

Why Believe In The Bible?

The Christian faith is usually explained using the Bible as the primary source. The Bible is used to explain creation, sin, heaven and hell, Jesus' death and resurrection and how to find a relationship with Jesus. This is how Christianity should be explained as Christians view the Bible as the word of God. The problem is, this approach assumes that the listener will believe that what the Bible says is true. It is fair then that some evidence is given about the Bible's uniqueness, how it was prepared, how the books were chosen to be in the Bible, who it was written by, and why it is reliable.

Unique?

To start with, the Bible was written by forty different authors over 1500 years involving forty generations of writers. The Bible was written by kings, poets, prophets and even fisherman. The Bible was written in 3 continents; Asia, Africa and Europe as well as in three different languages; Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek. Many controversial subjects are dealt with in the Bible in complete harmony with the overall theme of the whole book being "God's redemption of Humanity." The Bible continues to be the biggest selling book of all time and had been translated into 1280 languages by 1966. It is fair to say that there is no other book on the planet that is anything like the Bible.

How was it Prepared?

Books of the Bible have been written on three different types of materials. The first and oldest type of material is papyrus. Papyrus scrolls were made by pressing papyrus reeds together. The longest of these scrolls recorded is 144ft. The second type of material used was called parchment which was dried sheep skin and the third type was called Vellum which was calf skin. None of these original documents contain chapter and verse divisions. Each book was written as a whole. The first standardized chapter and verse divisions did not come until the 10th century A.D.

How Where the Books Chosen?

The process in which books were selected as part of the Bible is called canonization. The term 'canon' refers to the measurement used to include or exclude a book from the Bible. When a book was officially accepted, it was regarded as being part of the canon. The following is the criteria used to select and accept books to be part of the Bible.

1. Is it authoritative? (i.e. thus says the Lord.)
2. Is it prophetic?
3. Is it authentic? (If in doubt throw it out.)
4. Is it dynamic? (i.e. comes with transforming power of

God.)

5. Is it read, collected, used and accepted by the apostles and by the people of God.

This process had to happen for a number of reasons. The first reason was in 140 AD when a man named Marcion put together his own canon and began to propagate it. This forced church leaders to stop Marcion but also to determine an authentic canon. Secondly eastern churches were using books that weren't authentic and this was causing some problems again forcing an authentic canon. The third reason for the canon was the most serious. In A.D. 303, Roman emperor Diocletian declared the destruction of all sacred Christian books. Anyone possessing such a book would be put to death. This meant that there had to be no doubt which books were in the canon because no-one would be prepared to die for just a religious book that wasn't in the canon. This list of books in the Bible was finalized by Augustine and Jerome in the late fourth century and confirmed by the church council at Hippo in A.D. 393 and remains the same today.

It is important to understand that this process wasn't just a case of people's opinion deciding a book's fate. If a diamond and a cubic zirconium are shown to a jeweler, the jeweler will quickly be able to differentiate between the two. It is not the jeweler who decides which is which. It is the jeweler who recognizes the superior quality of the diamond. The same can be said of the process of canonization. It was men who recognized the difference between sacred literature to be included in the Bible and mere religious writings.

Reliability of the Bible.

The historical reliability of the Bible must be tested in the same way that all other historical literature is tested. To do this we must look when the original manuscript was written, when the earliest copy was written, what is the time span between the original and the copy and how many copies there are.

In order to give some perspective, we must look at some secular classical history. The writings of Caesar were written between 100 and 44 B.C. The earliest copy we have is dated at 900 A.D. leaving a time span of 1000 years between the original and the first copy and there are ten copies.

Plato's Tetralogies were written between 427 and 347 B.C. The earliest copy also dates 900 A.D. leaving a 1200 year span between the original and the copy and there are 7 copies.

The greatest evidence for a piece of classical history is in Homer's Iliad. This was written in 900 B.C. with the earliest copy dating 400 B.C. leaving only 500 years between the original and the copy and there are 643 copies in existence.

In comparison, the New Testament was written between 40 and 100 A.D. The first copy dates at 125 A.D. leaving a time span of 25 years and there are 24 000 copies in existence.

As well as this evidence we must also look at textual corruption. This requires looking at the copies of each document and finding differences. The less number of textual changes we find, the stronger proof we have for the documents reliability.

Out of 15600 lines in Homer's Iliad, 764 lines have corruptions. In the New Testament there are 20000 lines of which there are 40 lines that contain corruptions. So in comparison, Homer's Iliad is 5% corrupt as opposed to the New Testament which is 0.5% corrupt. It must also be noted that a simple spelling mistake is listed as a corruption.

It is interesting that most people accept the writings of Caesar, Plato and Homer as being genuine and authentic while doubting the New Testaments authenticity. With this evidence in mind, to state that the New Testament is not authentic and unreliable would require disregarding all classical history. If you believe In Caesar, Plato and Homer, you must also accept the Bible.

Conclusion.

It is fair to conclude that not only is the Bible the most unique book of all time, it is also the most reliable historical text we have on this period on Greco-Roman history and must be taken seriously.

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