

Faith in What?

Christians put their trust first and foremost in a person, Jesus Christ. Christians also trust in what God tells us in the Bible. It informs the way a Christian views the world. But is the Bible a reliable historical document or just a book of religious ideas? It is not unreasonable to want to test the Bible's claims, to see whether it is reliable and consistent both within itself and with the world we know.

The Bible was written over a period of 1,500 years, over 40 generations and by more than 40 authors, from every walk of life - including kings, peasants, philosophers, fishermen, poets, statesmen, scholars, prophets, servants and soldiers. Their circumstances were as varied as their places in life and they lived on three continents, Asia, Africa and Europe.

Written in three languages, Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek the Bible covers a vast range of often-controversial subjects. Yet there is a harmony of thought and continuity throughout.

It has been shown to be transmitted accurately from the time it was originally written and compares favourably with other ancient documents:

Caesar's writings were written between 100-44 B.C. and the earliest copy we have is dated A.D.900 - a gap of 1,000 years. There are only 10 copies in existence.

Aristotle the Greek philosopher wrote between 384-322 B.C. and the earliest copy we have is dated A.D.1100 - a gap of 1,400 years. There are at most 49 copies of any one of his works.

The New Testament was written between A.D.40-100 and the earliest copy we have is dated A.D.125 - a gap of only 25 years. There are over 24,000 copies in existence.

The Old Testament is much older and the copies we have are copies of copies of copies. However, comparing copies of different ages and places shows that they are extremely accurate. Also, the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls has provided us with fragments of manuscripts, some of which date from 125 B.C.

It has been shown to be correct when it deals with historical personages and events. Places, people, coins, etc. mentioned in the Bible have been found through archaeology or being mentioned in other historical writings. Abraham came from Ur of the Chaldees, Joshua brought down the walls of Jericho. Both these places exist today.

It has been shown to be without any scientific absurdities that would betray that it came by mere human authorship. The Bible makes no claim to be a scientific textbook but if we read it as intended then it doesn't conflict with science. The Bible tells us who is behind the universe not how it was put together. If we believe that the

only things in life that are true can be analysed under a microscope, then words like love, beauty, personality, and honesty are never going to be in our vocabulary.

It does not contradict itself, and provides a unified message.

Someone has said, "People do not reject the Bible because it contradicts itself but because it contradicts them." The Bible is like a mirror and when we see ourselves in it we do not always like what we see. God has spoken to us through the Bible, and if we want to know about him and his words, we must trust this book. Christians trust it and know from experience that it has the power to change people's lives.

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