

ETT 2024 – Friday morning – How Do We Know That We Can Trust the Bible?

Preach the Word. In other words, preach what the Bible says. That's our directive. But, how do we know that we can trust the Bible. How did it get here?

The word "Bible" from the Koine Greek τὰ βιβλία, τὰ biblía or "the books." (The Greek word is the same as the Latin "biblia") The Bible contains 66 books. The Old Testament has 39 books. The New Testament contains 27 books.

The Bible is sometimes referred to as "Scripture," from the Latin term "scriptura," meaning "writing."

The Bible was originally written in three languages: Most of the Old Testament was written in Hebrew except for parts of Daniel and Nehemiah that were written in Aramaic. The New Testament was written in Koine Greek, a form of common Greek.

The Bible was written by approximately 40 different men (approximately because of debates about the authorship of some books) over a period of 1500 years (essentially the time of Moses, the author of the Pentateuch, to 92-96 AD, the time of the Revelation).

Yet, they're in agreement with each other, leading to the concept of inspiration and the evidence of one unifying author, the Holy Spirit of God, behind it all. Even though the Bible addresses many very controversial topics, the writers are in unity, even across millennia.

The Bible is divided in two large sections, based on pre-Christ Jewish history and post-Christ church history. The division between the Old and New Testaments is a literary division. But the beginning of the NT is still recording events that occurred under the Old Covenant.

(Even though the words Testament and Covenant are very similar: The Hebrew term for covenant is *berit*, meaning "to bond or fetter." It is translated into the Greek as *syntheke*, "binding together" or *diatheke*, "will, testament.")

Old Testament Canon

can·on /'kanəən/ Noun--a collection or list of sacred books accepted as genuine.

The Bible itself testifies to the historical development of its own canon. The earliest writing of the Word of God was when God wrote the Ten Commandments with His own finger. Written in Hebrew, the specific language spoken by the people to whom God was communicating. So, God's words are for the purpose of revealing Himself to particular people.

So, the first written words from YHWH that the Hebrews had were the tablets of stone. God then commanded Moses and he wrote and kept track of the movements and commands given to Israel.

Exod. 24:1-4 -- Then He said to Moses, "Come up to the LORD, you and Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel, and you shall worship at a distance. [2](#) Moses alone, however, shall approach the LORD, but they shall not approach, nor shall the people come up with him." [3](#) Then Moses came and reported to the people all the words of the LORD and all the ordinances; and all the people answered with one voice and said, "All the words which the LORD has spoken we will do!" [4](#) And Moses wrote down all the words of the LORD. Then he got up early in the morning, and built an altar at the foot of the mountain with twelve memorial stones for the twelve tribes of Israel.

Exod. 34:27-28 -- Then the LORD said to Moses, "Write down these words, for in accordance with these words I have made a covenant with you and with Israel." [28](#) So he was there with the LORD for forty days and forty nights; he did not eat bread or drink water. And He wrote on the tablets the words of the covenant, the Ten Commandments.

Numbers 33:1-2 -- These are the journeys of the Israelites when they came out of the land of Egypt by their divisions under the leadership of Moses and Aaron. [2](#) At the LORD's command, Moses recorded the stages of their journey. These are the stages listed by their starting points:

Deuteronomy 31:24-26 -- When Moses had finished writing in a book the words of this law from beginning to end, he gave this command to the Levites who carried the ark of the covenant of the LORD: [26](#) "Take this Book of the Law and place it beside the ark of the covenant of the LORD your God, so that it may remain there as a witness against you.

So, the earliest writing about God was preserved along with the other religious furniture. Then Joshua wrote:

Josh. 24:25-27 -- So Joshua made a covenant with the people that day, and made for them a statute and an ordinance in Shechem. [26](#) And Joshua wrote these words in the Book of the Law of God; and he took a large stone and set it up there under the oak that was by the sanctuary of the LORD. [27](#) Then Joshua said to all the people, “Behold, this stone shall be a witness against us, because it has heard all the words of the LORD which He spoke to us; so it shall be a witness against you, so that you do not deny your God.”

Consequently, Joshua is the next book in the OT. Then others, usually prophets, wrote additional words from God.

1 Samuel 10:25 -- Then Samuel told the people the ordinances of the kingdom, and wrote *them* in the book, and placed *it* before the LORD. And Samuel sent all the people away, each one to his house.,

1Chron 29:29 -- Now the acts of King David, from the first to the last, are written in the chronicles of Samuel the seer, in the chronicles of Nathan the prophet, and in the chronicles of Gad the seer.,

Likewise the actions of the kings of Judah and Israel were recorded in books, it was all written down.

2Chron 20:34 -- Now the rest of the acts of Jehoshaphat, first to last, behold, they are written in the annals of Jehu the son of Hanani, which is recorded in the Book of the Kings of Israel.,

2Chron. 26:22 -- As for the rest of the acts of Uzziah, from beginning to end, they are recorded by the prophet Isaiah son of Amoz.

2Chron. 32:32 -- As for the rest of the acts of Hezekiah and his deeds of loving devotion, they are indeed written in the vision of the prophet Isaiah son of Amoz in the Book of the Kings of Judah and Israel.

And the prophets were told to write:

Jeremiah 30 -- **1** This is the word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD: **2** “This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: ‘Write in a book all the words that I have spoken to you. **3** For behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will restore from captivity My people Israel and Judah, declares the LORD. I will restore them to the land that I gave to their fathers, and they will possess it.’”

The Old Testament was preserved because it was given to a particular people group who protected and preserved it with appropriate reverence.

The Bible is both history and insight into what God is doing through these various events. The books are added by prophets who not only wrote about what happened, but they provided additional information concerning the background and spiritual implications of what occurred.

Old Testament canon ended around 435 BC with the completion of Malachi (currently the last book in the OT).

The Intertestamental Books

The Jews continued keeping history, but they had no words from prophets. So, the history is recorded (collectively referred to as the apocrypha -- "hidden", "esoteric", "spurious", "of questionable authenticity", from the Greek ἀπόκρυφα, meaning “those hidden away”), but not counted as Scripture because they did not have imprimatur of prophets who heard from God.

1Maccabees 4:45-46 (@164 BC) -- And a good counsel came into their minds, to pull it down: lest it should be a reproach to them, because the Gentiles had defiled it; so they threw it down. And they laid up the stones in the mountain of the temple in a convenient place, till there should come a prophet, and give answer concerning them.”

1Mac. 9:27 (160 BC) -- So there was great distress in Israel, the worst since the time when prophets ceased to appear among them.

14:41 - Therefore, the Jews and their priests are happy to have Simon and his descendants as their leaders and High Priests, until a true prophet appears.

Josephus (Jewish historian) 39-100 AD -- **Against Apion 1:38-42** *Flavius Josephus Against Apion*, translated by William Whiston (University of Cambridge, 1736).

For we have not an innumerable multitude of books among us, disagreeing from and contradicting one another, [as the Greeks have,] but only twenty-two books, which contain the records of all the past times; which are justly believed to be divine; and of them five belong to Moses, which contain his laws and the traditions of the origin of mankind till his death. This interval of time was little short of three thousand years; but as to the time from the death of Moses till the reign of Artaxerxes king of Persia, who reigned after Xerxes, the prophets, who were after Moses, wrote down what was done in their times in thirteen books. The remaining four books contain hymns to God, and precepts for the conduct of human life. It is true, our history hath been written since Artaxerxes very particularly, but hath not been esteemed of the like authority with the former by our forefathers, because there hath not been an exact succession of prophets since that time; and how firmly we have given credit to these books of our own nation is evident by what we do; for during so many ages as have already passed, no one has been so bold as either to add anything to them, to take anything from them, or to make any change in them; but it is become natural (or, an instinct) to all Jews immediately, and from their very birth, to esteem these books to contain Divine doctrines (or “decrees of God”), and to persist in them, and, if occasion be willingly to die for them.

So, we see that around 95-100 AD Josephus states that the contents of the Old Testament were written between the time of Moses and the days of Artaxerxes I (king of Persia from 465 to 424 BC), which places it in the time of Esther (in the time of Ezra and Nehemiah).

{{According to Josephus, the Jews recognized 22 books as the Scriptures of the Jewish Bible:

- The Law: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy: 5 books
- The Prophets: Joshua, Samuel, Kings, Isaiah, Jeremiah- Lamentations, Ezekiel, The book of the twelve (Hosea to Malachi): 7 books
- The Writings: Psalms, Proverbs, Job, Song of Songs, Ruth- Judges, Ecclesiastes, Esther, Daniel, Ezra-Nehemiah, Chronicles: 10 books

In Protestant Bibles, many of the books are divided—Samuel becomes 1 and 2 Samuel, Chronicles becomes 1 and 2 Chronicles, Ezra and Nehemiah are separate books, as are Ruth and Judges.}}

And, of course, Jesus and NT teachers continually quote from the OT over 296 times, but they never cite any books of the Apocrypha as having any authority.

So the method for preserving the OT was to have those books guarded by a particular, relatively small group of people who considered them God's word to them specifically, written in a language specific to them.

The Hebrew Bible, or Tanakh, contains twenty-four books divided into three parts; the five books of the Torah ("teaching" or "law"), the Nevi'im ("prophets"), and the Ketuvim ("writings").

To add or subtract from God's word would be to prevent God's people from obeying him fully. (Grudem) It is a way of keeping people from being able to obey all the instruction that God has intended for His people.

The New Testament

None of the original manuscripts of the NT currently exist. However, we have in excess of 5600 early Greek manuscripts and fragments, some dating back to the early Second Century.

And that's multitudinously more than any other ancient writing, even the stuff that we consider authoritative. The NT documents are better preserved and more numerous (with much shorter timespans between their writing and our earliest copies) than any other ancient writings. And since they are so numerous, they can be cross checked for accuracy ... and they are very consistent. That process is known as "textual criticism."

In 200 AD, an early church father named Tertullian wrote that the churches in Corinth, Ephesus, Phillipi, Thessalonica, and Rome still had original documents written by Paul and other disciples. At that time, many of the documents would have been more than 130 years old. That's an indication of the importance the

early church put upon preserving the writings of Paul and the disciples. And those early documents were copied repeatedly.

There are thousands more New Testament Greek manuscripts than any other ancient writing. The internal consistency of the New Testament documents is about 99.5% textually pure. That is an amazing accuracy. In addition, there are over 19,000 copies in the Syriac, Latin, Coptic, and Aramaic languages. The total supporting New Testament manuscript base is over 24,000.

Almost all biblical scholars agree that the New Testament documents were all written before the close of the First Century. If Jesus was crucified in 30 A.D., then that means that the entire New Testament was completed within 70 years. This is important because it means there were plenty of people around when the New Testament documents were penned who could have contested the writings. In other words, those who wrote the documents knew that if they were inaccurate, plenty of people would have pointed it out. But, we have absolutely no ancient documents contemporary with the First Century that contest the New Testament texts.

Furthermore, another important aspect of this discussion is the fact that we have a fragment of the gospel of John that dates back to around 29 years from the original writing (John Rylands Papyri 125 A.D.). This is extremely close to the original writing date. This is simply unheard of in any other ancient writing and it demonstrates that the Gospel of John is a First Century document

The New Testament is traditionally divided into: Gospels, History, Epistles (Letters), and Prophecy.

Gospels: Matthew, Mark, Luke, John

History: Acts

Epistles: Romans, Titus, 1Corinthians, 2Corinthians, Galatians, Hebrews, Ephesians, James, Philippians, 1Peter, 2Peter, Colossians, 1John, 2John, 3John, 1Thessalonians, 2Thessalonians, Jude, 1Timothy, 2Timothy

Prophecy: Revelation

Christian Bibles range from the sixty-six books of the Protestant canon to the eighty-one books of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church canon. But, the New Testament is the same for all Christian churches, containing those twenty-seven books.

So why should we trust it? Internal objective proof: Like **Prophecy**

Encyclopedia of Biblical Prophecy, by J. Barton Payne, lists 1,239 prophecies in the Old Testament, and 578 prophecies in the New Testament. That works out to a total of 1,817 prophecies. Those prophecies take up 8,352 of the Bible's verses. So, because there are 31,124 verses in the Bible, 8,352 verses equals about 27 percent (26.83) – meaning that roughly one-quarter of the Bible is prophetic.

Prophecy is a unique characteristic of the Bible. No other major religious literature contains prophecy on par with what the Bible declares.

Principle: *Prophecy only works if the future is definite.*

Prophecy is so central to the Bible that Deuteronomy 18:21-22 says, “And if you say in your heart, ‘How may we know the word that the Lord has not spoken?’ — when a prophet speaks in the name of the Lord, if the word does not come to pass or come true, that is a word that the Lord has not spoken; the prophet has spoken it presumptuously. You need not be afraid of him.”

So God is concerned for the accuracy of His word.

Prophecy allows you to check it. If it's god's word, it can withstand scrutiny.

"Behold, the former things have come to pass, And new things I declare; Before they spring forth I tell you of them." (Isaiah 42:9)

"Remember the former things of old, For I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like Me, Declaring the end from the beginning, And from ancient times things that are not yet done, Saying, 'My counsel shall stand, And I will do all My pleasure'." (Isaiah 46:9-10)

"Now I tell you before it comes, that when it does come to pass, you may believe that I am He." (John 13:19)

Peter makes the point that accurate prophecy must come from God.

2Pet. 1:20-2:3 -- But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation, for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God. But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will also be false teachers among you, who will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing swift destruction upon themselves. And many will follow their sensuality, and because of them the way of the truth will be maligned; and in their greed they will exploit you with false words; their judgment from long ago is not idle, and their destruction is not asleep.

Point being: If the bible accurately fortells the future, it must be the word of God and is ultimately trustworthy. Like: *Messianic Prophecy*

The Bible contains many Old Testament prophecies concerning the Messiah to come. By some counts, there are over 400 prophecies in the Old Testament that point to the coming Messiah, His life, and His death. According to the New Testament, Jesus of Nazareth perfectly fulfilled every one of them. The odds of someone doing are astronomical. And, if it's true, it's certainly evidence that the Bible is God's word. You can trust it.

Isaiah made his prophecy 150 years before Cyrus was born, 180 years before Cyrus performed any of these feats and 80 years before the Jews were taken into exile. (and he did, eventually, perform them all). History tells us that in 538 BCE Cyrus ascended to power and signed the two edicts of restoration.

Now, either the authors of the Bible (if it's fake) got really lucky, or there is in fact divinity at the heart of this book.

Daniel predicted the rise and fall of the nations that would follow Babylon, occupy that same territory, and oppress the children of Israel: Medo-Persia, Greece, Rome. He likened Medo-Persia to a bear that rose up on one side, fulfilled as Cyrus the Persian became more powerful than Darius the Mede. Daniel likened the first king of Greece to a leopard with wings, describing the speed and ferocity of Alexander the Great. But, Daniel also accurately predicted that Alexander's power would not go to his progeny, but to four generals.

And that's exactly what happened.

Some 400 years before crucifixion was invented, both Israel's King David and the prophet Zechariah described the Messiah's death in words that perfectly depict that mode of execution. Further, they said that the body would be pierced and that none of the bones would be broken, contrary to customary procedure in cases of crucifixion (Psalm 22 and 34:20; Zechariah 12:10). Again, historians and New Testament writers confirm the fulfillment: Jesus of Nazareth died on a Roman cross, and his extraordinarily quick death eliminated the need for the usual breaking of bones. A spear was thrust into his side to verify that he was, indeed, dead.

So, since the Bible is verifiably true – which means that it is indeed the word of God, and therefore the best verification of itself, the best defense of itself and the best explanation of itself. The word is the best source for knowledge of God, the revelation of God's will, and the expectations placed on all those whom He has elected and called.

The Bible is its own best authority.

The Scriptures cannot be broken (destroyed or dissolved), according to Jesus in John 10:35.

One of the most common phrases in Davidic / Psalmic literature is “According to thy word”

John 8:43 -- Jesus said, “Why do you not understand my speech? Because you cannot hear my word.”

Mark 8:38 -- If anyone is ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him when he comes in his Father's glory with the holy angels."

Hebrews 3:7 – Therefore, just as the Holy Spirit says, TODAY IF YOU HEAR HIS VOICE, Harden not your hearts ...”

Matthew 22:29-33 -- But Jesus answered and said to them, “You are mistaken, since you do not [\[s\]](#)understand the Scriptures nor the power of God. [30](#) For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven. [31](#) But regarding the resurrection of the dead, have you not read what was spoken to you by God: [32](#) ‘I AM THE GOD OF ABRAHAM, THE GOD OF ISAAC, AND THE GOD OF JACOB’? He is not the God of the dead, but of the living.” [33](#) When the crowds heard *this*, they were astonished at His teaching.

Finally, the Subjective Proof

The Bible says things about you. It says it will change you. It will lead you to Christ and produce faith in you. It will give you peace that passes understanding. It will give you eternal comfort and surety.

In short, it will make you Christian. If that has happened to you, it’s because the Bible is doing its saving work within you Proof that it is utterly, completely, and finally trustworthy.