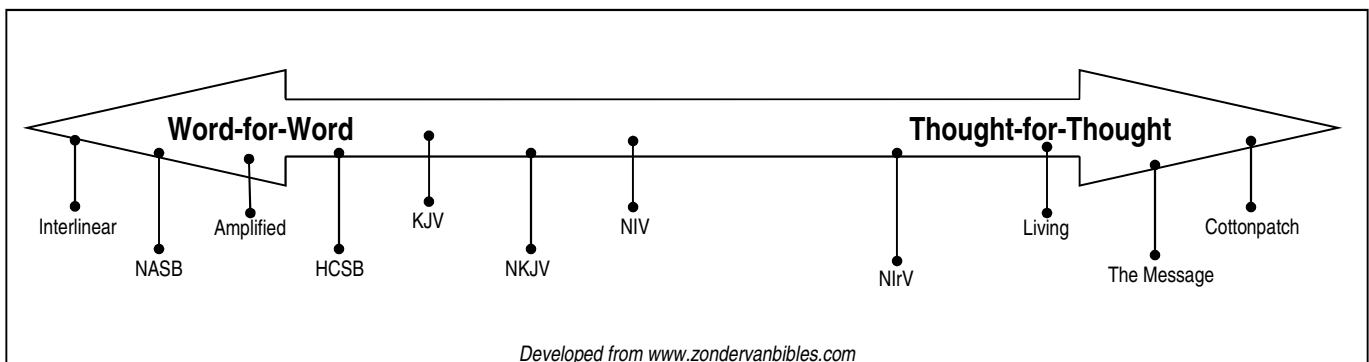
### A. THE TERMINOLOGY

1. **Translation:** A 'translation' is a work derived from the original languages. Scholars attempt to provide the best, most accurate translation from the original languages based on a growing understanding of the ancient languages.
2. **Version:** Sometimes 'version' and 'translation' are used interchangeably. Others differentiate the two with a version being a work developed from a translation and not the original languages. An example may be an attempt to write a version of the Old Testament from the Greek Septuagint instead of Hebrew.
3. **Paraphrase:** A 'paraphrase' is not focused on the text as much as it is communicating the 'truth' of the message in clear, modern terms. A paraphrase then takes wide license with the text in an effort to communicate it. Examples are Clarence Jordan's "Cottonpatch New Testament", "The Message" and the "Living Bible".

### B. TWO METHODS OF TRANSLATING

1. **Formal Equivalent** (word-for-word): This method attempts to translate each word or phrase precisely and directly from the original language into English. The advantage of this method is a highly accurate translation. The disadvantage is that the text may sound 'choppy' and may be confusing where a Greek or Hebrew figure of speech was used that doesn't translate well.
2. **Dynamic** (thought-for-thought): This method attempts to translate each thought from the original text into English. The advantage is the text is much more readable and understandable. The disadvantage is that you are reading the scholar's opinion about what the text means.

### C. A LOOK AT SOME COMMON BIBLES



## IX. THE APOCRYPHA

### A. DEFINITION

1. The term 'Apocrypha' comes from the Greek word meaning '**hidden**' and refers to the **14 books** written between 300 B.C. and A.D. 100.
2. The **Jews rejected** these writings as canonical, however, **Jerome** included them as semi-canonical in the Latin Vulgate.
3. In 1548 at the **Council of Trent**, the Roman Catholic church recognized 11 of the 14 books as canonical.

### B. LISTING OF THE BOOKS

- |                                       |  |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| 1. Wisdom of Solomon (c. 30 B.C.)     | 8. 2 Maccabees (110-70 B.C.)           |
| 2. Ecclesiasticus (Sirach) (132 B.C.) | 9. Baruch (150-50 B.C.)                |
| 3. Tobit (200 B.C.)                   | 10. Letter of Jeremiah (300-100 B.C.)  |
| 4. Judith (150 B.C.)                  | 11. Additions to Esther (140-130 B.C.) |
| 5. 1 Esdras (150-100 B.C.)            | 12. Prayer of Azariah (200-100 B.C.)   |
| 6. 2 Esdras (A.D. 100)                | 13. Bel and the Dragon (100 B.C.)      |
| 7. 1 Maccabees (110 B.C.)             | 14. Prayer of Manasseh (200-100 B.C.)  |

### C. REASONS FOR REJECTION

1. These books are **never quoted in N.T.**
  - a. Matthew quotes 25 of the 39 O.T. books
  - b. The N.T. quotes all but three O.T. books
2. They are **not recognized by Christ** or the **Jews** of His day
  - a. Josephus and Philo listed the O.T. canon but did not include the Apocrypha
3. They **don't claim** to be **inspired**
4. They contain **historical, geographical and chronological errors**
  - a. Judith 1:7 says Nebuchadnezzar was king of the Assyrians (he was the king of the Babylonians)
  - b. Judith claims that Nineveh was captured by Nebuchadnezzar (his father, Nabopolazar captured it)
  - c. Baruch 1:1 says Baruch wrote from Babylon, but he was actually in Egypt with Jeremiah (**Jeremiah 43:6-7**)
5. They contain **teachings contrary to Scripture**
  - a. They advocate prayers for the dead (2 Mac 12:41-45)
  - b. They justify suicide (2 Mac 14:41-46)
  - c. They teach almsgiving atones for sin (2 Mac 3:30)
  - d. They teach the pre-existence of souls (2 Mac 8:19-20)
6. **Malachi 4:4-5** anticipates **no Scripture** between the Testaments

# THE HISTORICAL CLAIMS OF THE BIBLE

*How do we know what was written and transmitted is historically accurate?*

## I. THE ARGUMENT THUS FAR:

- A. God has chosen to **reveal Himself** to mankind through the Bible.
- B. This process began with God **inspiring** the original Biblical text.
- C. God used human authors to produce an **inerrant Biblical text**.
- D. This Biblical text has been **faithfully transmitted** to us today to ensure we have the same text as originally written

## II. THE CRITIC'S QUESTION:

All of that is based on a huge leap of faith in a perfect God.  
Is there any **tangible** proof of the Bible's reliability?

## III. EXTERNAL TESTIMONIES (FROM NEUTRAL OR HOSTILE WITNESSES)

### A. **JOSEPHUS: JEWISH HISTORIAN** (A.D. 37-100)

- 1. **Contemporary** of Christ
- 2. Well-respected **historian**
- 3. References many **New Testament figures**
  - a. The Herods
  - b. Roman emperors - Augustus, Tiberius & Claudius
  - c. High priest families - Annas, Caiaphas, Ananias
- 4. Wrote of "*the brother of Jesus, the so-called Christ, whose name was James...*"

5. In a **disputed passage** wrote:

*"At this time there was a wise man who was called Jesus...Pilate condemned Him to be condemned and to die. And those who had become His disciples did not abandon His discipleship. They reported that He had appeared to them three days after His crucifixion and that He was alive; accordingly, He was perhaps the Messiah concerning whom the prophets have recounted wonders."*

**B. TACITUS: ROMAN HISTORIAN (A.D. ~55-~117)**

1. He wrote of **Nero's public relations** plan after the burning of Rome in A.D. 64:

*"Hence to suppress the rumor, he falsely charged with the guilt, and punished, with the most exquisite tortures, the persons commonly called Christians, who were hated for their enormities. Christus, the founder of the name, was put to death by Pontius Pilate, procurator of Judea in the reign of Tiberius: but the pernicious superstition, repressed for a time broke out again, not only through Judea, where the mischief originated, but through the city of Rome also."*

**C. LUCIAN: GREEK SATIRIST (2<sup>nd</sup> Century)**

1. Alluding to **Christ**, he wrote:

*"...the man who was crucified in Palestine because he introduced this new cult into the world...Furthermore, their first lawgiver persuaded them that they were all brothers one of another after they have transgressed once for all by denying the Greek gods and by worshipping that crucified sophist himself and living under his laws"*

**D. SUETONIUS: ROMAN HISTORIAN (~ A.D. 120)**

1. **Court official** and historian
2. He wrote of **Emperor Claudius**:

*"As the Jews were making constant disturbances at the instigation of Chrestus [another spelling of Christus or Christ], he expelled them from Rome."*

3. And in his history of the **Caesars**, he wrote:

*"Punishment by Nero was inflicted on the Christians, a class of men given to a new and mischievous superstition."*

E. **PLINY THE YOUNGER** (A.D. 112)

1. **Governor** of Bithynia (northern Turkey)
2. In correspondence with **Emperor Trajan**, he wrote of Christians:

*"They were in the habit of meeting on a certain fixed day before it was light, when they sang in alternate verse a hymn to Christ as to a god, and bound themselves to a solemn oath, not to do any wicked deeds, and never to deny a truth when they should be called upon to deliver it up."*

F. **THALLUS: SAMARITAN-BORN HISTORIAN** (~A.D. 52)

1. Quoted by Julius Africanus (~A.D. 221) concerning his explanation of the **darkness during the crucifixion**:

*"Thallus, in the third book of his histories, explains away this darkness as an eclipse of the sun - unreasonably, as it seems to me"*

2. Julius' contention was that the crucifixion occurred during the time of a **full moon** when a solar eclipse cannot occur.

G. **LETTER OF MARA BAR-SERAPION** (~A.D. 73)

1. In a letter written to his son in prison, the father **compares the deaths** of Socrates, Pythagoras and Jesus:

*"What advantage did the Jews gain from executing their wise King? It was just after that that their kingdom was abolished...But Socrates did not die for good; he lived on in the teaching of Plato. Pythagoras did not die for good; he lived on in the statue of Hera. Nor did the wise King die for good; he lived on in the teaching which he had given."*

#### H. COMBINING THIS SECULAR TESTIMONY

1. Jesus was called the "**Christ**" or "**Messiah**".
2. Jesus was **crucified** under Pontius Pilate at Passover time.
3. His disciples reported that He **appeared** to them three days after His crucifixion.
4. His **followers spread** all over Judea and reached Rome.
5. Jesus was **worshipped** as God by His followers.
6. The irrefutable conclusion: A person names **Jesus lived** and died 2000 years ago

#### IV. ARCHAEOLOGY TESTIMONY

##### A. NOTABLE QUOTES

1. Nelson **Glueck**: Jewish Archaeologist

*"It may be stated categorically that no archaeological discovery has ever controverted a single Biblical reference. Scores of archaeological findings have been made which confirm in clear outline or exact detail historical statements in the Bible."*

2. William **Albright**: Considered one of the Great Archaeologists

*"There can be no doubt that archaeology has confirmed the substantial historicity of Old Testament tradition"*

*"Discovery after discovery has established the accuracy of innumerable details, and has brought increased recognition to the value of the Bible as a source of history."*

3. Sir William **Ramsey**: Considered one of the Greatest Archaeologists Ever

- a. Skeptic of the reliability of the Bible until he began to research Acts, written by Luke

*"I found myself brought into contact with the Book of Acts as an authority for the topography, antiquities and society of Asia Minor. It was gradually borne*

*upon me that in various details the narrative showed marvelous truth...I gradually came to find it a useful ally in some obscure and difficult investigations."*

*"Luke is a historian of the first rank; not merely are his statements of fact trustworthy...this author should be placed along with the very greatest of historians."*

## B. NOTABLE FINDINGS

1. **The Mari Letters:** Contains the **names** Abam-ram (Abraham), Jacob-el and Benjamites and supports the record of the war in **Genesis 14**.
2. **Sodom & Gomorrah:** After finding the cities, reconstruction of their destruction indicates a **catastrophic event** including a severe earthquake, brimstone falling on the cities and intense heat.
3. **The Hittites:** This powerful people mentioned in Scripture was often one of the first examples used by critics to show the foolishness of the Bible because there was no other record of them. Then in **1876** tablets were discovered mentioning the civilization and was later confirmed in **1906**.
4. **Saul's Fortress:** Saul's fortress at **Gibeah** was discovered and along with it proof that **slingshots** were an important weapon of the day (**Judges 20:16**)
5. **Gezer:** In 1969, a discovery at Gezar of **Hebrew, Egyptian** and **Philistine** artifacts from the same timeframe supports **1 Kings 9:16**.
6. **Assyrian Kings:** Every **O.T. reference** to an Assyrian king has proven correct.
7. **Luke's Census:** The census Luke mentions was often mocked, but it has been discovered that censuses did indeed take place during that time.
8. **Nazareth Decree:** A stone found in Nazareth in 1878 contains a decree from **Emperor Claudius** (A.D. 41-54) stating that graves should not be disturbed or bodies moved under **penalty of death**. Death seems a harsh punishment for this until one wonders if he factored the Rome riots of A.D. 49 (involving Jews and Christians) and the Jews' claim that Christ's body was stolen.
9. **Yohanan Ben Ha'galgol:** This **crucifixion** victim from A.D. 70 was found in 1968 with a **nail** through his ankles and evidence of his hands being nailed as well. His legs were **crushed** with a blow as well supporting the practice of doing so to hasten death.

## V. MESSIANIC PROPHECIES TESTIMONY

### A. THERE IS **NO SERIOUS DOUBT** TO JESUS' EXISTENCE

1. Historians & Archaeology confirms this
2. The issue then becomes was He an ordinary man or something much more?

### B. THE FINAL, AND MOST PERSUASIVE TESTIMONY, IS FOUND IN **MESSIANIC PROPHECY**

#### 1. **John 5:39**

2. There are over **300 Messianic Prophecies** in the Old Testament
3. What is the **probability** of just **eight** of these prophecies?
  - a. Peter Stoner "**Science Speaks**"
  - b. **Professor** of mathematics, science and astronomy
  - c. The odds of **one man** (of all who have lived) fulfilling just eight of the prophecies
    - i. 1 in  $10^{17}$
    - ii. 1 in 100,000,000,000,000,000
    - iii. Take 1 in  $10^{17}$  silver dollars.
    - iv. The pile would cover the state of **Texas two feet deep**
    - v. Mark one and **stir them** all up
    - vi. Blindfold a man and tell him go wherever he wishes, and to stop, **pick up a silver dollar** and declare it is the marked one
  - d. The odds of one man fulfilling **16** prophecies
    - i. 1 in  $10^{45}$
    - ii. The pile of silver dollars would make a sphere from the earth **30x past the sun**



# THE JESUS OF THE BIBLE

*What did others say about Jesus and what did He say about Himself?*

## I. THE CENTRAL ISSUE OF THE BIBLE

### A. **Acts 8:26-35**

1. "He preached Jesus to him"
  - a. Not archaeology
  - b. Not manuscripts
  - c. Not historian's quotes
  - d. Not the laws of probability
  - e. Not theology
  - f. Not religion
2. He preached the Person of Jesus Christ
3. Who is Jesus?

### B. **Luke 24:27,44**

1. Jesus preached Jesus
  - a. All of the O.T. points to Christ
  - b. Prophecy AND the rest

### C. **Acts 8:36** and **Luke 24:32**

1. The power of preaching Jesus
  - a. Salvation
  - b. Passion

## II. THE CRITIC'S CLAIM

OK, I accept that a man named Jesus lived.  
But I believe He was just a man. Nothing more.  
He was a good man—a good moral teacher.  
But He never claimed to be God nor did He try to start a new religion.  
His followers just took what He said and ran away with it.

## III. THE DISSECTION OF JESUS

### A. ATTEMPT TO SEPARATE THE "JESUS OF HISTORY" FROM THE "JESUS OF MYTH OR FAITH"

1. TV specials & magazine articles such as "In Search for the Historical Jesus"
2. The Jesus Seminar
  - a. Group of liberal scholars who set out in 1985 to separate fact from fiction in the Gospels.
  - b. The method = voting on each portion of text concerning its authenticity
    - i. Red bead = high level of confidence in its authenticity
    - ii. Pink bead = probably authentic
    - iii. Grey bead = possibly authentic, but probably not so
    - iv. Black bead = It is not authentic
  - c. 16% of the works of Christ scored red or pink
  - d. 18% of the words of Christ scored red or pink
3. We are left with a "smorgasbord Jesus"

## IV. THE WORDS OF CHRIST

### A. HIS "I AM" STATEMENTS

#### 1. **Exodus 3:13-14**

- a. "I Am" = *Yahweh* (or *Jehovah*)
- b. Denotes eternal existence
  - i. 'I exist, and I have always existed!'
- c. Denotes uniqueness
  - i. 'All those other gods are false - I alone am real!'

#### 2. **John 8:56-58**

- a. "Before Abraham was born, I am"
  - i. 'I am' = *ego eimi* (grk) = *Yahweh* (heb)
  - ii. "Before Abraham was born, *Yahweh*"
- b. **John 8:59** = Picked up stones according to **Leviticus 24:16**:

Moreover, the one who blasphemes the name of the LORD shall surely be put to death; all the congregation shall certainly stone him. The alien as well as the native, when he blasphemes the Name, shall be put to death.

#### 3. **John 10:11**

- a. "I am the good shepherd"
- b. **Psalms 23:1** = "The Lord (*Yahweh*) is my Shepherd..."

4. **John 8:12**

- a. "I am the light of the world"
  - i. Feast of Tabernacles = anticipated Messiah
- b. **Isaiah 60:19** = "*Yahweh* will be an everlasting light"
- c. **Psalms 27:1** = "*Yahweh* is my light and my salvation"

5. **John 14:6**

- a. "I am the way, the truth and the life"
- b. He is the only path to God

B. HIS CLAIM TO FORGIVE SINS

1. **Mark 2:5**

- a. "My son, your sins are forgiven"

2. **Mark 2:6-7**

- a. Blasphemy = claiming to be God
- b. Only God can forgive sins

3. **Isaiah 43:25** = "I am the one who wipes out your transgressions"

4. **Jeremiah 31:34** = "I will forgive their iniquity"

C. HIS CLAIM TO GIVE LIFE

1. **John 5:21**
  - a. The Son gives life to whom He chooses
2. **1 Samuel 2:6** = "Yahweh kills and makes alive"
3. **Deuteronomy 32:39** = "It is I who put to death and give life"

D. HIS CLAIM OF EQUALITY WITH THE FATHER

1. **John 5:16-17**
  - a. Claim to be working alongside His Father
2. **John 5:18** = He was making Himself equal with God

E. HIS CLAIM OF UNITY WITH THE FATHER

1. **John 10:30**
  - a. "I and the Father are one"
2. **John 10:31-33** = Stone for blasphemy - make yourself out to be God

F. HIS ARREST, CONVICTION AND CRUCIFIXION

1. **Mark 14:60-64**
  - a. "I am"
  - b. Death for blasphemy

2. **Matthew 27:41-43**

- a. Chief Priests, scribes and elders = "For He said, 'I am the Son of God'"

G. HIS AUTHORITY

1. **Matthew 5:21 + 22; 27 + 28; 33 + 34; 38 + 39; 43 + 44**

- a. "You have heard..." = Old Testament
- b. "But I say..." = Jesus places His words at least on par with O.T.

2. **Matthew 28:18,19**

- a. "All authority in heaven and on earth"

3. **John 13:34**

- a. "A new commandment"

V. THE WORKS OF CHRIST

A. HIS ATTESTING MIRACLES

1. Two Reasons for Christ's miracles

- a. Compassion (**Matthew 14:14**)
- b. Sign of His Deity

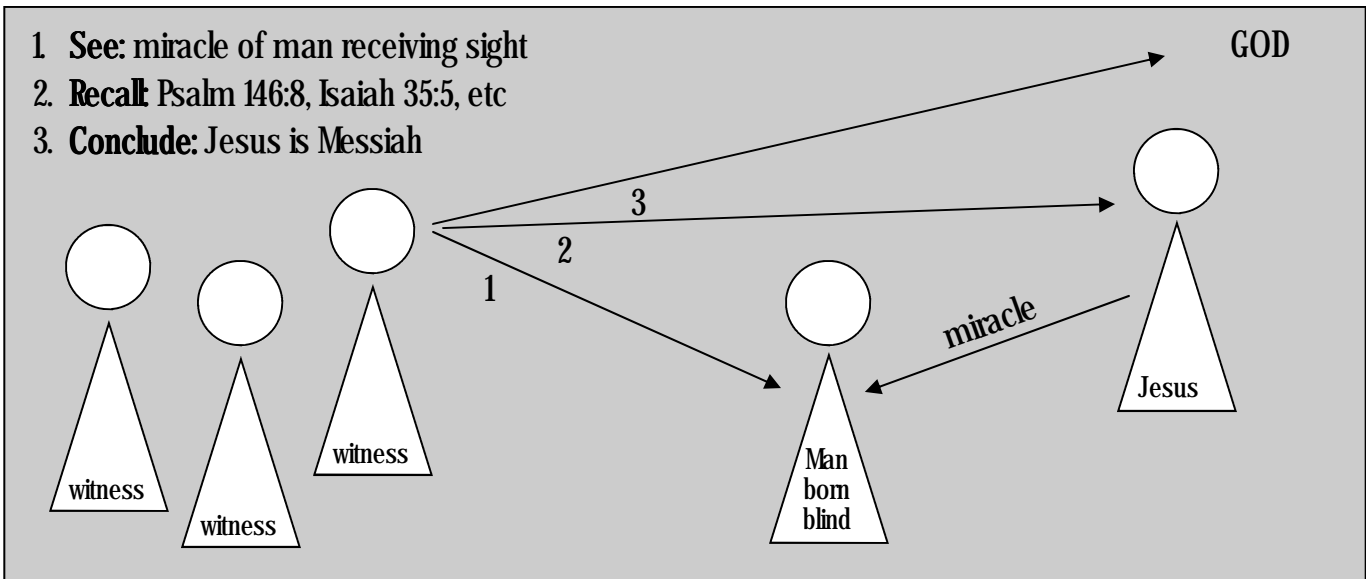
2. Seven attesting signs (miracles) recorded by John

- a. Water to wine (**John 2:1-11**)                      Power over quality
- b. Healing of official's son (**John 4:46-54**)                      Power over space
- c. Healing the man at the pool (**John 5:1-18**)                      Power over time

- |   |                       |
|---|-----------------------|
| d. Feeding the 5,000+ ( <b>John 6:1-14</b> )    | Power over quantity   |
| e. Walking on water ( <b>John 6:16-21</b> )     | Power over nature     |
| f. Healing the blind man ( <b>John 9:1-41</b> ) | Power over misfortune |
| g. Raising Lazarus ( <b>John 11:1-44</b> )      | Power over death      |

3. Example of the man born blind (**John 9:1-41**)

- a. **John 9:10** = How were his eyes opened? (How did this miracle happen)
  - i. **John 9:11** = Jesus did it
  - ii. **John 9:12** = Where is He?
- b. **John 9:32** = The uniqueness of the miracle
  - i. **Psalm 146:8** = Yahweh opens the eyes of the blind
  - ii. **Isaiah 35:5** = The eyes of the blind would be opened in Messianic Kingdom



B. HIS ACCEPTANCE OF WORSHIP

1. Worship is reserved for God alone
  - a. **Exodus 20:1-4; Deuteronomy 5:6-9, 6:13; Acts 10:25-26; Revelation 22:8,9**
  
2. On many occasions Jesus accepted worship
  - a. **Matthew 14:33** = Disciples worship Him in a boat
  - b. **Matthew 21:15-16** = Children worship Him
  - c. **Matthew 28:9** = Followers worship Him on Resurrection Sunday
  - d. **Matthew 28:17** = The 11 worship before the Great Commission
  - e. **Mark 5:6** = Worship from demon
  - f. **John 9:38** = Man born blind worships Him
  - g. **John 20:28** = Thomas worships Him
  
3. Jesus not only accepted worship, He also commanded worship
  - a. **John 5:23** = "He who does not honor the Son, does not honor the Father"

# THE MAIN PURPOSE OF THE BIBLE

*What conclusion about Jesus can we draw from the Bible?*

## I. WHAT WE KNOW

- A. The Bible is an accurate and reliable witness to the life of Jesus
- B. A man named Jesus lived 2,000 years ago
- C. This man named Jesus claimed to be God and did some pretty amazing things
- D. The million dollar question: **Is He God?**

## II. OUR THREE CHOICES

- A. C.S. Lewis; Josh McDowell
- B. Jesus being just a good man or moral teacher must be ruled out
  - 1. Would a good and moral man claim to be God?
- C. Therefore, Jesus must be either:
  - 1. A Liar
    - a. Jesus claimed to be God knowing that He was not
    - b. Do His ethical teachings support this?
    - c. Does His ethical behavior support this?
    - d. How do we explain His miracles?

2. A Lunatic

- a. Jesus claimed to be God thinking that He was God
- b. Does His behavior support this? Did He act like a lunatic?
- c. How do we explain His miracles?

3. The Lord

- a. Jesus claimed to be God and is God

### III. THE RESURRECTION

#### A. The Empty Tomb

1. Where is His body?

2. The Wrong Tomb Theory

- a. Because of the confusion and heartache, the disciples went to the wrong tomb.
- b. Problems:

1.) \_\_\_\_\_ (**John 19:38-42**)

2.) \_\_\_\_\_ (**Matthew 27:59-61**)

3.) \_\_\_\_\_ (**Matthew 27:62-66**)

3. The Swoon Theory

a. Jesus didn't die. He passed out from pain and exhaustion and then the coolness of the tomb revived Him.

b. Problems:

1.) \_\_\_\_\_ (**John 19:31-34**)

2.) \_\_\_\_\_ (**John 19:39**)

3.) \_\_\_\_\_ (**Matthew 27:65-66**)

4. The Stolen Body Theory A

a. The disciples stole the body so that they could claim that Jesus rose from the dead. (**Matthew 28:12-15**)

b. Problems

1.) \_\_\_\_\_ (**Matthew 27:65-66**)

2.) \_\_\_\_\_ (**Matthew 26:56**)

3.) \_\_\_\_\_

5. The Stolen Body Theory B

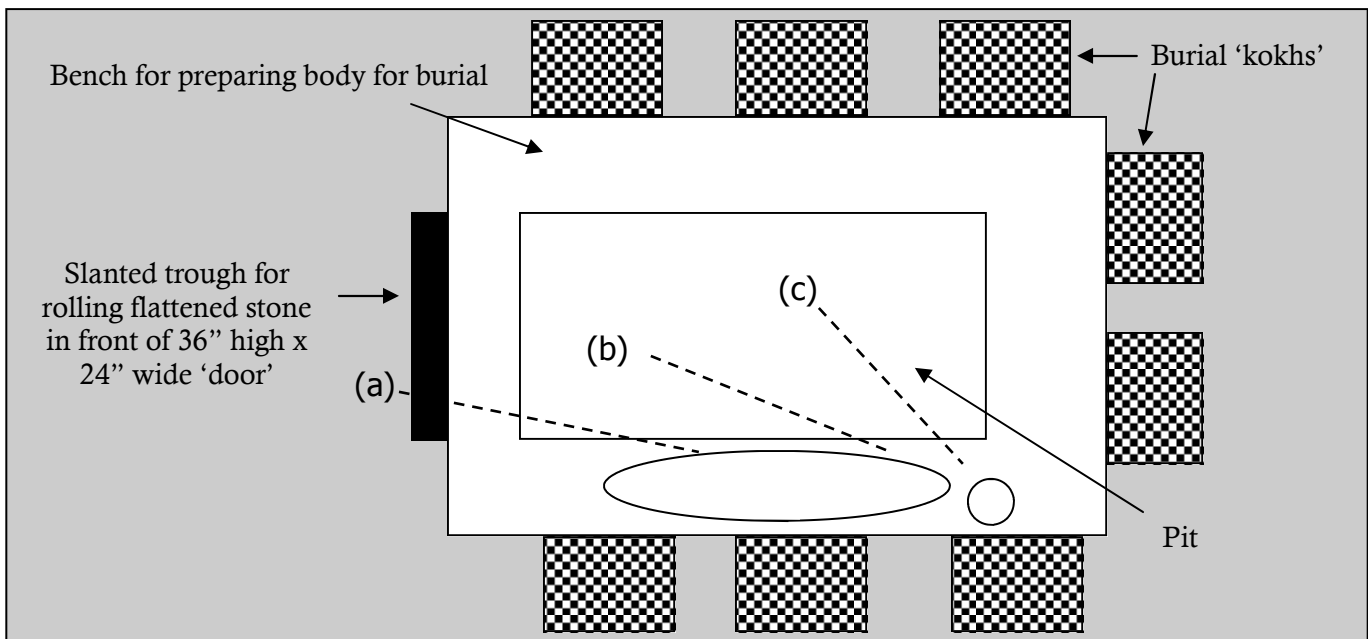
a. The Jewish leaders stole the body to make sure that the disciples could not.

b. Problem:

1.) \_\_\_\_\_

B. The Shape of the Linen Wrappings

1. Actually, the tomb was not empty
2. **John 20:1-8**
  - a. John glances (*blepei* - to see) from outside
  - b. Peter examines (*theori* - to gaze on, to contemplate) from inside
  - c. John looks (*eiden* - to see with perception) from inside
3. Were the burial clothes rolled or folded?
  - a. *entulizo*
    - i. "to wrap up in, envelope, roll or fold"
    - ii. "to roll in, wrap in, roll up, wrap together"
  - b. Fold
    - i. Deliberate patience - no signs of haste a robber would have taken
  - c. Rolled
    - i. Shows that Jesus passed right through the burial clothes



C. The Post-Resurrection Appearances

1. **1 Corinthians 15:1-8**

D. The Transformed Disciples

1. Before the resurrection

- a. Hiding
- b. Afraid
- c. Weak

2. After the resurrection (more specifically Pentecost)

- a. Public
- b. Bold
- c. Strong

3. Martyrdom

- a. It is believed that all of the disciples died a martyr's death (with the possible exception of John)
- b. Would 11 men suffer and die for a lie?

IV. What conclusion do you draw?

**Matthew 16:13-16**

# PROBLEM PASSAGES IN THE BIBLE

*How do we explain these problem passages in the Bible?*

## I. REMINDER

Biblical inerrancy concerns the original text.  
Perfect God gave a perfect Bible in its original form.

While we have seen that it has been passed down from generation to generation with extreme care, and because of this it is overwhelmingly reliable, there are still a few problem passages in the Bible that are worth examining.

## II. COPYIST ISSUES

- A. Some alleged errors are a result of copyist mistakes.
- B. There are a handful of these passages, most of which deal with numbers, spellings and word inclusion or exclusion.
- C. None of these passages concerns important theological matters
- D. Example: How many stalls of horses did Solomon have?
  1. **1 Kings 4:26**  
Solomon had 40,000 stalls of horses for his chariots, and 12,000 horsemen.
  2. **2 Chronicles 9:25**  
Now Solomon had 4,000 stalls for horses and chariots and 12,000 horsemen, and he stationed them in the chariot cities and with the king in Jerusalem.
  3. Was it 40,000 or 4,000?
    - 40 = 'rbym'
    - 4 = 'rbh'

### III. READING ISSUES

A. Some (perhaps most) alleged errors are not errors at all, but are indeed issues of not reading the full text, or just not reading carefully.

B. No error exists in these passages

C. Example: Were they to take a staff or not?

1. **Matthew 10:9-10**

“Do not acquire gold, or silver, or copper for your money belts, or a bag for your journey, or even two coats, or sandals, or a staff; for the worker is worthy of his support.”

2. **Mark 6:8**

...and He instructed them that they should take nothing for their journey, except a mere staff--no bread, no bag, no money in their belt...

3. Solution:

D. Example: How many times did the rooster crow?

1. **Matthew 26:34**

Jesus said to him, “Truly I say to you that this very night, before a rooster crows, you will deny Me three times.”

2. **Mark 14:30**

And Jesus said to him, “Truly I say to you, that this very night, before a rooster crows twice, you yourself will deny Me three times.”

3. Solution:

## PROBLEM PASSAGES

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E. Example: What was the inscription on the cross?

1. **Matthew 27:37**

And above His head they put up the charge against Him which read, “THIS IS JESUS THE KING OF THE JEWS.”

2. **Mark 15:26**

The inscription of the charge against Him read, “THE KING OF THE JEWS.”

3. **Luke 23:38**

Now there was also an inscription above Him, “THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS.”

4. **John 19:19**

Pilate also wrote an inscription and put it on the cross. It was written, “JESUS THE NAZARENE, THE KING OF THE JEWS.”

5. Solution:

\_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_

## IV. CONTEXT ISSUES

A. Some alleged errors are due to an incomplete understanding of the context of the passage—including geographical, historical, cultural and literary.

B. No error exists in these passages

C. Example: Did Jesus break the Sabbath (and thus sin)?

1. **John 9:14-16**

<sup>14</sup> Now it was a Sabbath on the day when Jesus made the clay and opened his eyes.

<sup>15</sup> Then the Pharisees also were asking him again how he received his sight. And he said to them, “He applied clay to my eyes, and I washed, and I see.” <sup>16</sup> Therefore some of the Pharisees were saying, “This man is not from God, because He does not keep the Sabbath.” But others were saying, “How can a man who is a sinner perform such signs?” And there was a division among them.

2. Solution:

D. Example: Was Jesus in the grave three days and three nights?

1. **Matthew 12:40**

“...for just as JONAH WAS THREE DAYS AND THREE NIGHTS IN THE BELLY OF THE SEA MONSTER, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.”

2. Jesus was crucified on Friday, and rose on Sunday

|                    |                    |
|--------------------|--------------------|
| Friday day (1)     | Friday night (1)   |
| Saturday day (2)   | Saturday night (1) |
| Sunday morning (3) |                    |

3. Solution:

**NOTE:** THIS IS AN IMPORTANT VERSE BECAUSE IN IT JESUS SUPPORTS THE HISTORICITY OF JONAH—SOMETHING MOST SKEPTICS RIDICULE EARLY AND OFTEN