



Lesson 1: The transmission of the Bible

“You would have to be **MAD** to not believe that what we have now is not what the original authors wrote back then”



Manuscripts

We have approx. 25 000 hand written copies, what we call manuscripts, of the New Testament (6000 in the Greek). We are waiting less than 100 years between the time that the originals were written and when our first manuscripts start to appear.



Average classical work

The average classical Greek writer has approx. 20 of their manuscripts that have survived today. We are waiting an average of 800 years between the time the originals were written for these authors and our first extant manuscript copies.

If we hold the Bible to the same standard as we do with other works of antiquity the Bible comes out on top every time. The New Testament, in particular, is the most widely attested and numerous document within the entire ancient world.



Video Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CJ3djRHcRM0&t=>



Differences

The side-effect of having so many manuscripts is that variants and differences creep into the text. Every hand written document has differences and the more copies you have the more differences there will be due to intentional insertions or human error. However, due to the method of preservation, both the variants and the original are preserved in the text. Based on the manuscript evidence being so numerous we are able to piece together the original text and pinpoint where insertions, additions, and deletions take place incredibly accurately.

It isn't the *number* of differences that make the difference, but rather, the *nature* of the differences (*quality over quantity*).

- 75% of all the differences in the manuscript tradition make no impact on translation out of the original languages;
- 24% of the differences in the manuscript tradition make no impact regarding the meaning of the text;
- This leaves 1% that actually make a difference.



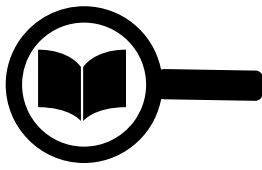
The New Testament is like a 10 000 piece puzzle. We currently have 10 100 pieces. When we start to put the pieces together and the picture emerges it is clear what pieces belong and what don't.



Video Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-OGiTAF1OTM&t=>

Book Recommendations: F.F. Bruce, *The New Testament Documents: Are they Reliable*, Elijah Hixson, Peter Gurry, and Dan Wallace, *Myths and Mistakes in New Testament Textual Criticism*





Lesson 2: The trustworthiness of the Bible

“Arguments against the trustworthiness of the Bible are **NULL** when the evidence is taken into consideration”



Names

When we look at the most popular Jewish names in the times and places that the New Testament claims to be written in and compare them with outside sources from the same times and places we find they match up every time. The top names in other ancient literature, like Josephus and the Dead Sea Scrolls, along with ossuaries (Jewish bone boxes) show similar patterns. When a name is popular it is followed up with a qualifier, i.e. “Simon called Peter,” or “Judas Iscariot,” to disambiguate *this* Simon from *that* Simon. When we compare the most popular Jewish names in antiquity with the New Testament we see that the top names in other literature match with the names that the New Testament lists with qualifiers.

This type of cross-referencing, particularly with names but also with geographical locations, plant life, and local details, shows us that the authors of the New Testament had to have either lived in those locations at the times they were writing, or did extensive research on people who had.



Video Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u0wpMeuVg-k&t=>



Undesigned Coincidences

An *undesigned coincidence* is an instance when you have one or more independent historical accounts and they interlock in such a way that would be unexpected if the story were simply fabricated wholesale. These type of details, particularly in the gospels and Acts, give us inadvertent support. When cross-referenced with one another and the details compared, we start to see the specifics fill out the stories.

Ex: Feeding of the 5 000: “why did Jesus ask Philip?”

- John tell us Jesus asks Philip where to buy bread (John 6:5)
- Luke tells us that this event happens in Bethsaida (Luke 9:10-11)
- John tells us Philip is from Bethsaida (John 12:21)

Both John and Luke tell the same story; Luke doesn’t mention Philip, but does tell us the location. John doesn’t mention the location but does tell us that Philip is a local of Bethsaida. So why did Jesus turn to Philip? He was a local. However, it is only by putting these things together that we can understand why Jesus speaks to Philip in John 6.



Video Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hl6prbqsUL8&t=>





Level of confidence

The biblical books don't come with the exact dates when they were written, but they do come with many names and places. These names and places can help give us an accurate picture of their claims within history. Unlike many other religious writings, the Bible talks about places we can find on a map, times we can compare with history, and names of people we can source in the timeline of history.



Learning more

As time goes on we discover more and more about the historical setting and situation of the people, times, and places the Bible talks about. As we continue to discover more documentation and dig-up more artifacts, the Bible is not discredited but validated. Learning, exploring, inquiring, and auditing the historical claims of the Bible has only helped to confirm, approve, and uphold its fundamental claims.



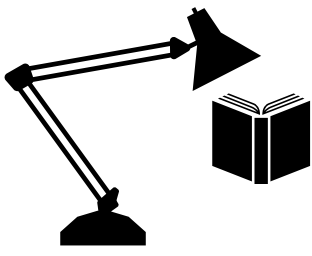
All of this points to VERISIMILITUDE — the appearance of truth, likelihood, and probability. Historians look for verisimilitude when trying to reconstruct the trustworthiness of a story, narrative, or document. The Bible as a whole has no lack of factors pointing to its verisimilitude!



Video Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F-57w8PZSPo&t=>

Book Recommendations: Peter J. Willaims, *Can we trust the Gospels?*, Richard Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses*, Lydia McGrew, *Hidden in Plain View*.





Lesson 3: Addressing objections to the Bible



Objection 1.1: “The Bible is just a translation of a translation of a translation”

Answer: Confuses *translation* with *transmission*:

- *Translation* is how one language is rendered into another
- *Transmission* is the history of how a written text travels throughout an area

The modern translation of the Bible you hold in your hands is rendered from the original Greek and Hebrew



Video Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JYVnH4f04RE>



Objection 2: “You don’t have the right books in your Bible - what about ‘the Gospel of Thomas,’ or ‘the Gospel of Mary’ that didn’t make it into your Bible?”

Answer: The only books that were written in the time frame of Jesus, by someone who knew Jesus or someone who knew someone who knew Jesus, are the 27 books of the New Testament.

- The other books are too late to have been connected with the characters of their namesake. I.e. the “Gospel of Thomas” was written at a time when we know Thomas to be dead. This follows consistently for all the other books.
- The other books show later embellishment and fabrications that cannot be historically verified.
- When looking at the **names** criteria of last session, these other books consistently give us the most popular names in different geographical locations at different times.
 - Example: Some give us the most popular names from Egypt in the fourth century.



Video Link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rYt2yiNd1Qg&list=PLNOXJdb0gACE5XVd2xekjNA5PuGT_NHqz&index=



Objection 3: “*This* specific English translation that I hold in my hand is the Word of God, any other translation is more inaccurate and / or corrupted.

Answer: We have the benefit of having a plethora of English translations, too many even. However, to hold to one over and above another shows not only a misunderstanding of how translation is done, but of the benefit of the clearness of the Bible and its ability to be rendered effectively in other languages.

- In one way the Bible does change over time - however, it changes in different versions of a particular language. The changes are for *clarity* not a sign of *corruption*.



There is a reason that Psalm 23 in 1066 read, “Drihten me raet, ne byth me nanas godes wan. And he me geset on swayth good feohland. And fedde me be waetera stathum” and doesn’t today - language evolves. The Bible is updated in its language so it is made understandable and effective, along with being updated in its textual basis over time as we learn more and more about what the original text looked like.



Objection 4: “The Bible is immoral”

Answer: Many of the immoral accusations of the Bible, when investigated, prove to be anything but. Nonetheless, if the accusation is being done by someone denying the existence of God than it makes it hard to make any type of objective moral objection to begin with.

- Ideas of “good” and “bad” require an objective standard to compare them to
- If we are merely molecules in motion, and the end result of a purposeless universe, than calling something objectionably “bad” makes no sense unless one has an objective standard to compare it to
- It is only by God giving us a standard that we can make absolute moral statements to begin with.



Video Link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Yb0UvaSW_dA

Book Recommendations: Andreas J. Kostenberger, Darrell L. Block, and Josh Chartra, *Truth in a Culture of Doubt: Engaging Challenges to the Bible*, James R. White, *The King James Only Controversy: Why do you trust modern translations?*





Lesson 4: Jesus' view of the Bible

Jesus has the highest view of Scripture

- John 10:35
- Matthew 22:29
- Matthew 4:4, 7, 10
- Mark 12:36
- Matthew 5:18
- Luke 24:27

“But regarding the resurrection of the dead, have you not *read* what was *spoken* to you by God?” - Matthew 22:31

- John 17:17



How do the scriptures see and understand themselves?

“All Scripture is God-breathed and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be complete, fully equipped for every good work.” - 2 Tim. 3:16-17

- Matthew 26:54
- Matthew 22:29
- Matthew 4:4, 7, 10
- Matthew 4:4 / Deut 8:3
- Acts 17:11
- Hebrews 4:12

“For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins *according to the Scriptures* and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day *according to the Scriptures*...” - 1 Cor. 15:3-8

