

ISN'T THE BIBLE JUST A BOOK OF MYTHS AND FAIRY TALES? WASN'T IT WRITTEN BY MERE MEN? AND ISN'T IT TOO OLD TO BE RELIABLE?

SERMON FOR SUNDAY, August 14, 2011

Last week was an introduction. This week, it's all about whether or not you can trust it. Ever trusted someone, and it wound up backfiring on you? For me, that was the day I trusted my athletic trainer that gave me a pair of crutches after my last knee injury in football. We all have a fear of trust leading us to a broken crutch, and an even worse injury.

A lot of people avoid church because they think it's just a brain washing exercise. The Holy book is a fairy tale. The leaders are hypocrites. The whole thing's a cult that's going to wind up wrecking their lives. Today, I want to encourage you with some facts about the Bible...not just another Holy Book. There's a reason why this thing is, and always will be, the best selling book on the planet. IT IS TRUSTWORTHY... but don't take my word for it...let's check out the facts.

TRUST

The issue with this book is Trust... Can you trust it? Can you trust how we got it? How it was written? Can you trust in the translation? Can you trust in its content? Can you trust its inspiration?

We welcome questions about the trustworthiness of this Book. The bible is far and away the most trustworthy document on the planet. Its content has been verified from all angles. It continues to be proven right time and again. Here is a quick answer for the critics... The most common reason people say they don't believe the bible is because it was written by mere men.

Ok, here's how to answer this. OF COURSE IT WAS WRITTEN BY MEN. The Bible itself points this out. Paul wrote letters to the church, they became Scripture. Moses wrote the first five books of the OT. David wrote the Psalms. This isn't the real issue is whether or not God had anything to do with them in what they wrote down.

2 TIMOTHY 3:16-17 All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.

When someone claims that the bible was written by men and not God, this statement reveals that the person making it fancies himself to be transcendent. Thinking that he is all knowing, all present, all powerful. It's almost like the person that claims this is actually claiming to be God himself. A good response... On what basis are you claiming that God was not involved? The Bible says that He is...on what basis do you disagree with that?

Pointing out that their viewpoint is purely opinion against what the Bible says about itself. Yours is not just a blind uneducated faith. Your "opinion" is based on fact and evidence. Let's examine some.

Consider the Case that the Bible is written over a 1,500 year span by more than 40 authors, among whose number were found: kings, peasants, philosophers, fishermen, poets, statesmen, scholars, a herdsman, a general, a cupbearer, a doctor, a tax collector, and a rabbi.

It was written on three continents: Asia, Africa, and Europe, and in three languages: Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek. Its subject matter includes hundreds of controversial topics, yet from Genesis right on through to Revelation the authors all spoke with harmony and continuity on the theme of the unfolding story of "God's redemption of humanity."

The statistics prove that it is read by more people and published in more languages than any other book in the history of humanity, But why is it so adored, so trusted...?

WHEN WAS THE BIBLE WRITTEN

Moses was raised in Egypt and familiar with new writing techniques. He is credited as authoring the first five books of the OT. He wrote these books around 1470BC. Bible books were originally written on Papyrus and Parchment in Scrolls.

The Prophets, Solomon, David wrote their books from around 1000 to 400 BC.

James most likely the first New Testament Author; in the 40s AD. All other gospels and letters were written between 50 and 90BC. Revelation was written 95 AD

WHY THESE WRITINGS CAN BE TRUSTED

The gospel writers would have very accurately recorded the events of Jesus' life, due to the oral tradition. It was very common for Hebrews to have large portions of the Old Testament memorized. Some rabbis were known to have the entire thing memorized. They had no computers, or even books. Scrolls of papyrus and parchment were used in the Temple, but not in every home. In worship they were read to, and committed to memory. This brings up the critics of oral tradition.

Many of these stories would have been told for years before they were actually written down...not that many years, but years nonetheless. The critics compare this to a game of telephone. This breaks down horribly because the purpose of the game of telephone is to get things wrong...to barely give the facts. Oral tradition was about getting things perfect. If a story teller got any part of a story wrong, element for element, the community would be there to correct the story teller. Oral tradition within a community is actually a very reliable way to transfer facts and history.

A couple other points... The Bible is quick to admit the faults of its heroes, David, Solomon, Peter. A book that does this would hardly come off like a book of mythology.

THE CONSISTENCY OF THE STORIES, WITHOUT BEING DUPLICATES.

If the gospels had been identical to each other, word for word, this would have raised charges that the authors had conspired among themselves to coordinate their stories in advance, and that would have cast doubt on them. Each story has the same elements, but told from different angles

HOW IT HAS BEEN PRESERVED

The Originals were written (some after a period of oral tradition) then copied, almost immediately – “manuscripts” (copy of an original work by a handwritten by a scribe). Jewish Scribes were trained in their copying skills for over 25 years. They had dedication to absolute precision. If one mistake was made the entire scroll would be thrown out. Letters were counted, columns were counted, even the middle letter of the page was verified with master. What you don’t want is too much time between the actual writing of the original document and the copy. The less time in between the writing of the original and the copy, the more reliable the copy. It’s like trying to remember what you did yesterday as compared to a year ago today. The smaller the time gap in between the original and the copy, the more you can trust it.

These manuscripts were handled with care, kept in clay pots, linens, tombs, homes, etc. They have stood the test of time. A note about manuscripts... when it comes to ancient writings, we don’t have any originals...not of anything. These originals didn’t stand up to the decay of the materials they were written on but no worries...it’s all about the manuscripts.

MANUSCRIPTS OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

Before 1947, our oldest manuscripts dated 900AD. These were written by the Masoretics. This was a Jewish sect that served as the custodians of the Hebrew Bible. There was a Greek version of the Old Testament called the Septuagint (meaning 70) written around 285BC. The consistency of this translation shows that the entire Hebrew Bible would have been in existence before the time of Christ. We have many copies of this, but remember, this was written in Greek, not Hebrew. We really need to focus on our Hebrew copies, because those would have been copied from the original language.

So, before 1947, the problem is that our earliest Hebrew copies of the Bible were dated 900AD, much later than the actual events of the Old Testament. But then, something amazing happened in 1947...we found the Dead Sea scrolls.

The Dead Sea Scrolls

A shepherd boy was looking for a sheep in some caves just North of the Dead Sea. He tossed a rock into a cave to try to flush out the hiding sheep, and instead of hearing the animal, he heard a pot break. This led to what has been called the greatest discovery of modern times. There were 11 Caves in all that were used as hiding spots by a group of Jewish Scribes called the Essenes...they hid their Old Testament manuscripts in these caves to keep them from being captured by rivaling nations. We have found in these caves 40,000 fragments of books. There is so much detail in these fragments, that we can literally reconstruct every book of the Old Testament from the preserved writings, save the book of Esther. The date of these writings? 300BC And the most amazing part of the discovery...they matched up perfectly, with only a few variations in spelling of names. The implications are huge.

Whereas before we had great faith in the reliability of our Old Testament manuscripts, WE NOW KNOW THAT OVER 1000 YEARS OF COPIES, NOTHING CHANGED AND NOTHING WAS CORRUPTED AT ALL. God’s

word has been, and will continue to be immensely reliable. He has preserved His truths for us with incredible attention to detail. But that's just the Old Testament...

MANUSCRIPTS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

This will really blow you away...the New Testament is King when it comes to reliability. We have a specific number of copies that range from 100AD to 1450AD, when printing was invented in Germany. The more copies that you have that agree with each other, especially ones from different geographical areas, the more you can cross-check them to figure out what the original document was like. Their agreement is traced back genealogically, like a family tree, representing the descent of the manuscripts.

If I wrote an essay, and then had many people hand copy it, there would be slight mistakes made with each copy. However, using the bibliographic test you could easily get back to the original. Why? Because they would all have different mistakes! THINK OF A TREE...one trunk, many different branches. Trunk represents original, branches represent copies of the original. Their agreement traces you back to what the original was like. If they were all different, you'd know they weren't based on anything original.

How does the New Testament compare to other ancient writings? Our copies of the New Testament date within a couple generations of the originals, whereas in the case of other ancient texts, maybe 5, 8 or 10 centuries of time elapsed between the original and the earliest surviving copy.

Plato's (Greek philosopher, mathematician) writings...we have 7 copies, with a gap of 1300 years from the time of the original to the first copy!

[The most significant to come to light are the Chester Beatty Biblical Papyri, discovered in 1930. 1 contains portions of the four gospels and the book of Acts. 2 contain large portions of 8 letters of Paul, plus portions of Hebrews, dating to about the year 200. 3 has a larger section of the book of Revelation, dating from the third century.]. Here's a contest to see which ancient documents are the most reliable...

- 4th Place- Aristotle, Greek philosopher, student of Plato. 1400 years between original and copy, 49 existing copies
- 3rd Place – Sophocles, ancient Greek playwright. 1400 years between original and copy, 193 existing copies
- 2nd Place - Homer's Iliad, Greek writing about the struggle between the King Agamemnon and warrior Achilles. 1000 years between original and copy, 643 existing copies.
- 1st Place - The New Testament. Less than 100 years between originals and copies, 5600 existing Greek copies + 19,000 existing Latin, Coptic, Syriac and Aramaic copies. A total of 24,000 existing copies

CAN WE TRUST CONTENT?

Consider the map in the back of the bible. Most of the cities mentioned are alive and well today. The people groups mentioned are verified by other history sources.

Historicity: Acts correctly records the first 30 years of the Christian church. Within an accurate presentation of the historic facts of current lands, governments, leaders, landmarks, many of which have been verified through archeology.

Archeology

1 John 5: *Now there is in Jerusalem near the Sheep Gate a pool, which in Aramaic is called Bethesda (Bethsaida) and which is surrounded by five covered colonnades.*

Recently discovered 40 feet underground within the walls of Old City Jerusalem for years people thought this to be an incorrect description, or a place that didn't exist but, as it always does, truth rose up to the surface.

Science: Science has always lined up with the bible...not the other way around. Which is the constant? Certainly not science no more than medicine is a constant. It's a practice... continuing to improve and discover. The Bible has remained consistently true from the beginning.

Round or Flat earth: Not until the 1500s did the scientific community accept the earth to be round but in the late 7th century BC the prophet Isaiah wrote these words...

ISAIAH 40:22 *"He sits enthroned above the circle of the earth."*

Isaiah 40:22 He (God) sits enthroned above the circle of the earth...circle, sphere, or compass.

Hydrologic Cycle: Job, one of the oldest books in the Old Testament, second millenia BC correctly recorded the cycle of water. Science had no clue of this cycle at this time.

Job 36:27-28 *He (God) draws up the drops of water, which distill as rain to the streams, the clouds pour down their moisture and abundant showers fall on mankind.*

Stars uncountable: In the late sixth century BC the prophet Jeremiah described the stars, at this time the it was believed that there were 1100 stars. Jeremiah said something that sounded ridiculous to the people of that day.

Jeremiah 33:22 *I will make the descendants of David...as countless as the stars of the sky...*

We know now that there are at least 100 billion stars in 100 billion galaxies counting at a rate of 10 per second it would take more than 100 trillion years and there you have it..."IMPOSSIBLE TO COUNT".

Not enough for you?

I believe in Evolution... not in matter and not in truth but in scientific thought. Matter doesn't evolve. True, there may be variations within a species but c'mon, call them what they are. They are variations. There is no record, no fossil, no scientific data proving any transitions from species to species. The fossil record doesn't lie. Truth doesn't evolve. What is true now has always been true. God doesn't change.

Proof of the Evolution of Scientific Thought about Evolution

The Big Bang idea started with a Belgian astronomer, Georges Edward Lemaitre. He thought the original exploding mass to be "no more than a few light-years in diameter." 2 light years is 12,000,000,000,000 miles in diameter. In 1965 it was reduced to 275 million miles, in 1972 71 million miles, in 1974, 54 thousand miles. In 1983 a trillionth the diameter of a proton.

"...the observable universe could have evolved from an infinitesimal region. It's then tempting to go one step further and speculate that the entire universe evolved from literally nothing." Scientific American, May 1984, p 128

I believe in something else... GENESIS 1:1

Genesis 1:1 In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

How incredible is it that today's scientific community would say, 20 BYA nothing exploded and created everything. 4.6 BYA the earth was molten mass and began to cool, it rained on the rocks for millions and millions of years, turned into soup. 3 BYA Soup came alive.

Ask me where the universe came from, I'll say, "God", and when you ask me where he came from, and I say "I don't know", you'll call my view religious, derived from faith, and not science. Ask an evolutionary scientist where the matter came from, where the laws came from, where the energy came from, and he'll say, "I don't know."...and they will call that Science. Don't be fooled...they're both religious, requiring faith. As for me, I find my faith to be well grounded, well tested, well proven.

This Book is Truth and Life. It's the best guide you'll ever find.

PSALM 119:105 Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path.

It's not going anywhere.

ISAIAH 40:8 The grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of our God stands forever

Read It! Ask Questions About It! Learn From It! The truth in here will set you free.

The best thing this book has to offer to you is Jesus Christ. He came to live a perfect life in your place because He knew you couldn't do it by yourself. He died in your place to take the punishment for your sins. If you trust in Him to save you, He will forgive you of your sins allow you to go to Heaven when you die. And in the mean time, He will offer you a life of true fulfillment, confidence and peace.