The Trustworthiness of the Bible

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What is the Bible?

- A collection of books handed down from ancient times by the Christian church, which books claim to be a message from the Creator to the entire human race.
- These books are grouped in two collections called the Old Testament and the New Testament (or old covenant and new covenant), and are usually bound in one volume.
Finding a Passage

• Because the Bible is a collection of books, it is sometimes hard to find a passage, since the books are not given in alphabetical order.

• We use a technique somewhat like the post office does for getting a letter to you:
  – Country
  – Postal code & city
  – Street & number
  – Name
Finding a Passage

• So we look in:
  – The Bible (Old or New Testament?)
  – Book? (need a list)
  – Chapter?
  – Verse?
Finding a Passage

• Suppose we wish to find the passage discussed last night from Lesson 29, the parable of the prodigal son:

• We look in:
  – Bible (New Testament)
  – Chapter 15
  – Beginning at verse 11
Finding a Passage

• So, if you have the reference for a passage (like Luke 15:11), all you need is the list of names of the books of the Bible, and the page on which each book begins.

• If you only have a brief quotation (“love your neighbor as yourself”), you need to use a concordance, either a book or a computer program!
Is the Bible Trustworthy?

• I think it is, or I wouldn’t have given up a career in astrophysics to spend 35 years teaching the Bible.

• I believe there is good evidence that the Bible really is God’s message for humanity.

• We will look at a little of this in this talk, and more on Saturday.
Is the Bible Trustworthy?

Let’s look at this question under several headings:

• Does God exist?
• Is the Bible a message from God?
• Has the Bible been transmitted correctly to us?
• Has the Bible been translated correctly?
Does God Exist?

• Our universe had a beginning.
  – This implies an adequate cause.
• Our universe is very finely ‘tuned.’
  – This implies a designer.
• Earth’s cosmic environment is ‘just right.’
  – This implies a designer.
• Living things are astonishingly complex & wonderfully functional.
  – This implies a designer.
Is the Bible from God?

• The Bible’s ethical teachings
  – E.g., ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’

• The Bible’s fulfilled predictions
  – Concerning surrounding nations
  – Concerning Israel
  – Concerning the Messiah

• Changed lives due to the Bible
  – Individuals
  – Societies
Bible Transmission

• Since printing was not used in Europe before the late 1400s, Bibles were copied by hand till then (as were all other books).
• How do we know the Bible was not changed drastically over this period?
• If God had it written as his message to humans, he would have protected it.
• We can check this by looking at manuscripts from various periods.
Bible Transmission

• For the Old Testament, we have manuscripts from before the time of Jesus.
• For the New Testament, we have manuscripts from before 200 AD.
• We have many thousands of manuscripts from before the age of printing.
• Bible manuscripts are typically closer to the time of writing than for other ancient books.
# Comparison to Other Works

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Work</th>
<th>Originally Written</th>
<th>Earliest Comp Ms</th>
<th>Difference</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>New Testament</td>
<td>~75</td>
<td>~350</td>
<td>~275</td>
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<tr>
<td>Josephus</td>
<td>~90</td>
<td>~1000</td>
<td>~900</td>
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<tr>
<td>Plutarch</td>
<td>~100</td>
<td>~950</td>
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<td>Tacitus</td>
<td>~100</td>
<td>~850</td>
<td>~750</td>
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<tr>
<td>Old Testament</td>
<td>1400-400</td>
<td>~350</td>
<td>750-1750</td>
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<tr>
<td>Enuma Elish</td>
<td>~1750 BC</td>
<td>~650 BC</td>
<td>~1100</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rigveda</td>
<td>1500-1000</td>
<td>~1350 AD</td>
<td>~2600</td>
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<tr>
<td>Iliad</td>
<td>bef 700 BC</td>
<td>~1050 AD</td>
<td>1750+</td>
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Bible Transmission

• There are only minor differences between early and late manuscripts.
• Over recent centuries, a science called ‘textual criticism’ has been developed to obtain the best text from manuscripts of ancient books.
• Modern translations of the Bible use the information from the earliest available manuscripts.
Bible Translation

• The Bible was originally written in Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek.
  – Old Testament mostly in Hebrew
  – New Testament mostly in Greek
• Translations of the Bible have been made into thousands of languages, beginning in the 2nd century AD.
• Modern humans who wish to take the trouble to learn Hebrew and Greek can check the translations into their own languages.
Conclusions

We have good evidence that:

• God exists

• The Bible is God’s message to humans.

• The Bible has been carefully transmitted to us in modern times.

• The Bible has been carefully translated into our native languages.
The End

We can study & apply the Bible with confidence.