

Intellectual Honesty
Question: "Is the Bible reliable?"



Intellectual honesty is a virtue. It is a method of problem solving, characterized by an unbiased and honest attitude in an effort to discover the truth.

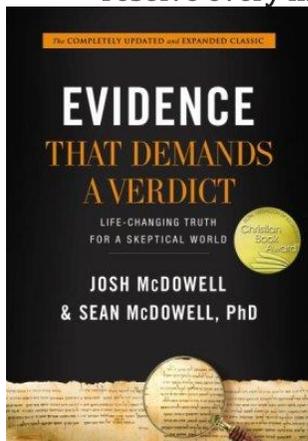
With regards to religion, intellectual honesty is demonstrated...

- By deciding that your current beliefs will not interfere with the pursuit of truth;
- By courageously examining relevant facts and information even though new discoveries may contradict what you have believed;
- By deciding to change what you believe based on the evidence.

I am convinced that anyone that is intellectually honest and examines the right information will agree with me that the bible is reliable, and that Jesus is who He claimed to be, the Son of God.

Will you be intellectually honest?

- If you will be, I must start out by giving you two disclaimers. I will not be able to give you enough information in a 45-minute lecture to answer all your questions and resolve every intellectual problem. You are going to have to do your own home work.



- I am not going to be able to perform a miraculous sign to convince you that what I believe about God is what you should believe.

What we are going to try to do in this series is persuade you that what we believe about the bible and about God is the truth based on the weight of circumstantial evidence.

Circumstantial evidence, in law, is evidence not drawn from direct observation of an event. Circumstantial evidence in a trial is evidence that does not come directly from an eyewitness or participant. To obtain circumstantial evidence we must have the right information and right logical to remove any reasonable doubt.

An example of circumstantial evidence is DNA evidence. People can be convicted for murder even when there are no eye witnesses, if there is DNA evidence. People are being released from prison after being convicted for murder when new DNA evidence has been discovered that proves that they were not the killer.

We want to give you circumstantial evidence that the bible is reliable, and that Jesus is God. We believe that this evidence is enough to demand a verdict on your part.

I believe that if you are intellectual honest that you will conclude beyond a reasonable doubt that the bible is true, and Jesus is God based on the weight of circumstantial evidence.

Today, all I can do in a short amount of time is point you in a direction.

Today's message will start answering the question, "Is the Bible reliable?"

Our knowledge of history comes from stories preserved in literature. Prior to writing, stories were only preserved by oral tradition.

Ancient history as a term refers to the collection of past events in history from the beginning of writing and recorded human **history** in the 3,000 BC – 500 AD period.

From ancient civilizations, there are many stories in ancient literature. Some of these stories are fact. They are history. Some are fiction. Some are a combination of fact and fiction.

As ancient literature texts are discovered, they are subjected to various tests by critics to determine if the text is reliable.

To make this determination, critics make these decisions using at least three forms of criticism.

- **Textual criticism**
- **Historical criticism**
- **Scientific criticism**

1. Textual criticism

How do we know that what we are reading now is what was written by the ancients?

When people developed a system of writing to express their language, they began to record their history through stories. But preserving original ancient stories in writing was very difficult. Unless a story was engraved in stone or on clay, manuscripts were very fragile and perishable. Manuscripts could be lost. To share manuscripts and preserve them, it required the tedious process of making a hand copy. There was no printing press to accurately reproduce literature and no computers to store accurate reproductions. People are flawed. People write poorly. Letters and numbers are sometimes difficult to decipher.

There are many important factors that textual critics use to determine if what was originally written is what we are reading today. Here are two of the more significant ones.

How do textual critics evaluate that what we are reading today is what was in the original?

- **The age of the ancient text**

The amount of time between when the original text was written, and the copy is important. As time passes there is a greater possibility for information in the original text to be lost or changed in translation.

- **The number of ancient texts.**

The more copies that are found of ancient texts, the more critics can compare them to see if there are serious contradictions, omissions, additions, errors, etc.

Slight changes in texts are expected because people are flawed. If there are many texts that are all very similar in content, it gives textual critics confidence that what we are reading now is very close to what was originally written.

How is our current bible to be viewed based on textual criticism?

Age of biblical texts

With regards to the OT, the texts known as the dead sea scrolls were written during the first century BC and first century AD.

With regards to the New Testament, this is also true. The ancient NT texts that have been discovered were written as early as the second century AD.

With regards to how other ancient documents are judged as reliable based on age, the biblical text passes this test.

Number of biblical texts

In the case of the Old Testament, using only the Dead Sea Scrolls, there are a collection of **800-900** documents, many containing ancient Biblical texts. There are over 50,000 individual pieces in all.

In the case of the New Testament, we have thousands of complete manuscripts and multiple thousands more fragments available. There are more than 5,000 copies of the entire New Testament or extensive portions of it. In addition, we have several thousand more fragments or smaller portions of the New Testament.

If these numbers don't seem like a lot, compared to other works of ancient history, the manuscript evidence and copies for the New Testament far outweigh manuscript evidence for other works.

For instance, textual critics believe that the texts that we have of Homer's *Iliad* are reliable. There are less than 700 copies of Homer's *Iliad*. The same could be said for the works we have of Aristotle. There are only a handful of copies of any one work of Aristotle. Both works are considered reliable by textual critics.

So, the OT and NT pass the test of textual criticism with regards to the age and number of texts that have been discovered. Textual critics are confident that what we are reading today is very close to the original except for minor errors that do not have any major effect on the stories or the content.

2. Historical criticism

Two of us can watch the same event and have different perspectives on what happened. Just because I write down what I witnessed does not make it fact.

The goal of historical criticism is to collaborate the accuracy of the ancient stories. If one author writes an account, are there other authors that collaborate and say the same thing?

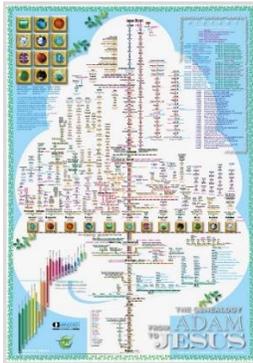
This may not be challenging in modern history because there are so many authors writing books that cover the same events. How many books have been written by different authors on WW II?

Ancient historical critics feel fortunate if they have one complete text from just one author for an ancient time period.

The bible was written by Jews. It is loaded with historical information. There are incredible lists of genealogies.

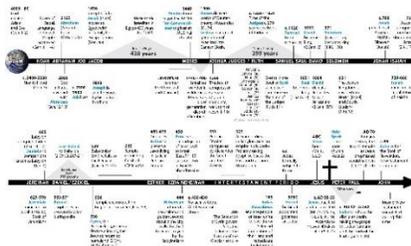
Matthew 1:1-17		
1. Abraham	1. Solomon	1. Jechonias
2. Isaac	2. Roboam	2. Salathiel
3. Jacob	3. Abia	3. Zorobabel
4. Judas	4. Asa	4. Abiud
5. Phares	5. Josaphat	5. Eliakim
6. Esrom	6. Joram	6. Azor
7. Aram	7. Ozias	7. Sadoc
8. Aminadab	8. Joatham	8. Achim
9. Naason	9. Achaz	9. Eliud
10. Salmon	10. Ezekias	10. Eleazar
11. Booz	11. Manasseh	11. Matthan
12. Obed	12. Amon	12. Jacob
13. Jesse	13. Josias	13. Joseph
14. David	14. Jechonias	14. Jesus

So all the generations from Abraham to David are fourteen generations and from David until the carrying away into Babylon are fourteen generations and from the carrying away into Babylon unto Christ are fourteen generations



The family tree of Jesus is listed all the way back to Adam.

A TIMELINE OF BIBLICAL HISTORY -Major Events From Creation to the Completion of the New Testament-



There are fixed time periods from which time lines can be created. In these stories, there are names of people, names of places, and names of objects. If the authors were trying to deceive others, they certainly did not do a very good job.

Are there ways to collaborate the accuracy of the ancient stories in the bible? If one author writes an account, are there other authors that recorded the same stories?

One of the most interesting things about the bible is that there are 40 authors of this one book. There is only one author of the book of Mormon. There is only one author of Quran. The founders of their religion wrote their holy book. In Christianity, Jesus did not write anything.

The bible is a book that contains 66 books with 40 different authors. The books were collected and made into one book through a process known as canonization. One of the reasons for canonization by the Jews was to collaborate the stories with different authors. The collaboration by these 40 authors in the bible took place over a span of 1500 years.

In the New Testament there are four different authors that collaborate the stories about Jesus. One of them was a gentile, Luke.

The Jews were one of the first people groups and perhaps the only people group that understood the importance of collaboration by various authors to historical criticism.

We do have the ability to fact check history in the bible with ancient literature by other authors and artifacts outside the bible.

The earliest non-Christian testimony to the Jesus's existence is that of the Jewish historian, Flavius Josephus (A.D. 37-100). In *Antiquities of the Jews*, the historian twice referred to Jesus. In one passage he called Jesus "the Christ," referred to his "marvelous deeds," and alluded to his death and resurrection (18.3.3).

Though some would dispute the genuineness of much of this reference, suggesting that it was embellished by an over-zealous Christian scribe, the passage, as it stands in all standard texts, can be defended (Jackson 1991, 29-30). In another place, Josephus commented on the trial of James, and identified him as "the brother of Jesus, the so-called Christ" (20.9.1).

The Jewish Babylonia Talmud was completed in the 5th century AD. It refers to Jesus' miracles as "magic," and records that he claimed to be God. It further mentions his execution on the eve of the Passover. Jewish testimony thus supports the New Testament position on the historical existence of Jesus.

There are allusions to Christ in Roman times (see Bettenson 1961, 3-7).

Pliny, governor of Bithynia, wrote the Roman emperor Trajan (ca. A.D. 112), asking for advice about how he should deal with Christians who made it a practice to meet on an appointed day to sing a hymn "to Christ as if to God" (*Epistle of Pliny to Trajan* X.96).

The Roman historian Tacitus, in his *Annals* (ca. A.D. 115), referred to "Christus," who "was executed at the hands of the procurator Pontius Pilate in the reign of Tiberius" (XV.44).

Writing about A.D. 120, Suetonius, a popular Roman writer, declared that Claudius expelled the Jews from Rome because they "were continually making disturbances at the instigation of Chrestus" (*Vita Claudii* XXV.4). "Chrestus" is a corrupted form of Christos (Christ). Luke alluded to this situation in Acts 18:2.

As Paul an apostle said to King Agrippa...

Acts 26:26

26 For the king, before whom I also speak freely, knows these things; for I am convinced that none of these things escapes his attention, since this thing was not done in a corner.

NKJV

There are other ancient sources besides the bible that confirm information in the Old Testament is reliable.

For example, archaeological finds in the 1920s confirmed the presence of cities much like Ur, described in [Genesis 11](#), which some skeptics doubted had existed so early. Engravings discovered in an Egyptian tomb depict the installation of a viceroy in a manner that exactly matches the biblical description of the ceremony involving Joseph ([Genesis 41:39–42](#)). Clay tablets dating to 2300 BC have been found in Syria strongly supporting Old Testament stories, vocabulary, and geography. Skeptics doubted the existence of the [Hittites](#) ([Genesis 15:20](#); [23:10](#); [49:29](#)), until a Hittite city, complete with records, was found in Turkey. There are dozens of other Old Testament facts supported by archaeological discoveries. **(Just google ancient texts that support information in the old Testament.)**

Even the “miraculous” occurrences of Genesis have evidential basis we can appeal to today. Ancient Babylonian records describe a confusion of language, in accordance with the biblical account of the [Tower of Babel](#) ([Genesis 11:1–9](#)). These same records describe a worldwide flood, an event present in literally hundreds of forms in cultures all over the world. The sites where Sodom and Gomorrah ([Genesis 19](#)) once sat have been found, displaying evidence of fiery and violent destruction. Even the plagues of Egypt and the resulting Exodus ([Exodus 12:40–41](#)) [have archaeological support](#).

Ancient texts and artifacts from other ancient civilizations support information that is in bible.

Many historical critics have spent their lives reviewing history to tell us what fact is and what is fiction.

[The Bible is THE most vetted ancient document in the history of the world!](#)

[There is greater collaboration by authors on the stories of the bible than on any other ancient book of history!](#)

The stories and events in the bible also include witnesses anywhere from a few to over a million people. Understanding people, you would think there would be a host of eye witnesses writing their own literature to say those stories were lies because I was there. The absence of this kind of historical evidence would be one way an intellectually honest historical critic would give the stories more credibility.

Yale archeologist Millar Burrows, an expert on the Dead Sea scrolls and a professor emeritus at Yale Divinity School, said this, archaeology has unquestionably strengthened confidence in the reliability of the Scriptural record.

Whole books are not large enough to contain all the finds that have bolstered scholastic confidence! It points to the bible as being trustworthy.

Using the same criteria for historical criticism and textual criticism by which critics judge other historical works, the Bible is reliable.

3. Scientific criticism

One way they to determine fact from fiction is science. If a story includes impossible events that violates natural laws, it should be considered fiction. Another word for fiction would be mythology.

Some examples of mythology from ancient literature would be the Iliad and The Odyssey by Homer, translated by Robert Fagles.

When I was growing up, the Wolfman, Frankenstein, Dracula, and King Kong were some of my favorite horror movies. On a positive note, I also liked Super Man and The Wizard of Oz. The events in these stories are known as fiction and will be known as fiction in the future because the events in these stories are scientifically impossible.

This is the main reason that many historical critics consider the bible to be a work of fiction or at least a combination of fact and fiction. Many of the stories in the bible do not pass the test of scientific criticism.

The stories in the bible portray the existence of a God that has the power to suspend natural laws. Since we are not eye witnesses to those events, why should we believe in them?

Scientific reasoning is based on experiment and observation. A scientist may not know why something is true, but they can reach a conclusion by experiment and observation that something is true when they conduct an experiment and they get the same results repeatedly.

Is there something in the bible that a scientist could test and observe and then reach a conclusion that the bible is reliable?

If I held up a book that was written in the year 1776, and that book accurately predicted hundreds of events in the United States that you and I know are true without any error, wouldn't it be logical to conclude that book was reliable?

Prophecies about Israel

- Counting Abraham's descendants would be like counting the stars

Bible prophecy: Genesis 15:5

Prophecy written: As early as 1400 BC

Prophecy fulfilled: Throughout history

- Abraham's descendants would have their own country

Bible prophecy: Genesis 15:18

Prophecy written: As early as 1400 BC

Prophecy fulfilled: About 3400 years ago

- Jacob's descendants would inherit the land of Israel

Bible prophecy: Genesis 35:9-12

Prophecy written: As early as 1400 BC

Prophecy fulfilled: About 3400 years ago

- God will never forget the children of Israel

Bible prophecy: Isaiah 49:13-17

Prophecy written: Between 701-681 BC

Prophecy fulfilled: Throughout history

- The people of Israel will never be completely destroyed

Bible prophecy: Leviticus 26:44

Prophecy written: As early as 1400 BC

Prophecy fulfilled: Throughout history

- God promised to restore the Jews

Bible prophecy: Isaiah 27:12-13

Prophecy written: Between 701-681 BC

Prophecy fulfilled: About 2600 years ago

- Enemies would move into the land of Israel

Bible prophecy: Leviticus 26:32-33

Prophecy written: As early as 1400 BC

Prophecy fulfilled: Beginning in about 721 BC

- The Jews would survive Babylonian rule and return home

Bible prophecy: Jeremiah 32:36-37

Prophecy written: Sometime between 626-586 BC

Prophecy fulfilled: 536 BC

- The people of Israel would return to their land

Bible prophecy: Ezekiel 34:13

Prophecy written: Between 593-571 BC

Prophecy fulfilled: About 2600 years ago

Prophecies about the Messiah

John 5:39

39 You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me.

NKJV

The word Scriptures means writings. The writings Jesus was referring to were the law and the prophets that the Jews believed were the revelation of God to them.

[Matthew 5:17-18](#)

17 "Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill.

18 For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled.

[NKJV](#)

Jesus believed the Scriptures were the reason the Jews should have believed He was their messiah. Jesus knew there were over 300 prophecies about the messiah in the law and the prophets and that He would fulfill every one of those prophecies.

<i>PROPHECY</i>	<i>PREDICTION</i>	<i>FULFILLMENT</i>
Isa. 7:14	Virgin-born...	Luke 1:26-53
Micah 5:2	... in Bethlehem	Matt. 2:1
Hos 11:1	Flight into Egypt...	Mt 2:14
Je 31:15	... to escape the massacre of the infants	Mt 2:16
Gen 49:10	Of the tribe of Judah	Luke 3:33
Isa. 7:14	Called Immanuel	Matt. 1:23
Isa. 9:1-2	Ministry in Galilee	Matt. 4:12-16
Zech. 9:9	Triumphal entry into Jerusalem	Matt. 21:1-11
Ps. 41:9	Betrayed by a friend...	Matt. 26:20-25
Zec 11:12	... for 30 pieces of silver...	Matt. 26:15
Zec 11:13	... & the money used to buy a potter's field	Matt. 27:6,7
Is 53:3	Rejected by Jews	John 1:11
Ps. 35:11	Falsely accused...	Matt. 26:59-68
Isa. 53:7	... yet silent before accusers	Matt. 27:12-14
Isa 50:6	Smitten and spat upon	Mark 14:65
Is 53:4,5	Suffered vicariously	Mt 8:16,17
Isa. 53:12	Crucified with robbers	Matt. 27:38
Ps. 22:16	Hands and feet pierced...	John 20:25
Ps. 34:20	... but bones not broken	John 19:33
Ps. 22:18	Lots cast for clothes	John 19:23-24
Ps. 22:15	Thirsted on the cross...	John 19:28
Ps 69:21	... and given vinegar to drink	John 19:29
Ps 22:1	"My God, why hast thou forsaken me?"	Matt. 27:46
Isa. 53:9	Buried in tomb of rich	Matt. 27:57-61
Ps 16:10	His resurrection	Matt. 28:9
Ps 68:18	His ascension	Lu 24:50,51

The odds of one person fulfilling just 8 of those prophecies is astounding.

One in 100,000,000,000,000,000.

Jesus said that the greatest sign He gave to the Jews that He was their messiah was the fulfillment of the prophecies that are in the law and the prophets.

Today, prophecy is the greatest sign that I can give to you that the bible is reliable, and that Jesus is the Son of God.

If textual criticism, historical criticism, and scientific criticism of the prophecies of the bible all confirm the bible is reliable, will you be intellectually honest?

Intellectual honesty is demonstrated...

- By deciding that your current beliefs will not interfere with the pursuit of truth;
- By courageously examining relevant facts and information even though new discoveries may contradict what you have believed;
- By deciding to change what you believe based on the evidence.

Will you change what you believe about the bible and about Jesus based on the evidence?

Will you receive Jesus?