



**Why Scripture...?**  
**A Defense of the  
New Testament**

**The Essentials of Apologetics**

# Introduction

What are some common assertions about the Bible?

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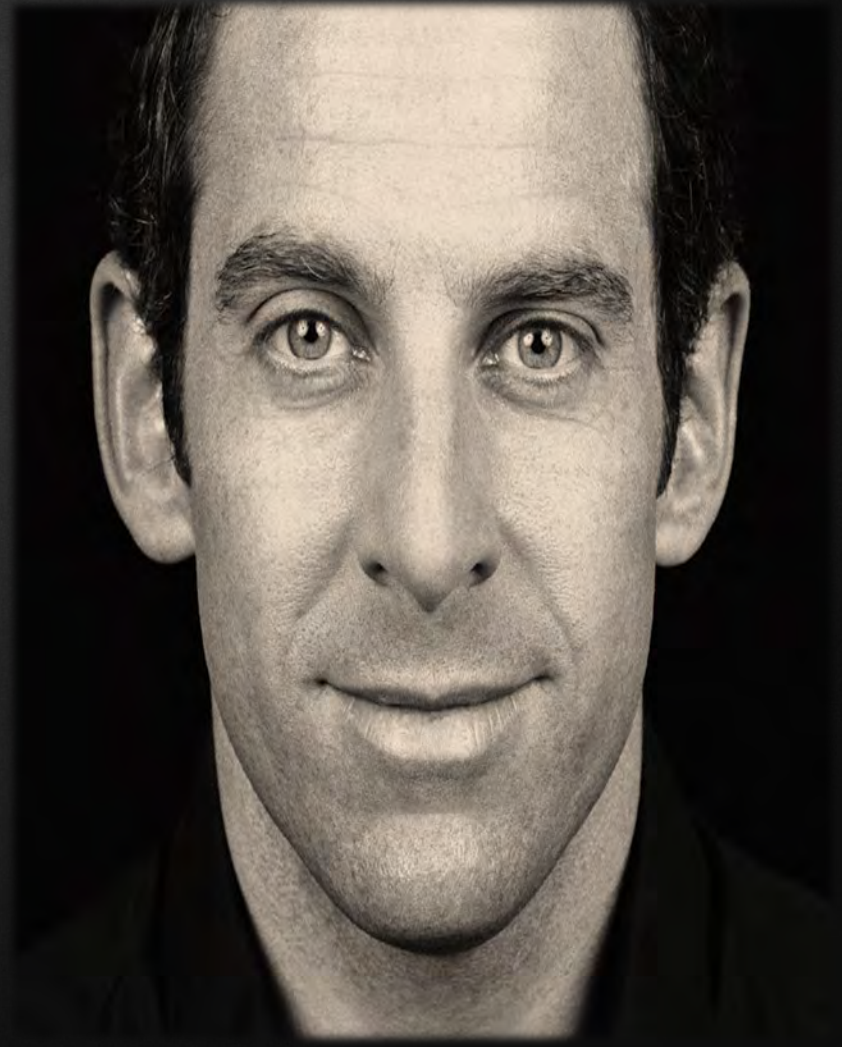


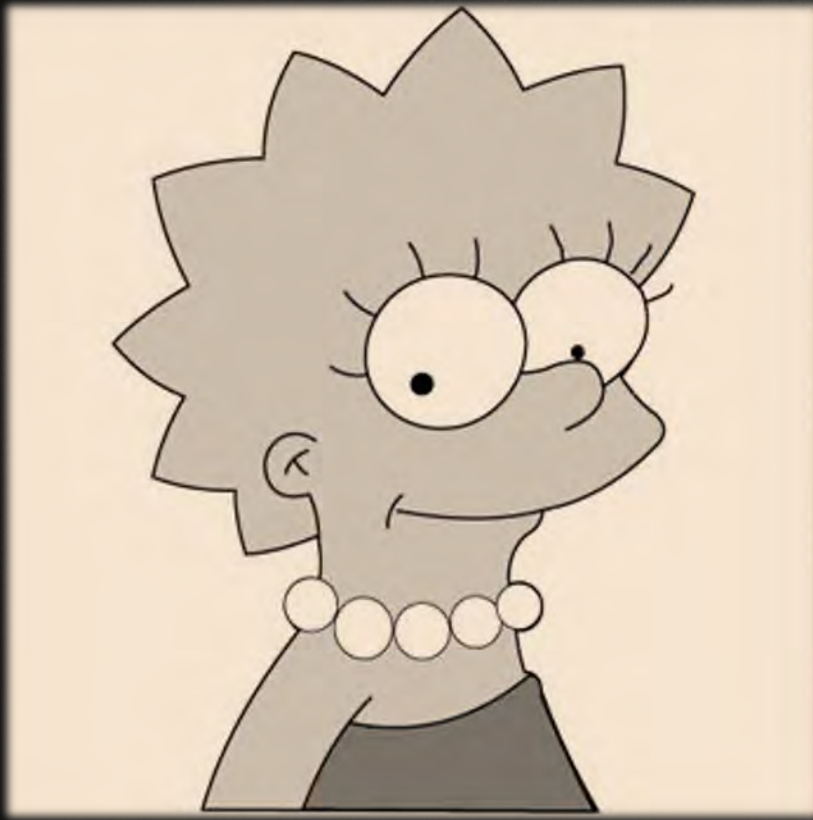
“If you believe that the Bible is real because of faith, we can't touch you ... they [Christians] pride themselves on believing things that are hard to believe in. They think God will bless them for that. But if you want history or fact in your Bible, you are so screwed”

–Penn Jillette

“Atheists are free to admit the limits of human understanding in a way that religious people are not. It is obvious that we do not fully understand the universe; but it is even more obvious that neither the Bible nor the Koran reflects our best understanding of it.”

– Sam Harris





“How do we know the guys who wrote the Bible just didn’t make all that stuff up?”  
– Lisa to Ned





In one sense, the Bible is a book of history that has recorded many events over a period of some 1,500 years. When we start to answer the question of if we can trust what the Bible says, we must first ask a key question of any other history book: **How do we know anything from history is true?**

# The Key Factor Needed For Historical “Believability”



**Eyewitness accounts** that were accurately and faithfully recorded by those who can be trusted.

# Determining Historical Truth

“There is an important difference between the scientific and legal methods for determining truth. The legal method does not ignore testimony or facts because they are not reproducible or testable. By a process of elimination and corroboration, the legal method allows history and testimony to speak for itself until a verdict is reached beyond a reasonable doubt and the balance of probability is achieved. I did not witness various battles that occurred through history and I cannot reproduce WWII so I must rely on documents and independent testimony to determine its plausibility. Certain kinds of tests are appropriate for different realms of thought.”

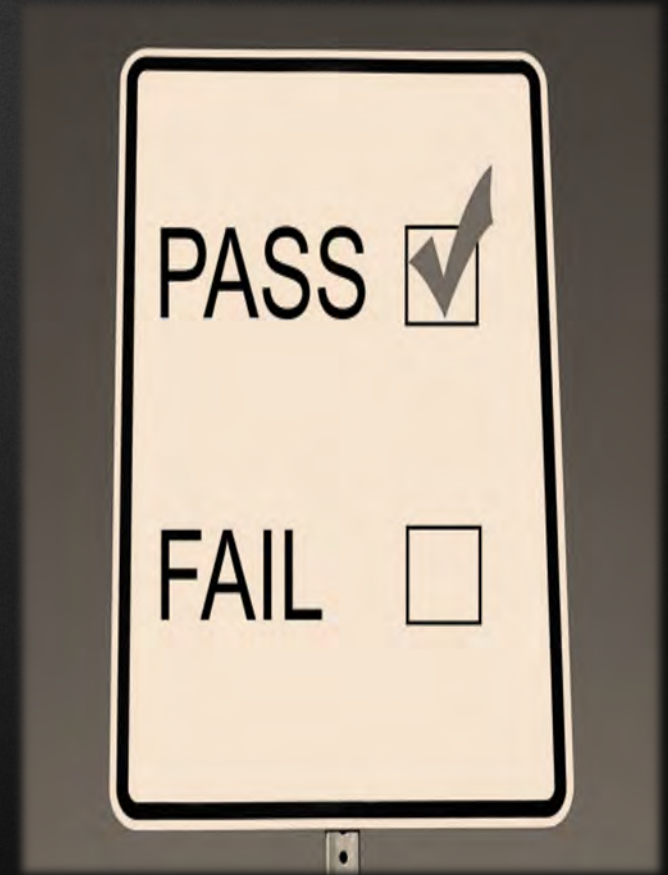
- Joe Boot





# How to Judge a Text's Historical Reliability

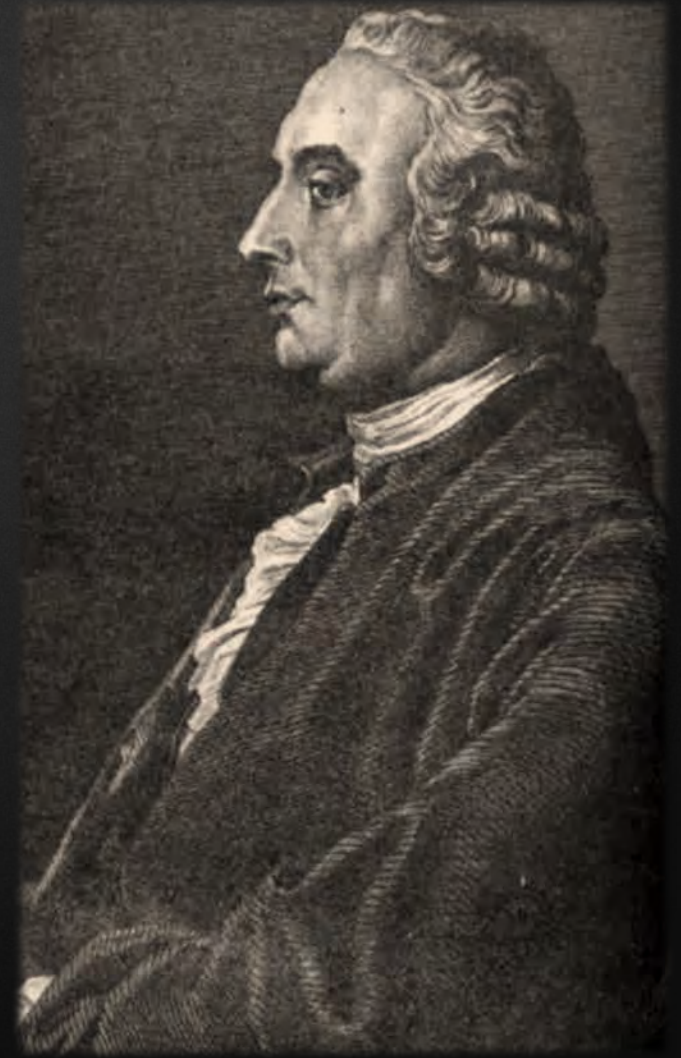
1. **Bibliographical Test** – how reliable are the manuscripts and how early is the dating?
2. **Internal Evidence Test** – are there multiple attestations, is the document free of contradictions, and do the accounts match?
3. **External Evidence Test** – is there external evidence that corroborates the document's testimony?



# Criteria for Witness “Believability” From Hume

1. Are the witnesses many in number?
2. Are the witnesses truthful?
3. Do the witnesses contradict?
4. Are the witnesses non-prejudicial?

- David Hume





# Why Trust the Bible?

How Does the New Testament Hold Up Under Historical Examination?

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# The Bibliographical Test – Why Care About Early Dating?



UNDERSTAND

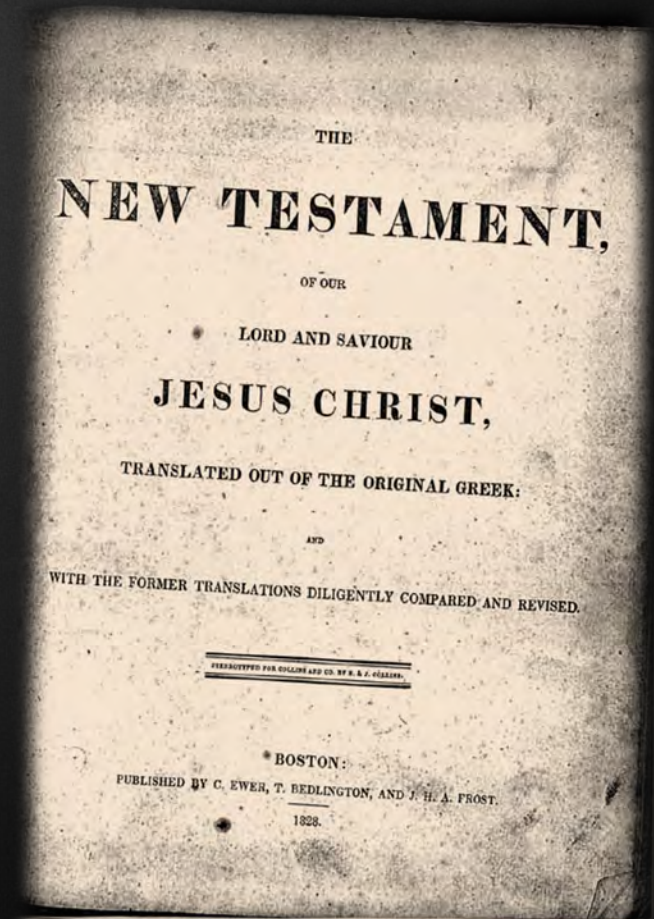
- Early dating means accounts were written close to the actual events.
- Early dating is important because eyewitnesses can refute written error.
- How 'early' does early need to be?
- Dr. A. N. Sherwin White, professor of ancient history, has shown (via the writings of Herodotus) that it takes more than two generations to pass before legend can corrupt a historical account.
- When Professor Sherwin-White turns to the gospels, he states that for the gospels to be legends, the rate of legendary accumulation would have to be **"unbelievable."**



# The Bibliographical Test – Dating the Gospels

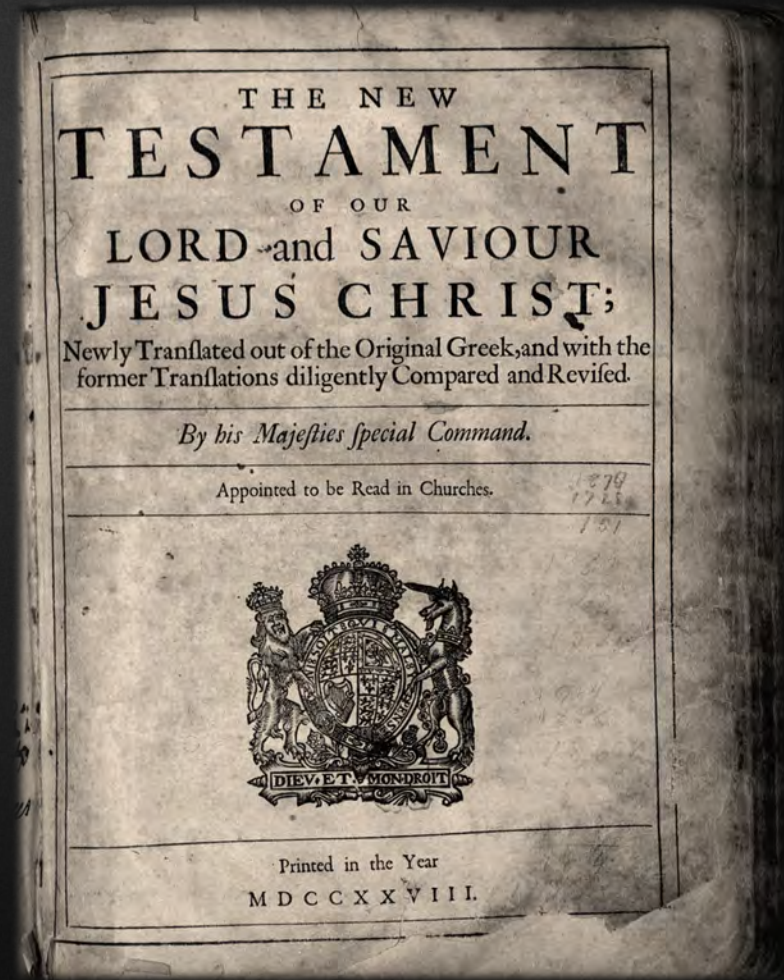
- **Matthew**: Written to Jewish believers; dated A.D. 42
- **Luke**: Written to Gentiles; dated A.D. 58-60
- **Mark**: Written to Roman/Gentile believers; dated A.D. 66-67 (probably earlier)
- **John**: Written to Christian believers; dated before A.D. 90

- Dr. David Alan Black, New Testament Scholar, *Why Four Gospels?*



“We can already say emphatically that there is no longer any solid basis for dating any book of the New Testament after about A.D. 80. In my opinion, every book of the New Testament was written by a baptized Jew between the 40’s and the 80’s of the first century (very probably sometime between about A. D. 50 and 75)”

– William F. Albright, Archaeologist

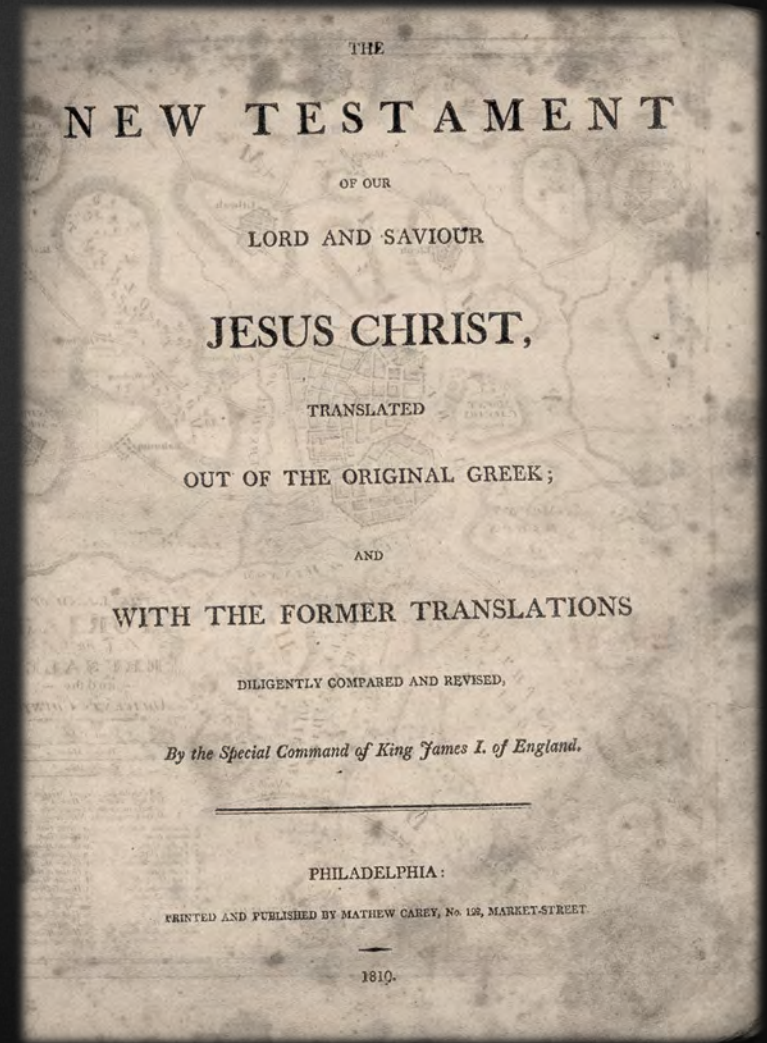




“The interval, then, between the dates of original composition and the earliest extant evidence becomes so small as to be in fact negligible, and the last foundation for any doubt that the Scriptures have come down to us substantially as they were written has now been removed. Both the authenticity and the general integrity of the books of the New Testament may be regarded as finally established.”

– Frederic G. Kenyon

Former director/principal librarian of the British Museum



# Citations from Early Church Fathers Help Prove Early Dating

Clement (c. A.D. 95)

- Matthew
- Mark
- Luke
- Romans
- 1 Corinthians
- Ephesians
- 1 Timothy
- Titus
- Hebrews
- James
- 1 Peter

Ignatius (c. A.D. 107)

- Matthew
- Mark
- Luke
- John
- Acts
- Romans
- 1 & 2 Corinthians
- Galatians
- Ephesians
- Philippians
- Colossians
- 1 Thessalonians
- 1 & 2 Timothy
- Titus
- Philemon
- Hebrews
- James
- 1 & 2 Peter
- 1 & 3 John
- Revelation

Polycarp (c. A.D. 110)

- Matthew
- Mark
- Luke
- John
- Acts
- Romans
- 1 & 2 Corinthians
- Galatians
- Ephesians
- Philippians
- Colossians
- 2 Thessalonians
- 1 & 2 Timothy
- 1 Peter & 1 John

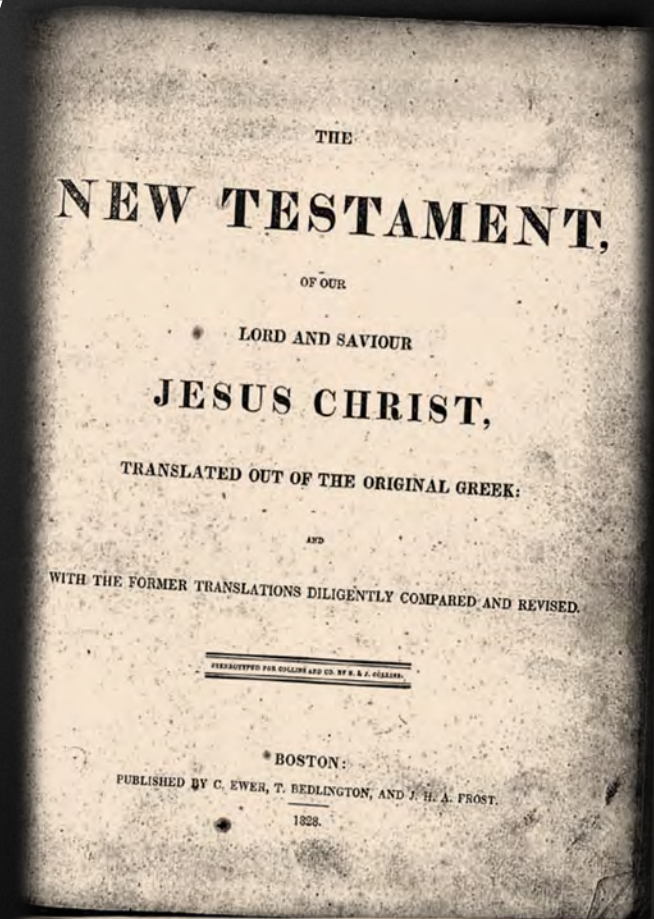


# Citations from Early Apologists Help Prove Early Dating

Writer	Lived	Gospel Quotes	Quotes from Acts
Justin Martyr	A.D. 133	268	10
Irenaeus	A.D. 125	1,038	194
Clement (alex.)	A.D. 150-212	1,107	44
Origen	A.D. 185-253	9,231	349
Tertullian	A.D. 160-220	3,822	502
Hippolytus	A.D. 165-235	734	42
Eusebius	A.D. 265-340	3,258	211
Totals	-	19,368	1,352

# More Evidence for Early Dating of the New Testament

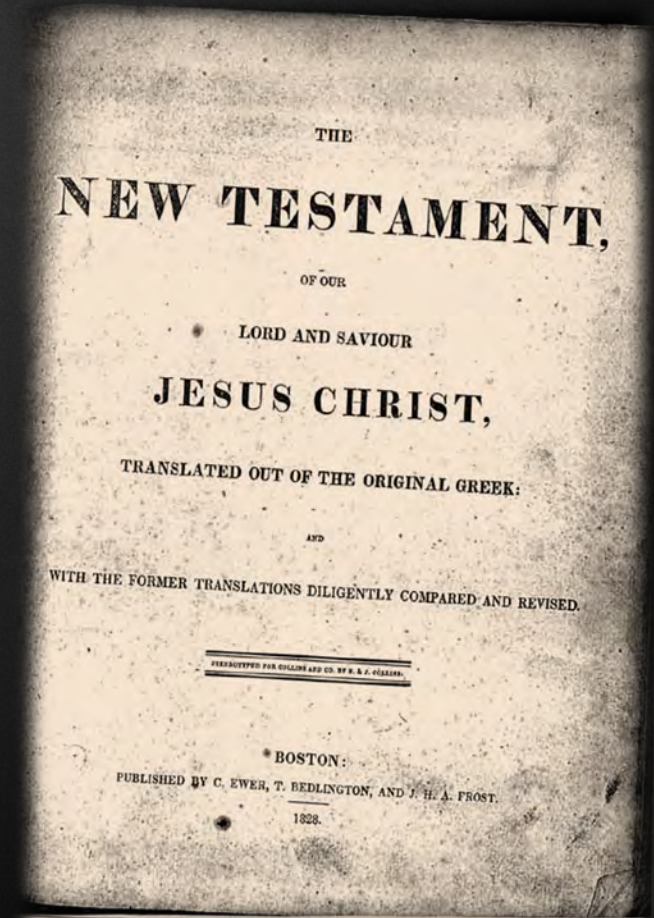
- Luke does not record the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 (a prophecy predicted by Jesus – you would think he would call attention to its fulfillment) or the death of Paul or the death of James (A.D. 62).
- The apostle Paul was martyred by Nero in A.D. 65-66, so his letters had to have come earlier.
- No mention of Nero's persecution of Christians in A.D. 64 when the large stadium was burned (Nero blamed the Christians).
- Rylands fragment of John found in Egypt dated A.D. 130, is proof that John's gospel – the latest of the four – was written in the first century.





# More Evidence for Early Dating of the New Testament

- Luke refers to the “former” book he wrote in Acts; must have been his gospel. Paul refers to Luke’s book as Scripture (1 Tim. 5:18) so it had to exist.
- We can reconstruct the entire New Testament except for 27 verses (mostly 3rd John) from quotations of early church fathers.
- Dead Sea Scrolls contain:
  - 4 fragments of Mark (dated A.D. 50)
  - 1 fragment of Acts (dated A.D. 60)
  - 1 fragment of Romans, 1 Timothy, 2 Peter, James (dated A.D. 70)





# The Internal Evidence Test – is the New Testament Consistent?

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All the gospels agree that....

- Jesus came to die for the sins of the world.
- Jesus chose twelve disciples to follow Him.
- Jesus lived a sinless and virtuous life.
- Jesus was opposed by the religious leaders of His day.
- Jesus openly delivered teachings to His disciples and crowds.
- Jesus worked miracles to validate His message and Person.
- Jesus was condemned, crucified, and died under Pontius Pilate.
- Jesus was placed in a guarded tomb for three days.
- Jesus was resurrected from the dead and appeared to His disciples.

# The Internal Evidence Test – is the New Testament Consistent?

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## Things you learn about Jesus from Paul....

- Jewish Ancestry
- Davidic Descent
- Virgin Birth
- Lived under the law
- Had brothers
- Had 12 disciples
- Had brother named James
- Lived in Poverty
- Was humble, meek
- Abused by Romans
- Teachings on marriage
- Love one's neighbor
- His deity
- His second coming
- The Lord's Supper
- Lived sinless life
- Death on cross
- Jews put Him to death
- Burial and resurrection
- Seated at right hand of God



# The External Evidence Test – Josephus

- Born A.D. 37; Jewish historian
- Wrote *History of the Jewish War and Antiquities of the Jewish People*.
- Events mentioned by Josephus: famine in the days of Claudius (Acts 11:28).
- People mentioned by Josephus: The Herods, Pilate, John the Baptist, Felix, Festus, Annas, Capiaphas, Ananias, James “the brother of the so-called Christ” and Jesus:
- *“Festus was now dead, and Albius was but upon the raid; so he assembled the Sanhedrin of the judges, and brought before them the brother of Jesus, who was called Christ, whose name was James, and some others, and when he had formed an accusation against them as breakers of the law, he delivered him to be stoned” – Antiquities 20.9.1*



# The External Evidence Test – Josephus

- Josephus mentions the death of John the Baptist:
- *“Now, some of the Jews thought that the destruction of Herod’s army came from God, and very justly, as a punishment of what he did against John, who was called the Baptist; for Herod slew him” – **Antiquities 18.5.2***





# The External Evidence Test – Josephus

- A disputed passage in Josephus' work mentions Jesus.
- Most scholars do believe that a Christian sympathizer tampered with the text, but they also believe Josephus did write about Jesus
- The accepted rendering is:
- *“At this time there was a wise man who was called Jesus. And his conduct was good and was known to be virtuous. Many people among the Jews and other nations became his disciples. Pilate condemned him to be crucified 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.”* – **Antiquities 18.3.3**



# The External Evidence Test – Tacitus

- Born A.D. 56.
- Senator and Roman historian.
- Records account of Christians and validates gospel history:
- *“Nero substituted as culprits and punished with the utmost refinements of cruelty, a class of men loathed for their vices whom the crowd styled Christians. Christus, from whom they got their name, had been executed by sentence of the procurator Pontius Pilate when Tiberius was emperor.” – **Annals, Book 15.***





# The External Evidence Test – Pliny the Younger

- Born A.D. 61.
- Governor of Bithynia in Asia Minor.
- Records account of Christians and validates belief of Christ's deity was long before council of Nicaea:
- *“They were in the habit of meeting on a certain fixed day before it was light, when they sang an anthem to Christ as God, and bound themselves by a solemn oath not to commit any wicked deed...”* – **Letters, Series 10.**



# The External Evidence Test – Lucian

- Born A.D. 125.
- Greek writer and critic of Christianity.
- Records account of Christians, Christ's crucifixion and worship:
- *“The Christians, you know, worship a man to this day – the distinguished personage who introduced their novel rites and was crucified on that account... these misguided creatures ... deny the gods of Greece and worship the crucified sage and live after his laws” – **The Works of Lucian of Samosata.***





# The External Evidence Test – Celsus

- Second century Greek writer.
- Critic of Christianity.
- Records account of Christians and worship of Jesus:
- *“Now if the Christians worshipped only one God they might have reason on their side ... But as a matter of fact they worship a man who appeared only recently. And their worship of this Jesus is the more outrageous because they refuse to listen to any talk about God, the father of all, unless it includes some reference to Jesus... .And when they call him Son of God, they are not really paying homage to God, rather, they are attempting to exalt Jesus to the heights.” – **Contra Celsum.***



# The External Evidence Test – The Talmud

- The Jewish Talmud is the primary text of Rabbinic Judaism.
- Records death of Jesus: *“On the eve of Passover Yeshua was hanged ... since nothing was brought forward in his favour he was hanged on the eve of the Passover!”* – **Sanhedrin 43a.**





# The External Evidence Test – Archaeology

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- The city of Nazareth was uncovered in 1955.
- Inscription to Caiaphas found in 1990 and dated to be A.D. 10-36.
- Name of Pilate (as prefect of Judea) found in 1961 and dated to be A.D. 26-37.
- Luke's mention of rulers in his Gospel and Acts: various ruler names discovered in Delphi, Corinth and other sites that validate dating and individuals mentioned.
- Book of Acts: historian C.J. Hemer has recorded hundreds of details in Acts that map to excavation findings.
- Crucifixion victim found in 1968 that matches perfectly with account given in Gospels (legs broken, etc.)
- Name of Erastus (Corinth city treasurer, Rom 16:23) found in 1929 in Corinth pavement with label "Erastus, curator of public buildings".

# The External Evidence Test – Archaeology

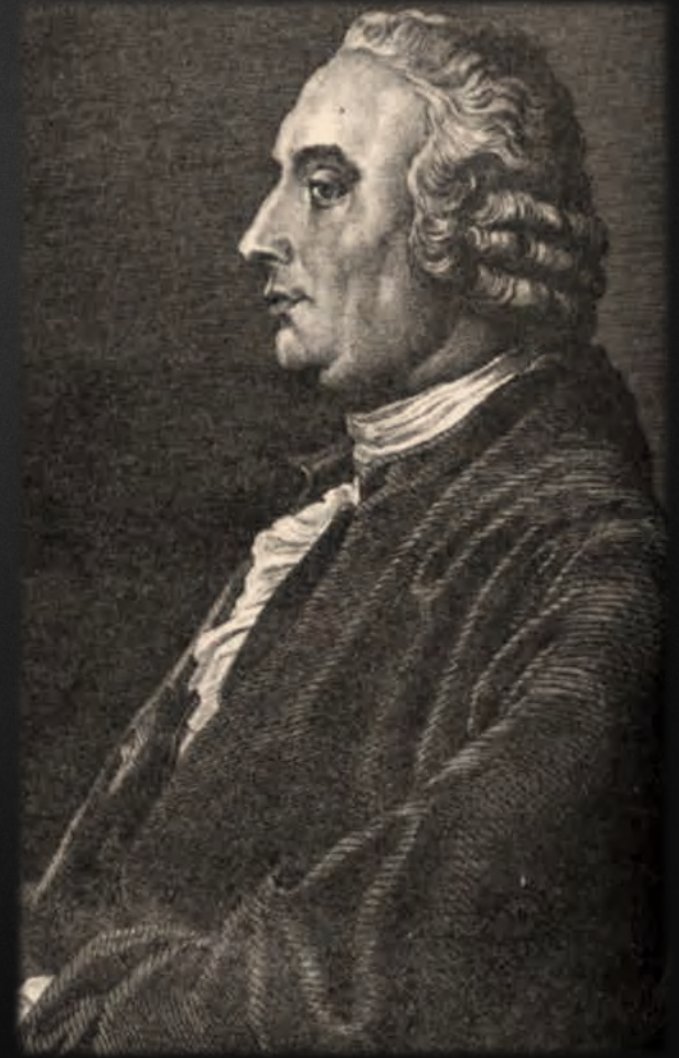


- After Jesus raised him from the dead, Lazarus fled from Judea to Cyprus to avoid persecution.
- He became bishop at the church of Larnaca.
- Archaeologists uncovered his sarcophagus in the 900's and found this inscription: **“Lazarus. Four Days Dead. Friend of Christ.”**



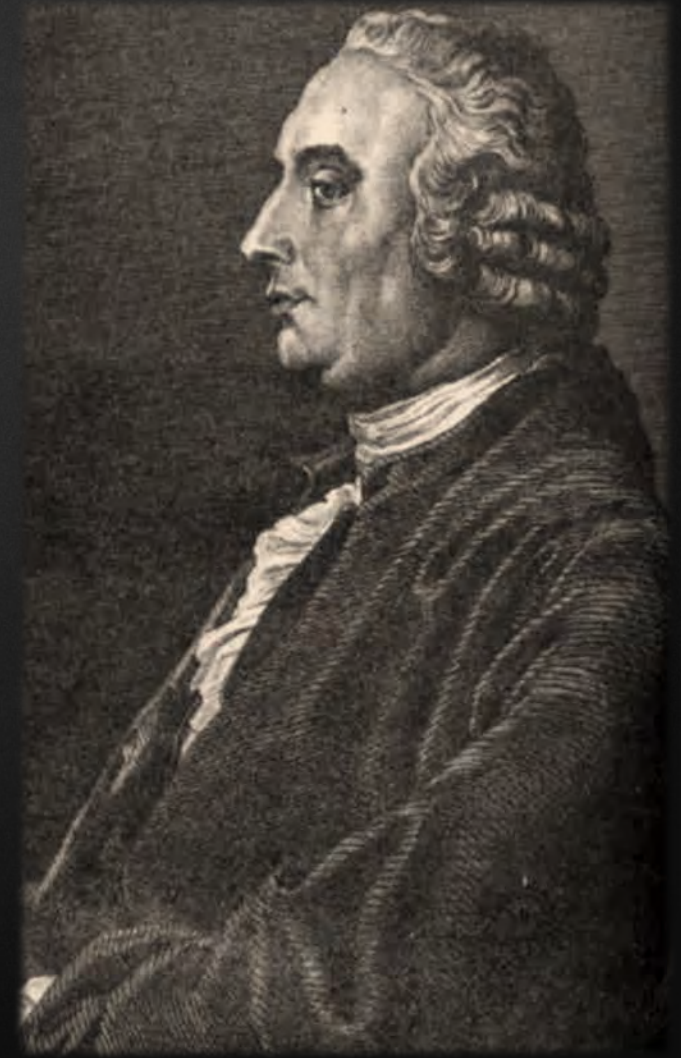
# David Hume's Test of Witnesses

- Are the witnesses many in number?
  - More than any other from antiquity.
- Are the witnesses truthful?
  - The authors were personally committed to the highest ethical standards of truthfulness and died for what they wrote vs. refute it.
- Do the witnesses contradict?
  - No. The accounts all agree on the core facts surround Jesus and events.
- Are the witnesses non-prejudicial?
  - Some apostles actually disbelieved at first (Thomas, James, Paul)



# David Hume's Test of Witnesses

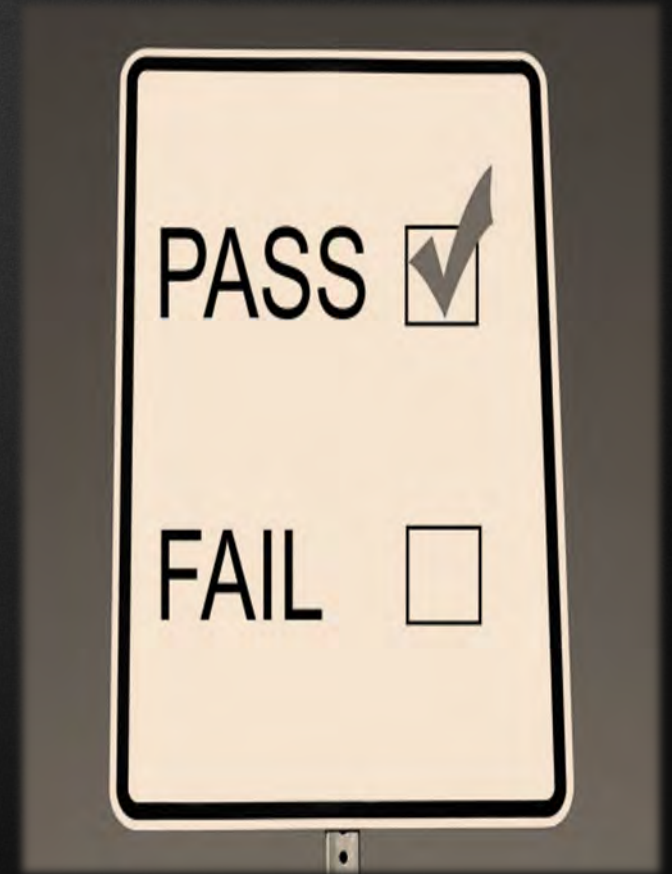
- The writers included embarrassing details about themselves (not smart, rebuked, cowards, doubters).
- The writers included embarrassing details about Jesus (he is deserted, not believed in, is crucified).
- The writers included events of the resurrection that seem odd (women as first witnesses, Jews' explanation of the empty tomb).
- The writers contain some divergent details (one angel or two – mark of no collusion).
- The writers do not embellish any of the miracles.
- The writers abandoned their sacred beliefs.
- The writers died for their testimony – no one dies for what they know is false.





# What Grade Does the New Testament Get?

1. **Bibliographical Test** – The New Testament documents have no rival in the ancient world in terms of number of manuscripts and early dating of those manuscripts.
2. **Internal Evidence Test** – The New Testament is free of contradictions and tells the same story regarding Jesus Christ.
3. **External Evidence Test** – Extra-biblical testimony and archaeology confirm the New Testament writer's facts.



# Top Objections to the Bible

What are some of the most common objections to the New Testament?

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# Objection #1

“The New Testament writers were biased. You can’t trust writings by those who were converted.”



- Why were they converted? What would cause devout Jews to abandon their beliefs and write what they did?
- What motive did they have to lie? What they received was mistreatment and death.
- Using such line of argumentation would rule out the writings of a holocaust victim who chronicled their experience in the death camps.

# Objection #2

“We don’t have the original texts / autographs of the New Testament. All we have are copies.”



- True, we have something better – thousands of early manuscripts that all agree on the events in question.
- Keep in mind that a single source could be polluted or corrupted whereas multiple copies that all tell the same story are a clearer witness to the actual events.
- The 5,300+ Greek manuscripts allow for scientific determination of what the true autographs contained.



# Objection #3

“There are contradictions and / or differences in the manuscript copies.”



- There are manuscript differences but none call into question one doctrine of the Christian faith.
- In 2005, Dr. Maurice A. Robinson, Senior Professor of Greek and New Testament at Southeastern did an exhaustive manuscript study and concluded that there was 92.2% stability in the text during the time skeptics such as Bart Ehrman assert the highest number of variants were introduced. Of the 7.8% in dispute, only 1% of the text has variants considered meaningful.

# What is a “Meaningful” Variant?

example

- An example of ‘meaningful variant’ is found in 1 Thessalonians 2:7.
- Paul either describes himself as ‘gentle’ or as ‘little children’ – one letter difference: *epioi* vs. *nepioi*.
- Does this call into question anything about the New Testament or about Paul that is ‘meaningful’ where the Christian faith is concerned?



# Objection #4

“The New Testament contains stories of miracles and we know that miracles just don’t happen.”



- Such an objection is typically caused by an anti-supernatural worldview that rules out miracles in an a priori manner.
- Other historians reference miracles also. Josephus cites Jesus as doing extraordinary feats (in his historically accepted version of Jesus in Antiquities); the Talmud refers to Jesus and His miracles as originating from sorcery, as does work from Celsus, the ancient critic of Christianity in the second century.

“For many readers it is precisely these miracle-stories which are the chief difficulty in the way of accepting the New Testament documents as reliable. To some extent it is true to say that the credibility of these stories is a matter of historical evidence. **If they are related by authors who can be shown on other grounds to be trustworthy, then they are worthy of at least serious attention by the historian.** . . . No doubt, the historian will be more exacting in his examination of the evidence where miracles are in question. But if the evidence is really good, he will not refuse it on a priori grounds.”

– F. F. Bruce



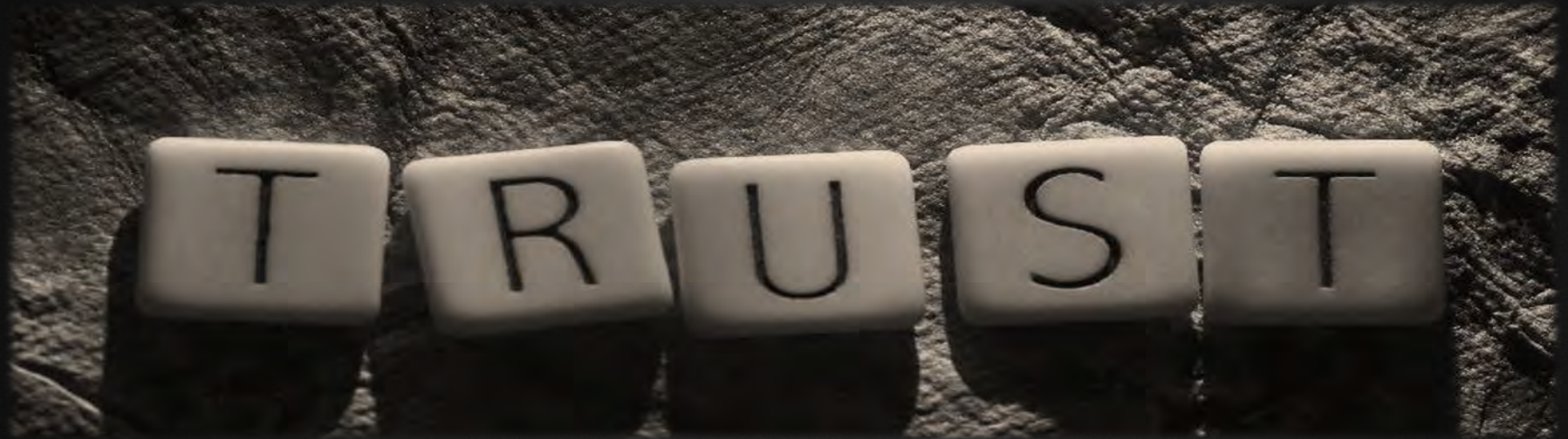


# Conclusions

Final Thoughts

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# Can We Trust the New Testament?



- Imagine sitting on a jury and hearing the testimony of nine eyewitnesses who all tell the same story.
- Then imagine their claims being backed up by valid historical methods, forensic science and external party confirmations.
- Then imagine all agree to die rather than recant their testimony.
- **What would you conclude?**



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Origins  
Why Something is Here

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