

1. Jesus: Reliable and Accurate

Our study of Jesus, by necessity, will take us on a journey through the prose and poetry of the Bible. We must therefore ask ourselves, ***“Are the accounts describing Jesus in Scripture reliable, historical and accurate?”***, for if they are not, our study will have been done in vain. Fortunately, the authors of the texts we will be examining have anticipated this dilemma, and have addressed it *straightaway*. Therefore, let us do likewise and start at this point!

Jesus' Instruction to His Disciples

John 15:26-27

**26 “But when the Comforter is come,
whom I will send unto you from the Father,
even the Spirit of Truth,
which proceedeth from the Father,
He shall testify of Me:
27 And ye also shall bear witness,
because ye have been with Me from the beginning.”**

The Greek word translated **“Comforter”** in v26 describes one who is **“called alongside”**. Considering that in a few hours, Jesus will be arrested, tried and executed, what is the significance of this?

The words “testify” in v 26 and **“bear witness”** in v 27 are both translated from the same Greek word, *martureo*, which transliterates into the English word “martyr”. The Greek word means to **“be a witness or to bear testimony”**. Again, in light of the context, why is Jesus' instruction significant?

The Disciples' main qualification was that they had been *with Jesus “from the beginning.”* In the end, He promised to send the *Comforter*, God's Holy Spirit, *to empower them to be His witnesses* even under severe persecution. All of them experienced torture, and all but one was martyred for their testimony. *Not one recanted*, bearing witness to the truth of what they testified. Would we die for the sake of perpetuating a lie? Of course not! And neither would they, adding to the veracity of what they wrote ... **A “Reliable and Accurate record of the Life, Ministry and Identity of Jesus the Christ!”**

John 15:26-27 (Observations)

V26

Underline Who will come.

Circle from Whom will He come?

Circle who He is.

Circle what He will do.

V27

Circle what Jesus instructs His disciples to do.

Underline why they would “bear witness”.

The **Comforter** is also called the **“Spirit of Truth”** by Christ because He will guide the Disciples into “all Truth” (John 16:13), which He did when they recorded their testimonies in the Gospel record.

Acts 1:8

“But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”

John's Testimony

In his first Epistle, the Apostle John reveals the extent of their understanding of the **"Word of Life"**.

1 John 1:1, 3

**1 "That which was from the beginning,
which we have heard,
which we have seen with our eyes,
which we have looked upon,
and our hands have handled,
of the Word of Life; ...
3 "That which we have seen and heard
declare we unto you, ... "**

How does John's opening statements in his Epistle affect your trust in the reliability of the Gospels?

Luke's Testimony

Luke, the author of the third Gospel, was not among the Apostles "from the beginning." He accompanied the **Apostle Paul** on his missionary journeys and served as his *Physician*, as well as *Historian*.

Luke 1:1-3

**1 "Forasmuch as many have taken in hand to set forth in order
a declaration of those things
which are most surely believed among us,
2 "Even as they delivered them unto us,
which from the beginning were eyewitnesses,
and ministers of the word;
3 "It seemed good to me also,
having had perfect understanding of all things
from the very first,
to write unto thee in order,
most excellent Theophilus,"**

Why does Luke begin his Gospel in this way?

**1 John 1:1, 3 (Observations)
V 1 & 3**

Circle all the pronouns in this passage.

Underline all the ways they gained understanding of the "Word of Life".

Underline what they declared.

Matthew and **John** are the only disciples among the Twelve who penned Gospel accounts. **Mark** used others including the Apostle Peter as his primary source. **Luke** also used several sources for his Gospel, possibly including **Mary**, the mother of Jesus, and **James** His brother.

**Luke 1:1-3 (Observations)
V1**

Circle how many others had "set forth" to declare what was believed.

V2

Circle the two words Luke uses to describe those people.

Underline how long these were with Jesus.

V3

Circle the word that describes Luke's understanding.

Circle the extent of his understanding.

Underline from when he gained it.

Circle how Luke intended to write these things.

Circle to whom Luke is writing.

"Theophilus" means 'Lover of God'. Unless one has a Love for God, he will not have a Thirst to Know Him!

In light of the previous Bible passages, why can we have *confidence* in the Gospel record?

Bibliographical Test

Having an accurate record of Jesus' Life is just the first step to ensuring the reliability of the Bible record. We must also have an *accurate transmission* of that record to us living today, 2000 years after the original manuscripts were created. *Lacking the original manuscript* and possessing only *copies* of them which have been duplicated and transmitted numerous times through the ages, *how can we be sure that the manuscripts we now have are accurate copies of the original?* Historians have a *method* to determine the accuracy of a manuscript that has survived from antiquity. That method is called the ***Bibliographical Test***.

The ***Test*** examines two criteria to determine accuracy.

- 1. How many copies do we have and how similar are they to each other, and ...**
- 2. How close in time are the earliest copies to the original manuscripts.**

The more copies we possess and the greater their similarity to each other the better. Why is this?

Also, the closer our oldest copies are to the time of the original manuscripts, the better that is as well. Why is that?

So how do the Gospel documents measure up, especially in comparison with other documents of antiquity? The following ***chart***, created by the ***Christian Apologetics and Research Ministry (CARM)***, reveals the answer!

The Christians living in the First Century lacked the technological advancements we in the Twenty First Century take for granted. Today, if you want a copy of a document, you simply duplicate it on a photocopy machine. In their days, it took a lot more effort.

The original manuscripts were written on either leather parchment or papyrus, both of which would eventually deteriorate, necessitating the making of more copies. It was time consuming and tedious work.

Today, we do not possess the original manuscripts, which have all been lost to time and ruin. Barring an amazing archeological discovery that locates the originals, we use the ***Bibliographical Test*** to determine as best as possible, what the original manuscripts said.

Christian Apologetics and Research Ministry (CARM)

Manuscript Evidence for New Testament Reliability

by Matt Slick

<https://carm.org/manuscript-evidence>

Author	Date Written	Earliest Copy	Approximate Time Span between original & copy	Number of Copies	Accuracy of Copies
Lucretius	died 55 or 53 B.C.		1100 yrs	2	----
Pliny	A.D. 61-113	A.D. 850	750 yrs	7	----
Plato	427-347 B.C.	A.D. 900	1200 yrs	7	----
Demosthenes	4th Cent. B.C.	A.D. 1100	800 yrs	8	----
Herodotus	480-425 B.C.	A.D. 900	1300 yrs	8	----
Suetonius	A.D. 75-160	A.D. 950	800 yrs	8	----
Thucydides	460-400 B.C.	A.D. 900	1300 yrs	8	----
Euripides	480-406 B.C.	A.D. 1100	1300 yrs	9	----
Aristophanes	450-385 B.C.	A.D. 900	1200	10	----
Caesar	100-44 B.C.	A.D. 900	1000	10	----
Livy	59 BC-AD 17	----	???	20	----
Tacitus	circa A.D. 100	A.D. 1100	1000 yrs	20	----
Aristotle	384-322 B.C.	A.D. 1100	1400	49	----
Sophocles	496-406 B.C.	A.D. 1000	1400 yrs	193	----
Homer (Iliad)	900 B.C.	400 B.C.	500 yrs	643	95%
New Testament	1st Cent. A.D. (A.D. 50-100)	2nd Cent. A.D. (c. A.D. 130 f.)	less than 100 years	5600	99.5%

The Chart on the left lists many authors of antiquity whose works are classics and rank among the great literary works of the ages. How many do you recognize? No academician would doubt the fact of their authenticity.

Also listed are the time spans between their original manuscripts and the oldest copies. Finally, we are given the number of copies that have survived to the present.

*The final entry gives us the same information pertaining to the **New Testament**. Study the list and compare the New Testament to the other works of antiquity. What do they tell you about the New Testament?*

Many people, including secular academicians, do not accept the New Testament as an accurate account of history. Many even doubt that Jesus even existed. If you shared this Chart with them, do you think their minds would be changed? Why or why not?

The Bible is a Book inspired by God and will not be affirmed nor embraced as Truth without the supernatural transformation and intervention of God's Spirit in a person's life.

For sure people may accept it intellectually as a record of history, but to truly appreciate and benefit from its spiritual value requires a work of God ... and a humble heart!

For more information read: **"Evidence That Demands a Verdict"** by Josh McDowell

A common criticism non-Christians have is that the Bible is filled with *imaginary stories*, and has been *translated and copied so many times*, the translations we have today are not accurate. ***From what you have learned in this chapter, how would you respond to a person who voiced that criticism to you?***

Contrary to people's skepticism, the Gospels are a reliable and accurate record by people who were with Jesus and were eyewitnesses of the events. You ***can*** trust its narrative, for in and through it, God speaks to us and reveals the incredible story of His only begotten Son!

With that, let us begin the exciting journey into the most amazing life ever lived on this Planet! ... The miraculous life of ***Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of God!***

*"Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on **Me** through their word."*

Jesus

John 17:20

One Solitary Life

He was born in an obscure village
The child of a peasant woman
He grew up in another obscure village
Where he worked in a carpenter shop
Until he was thirty when public opinion turned against him

He never wrote a book
He never held an office
He never went to college
He never visited a big city
He never travelled more than two hundred miles
From the place where he was born
He did none of the things
Usually associated with greatness
He had no credentials but himself

He was only thirty three
His friends ran away
One of them denied him

He was turned over to his enemies
And went through the mockery of a trial
He was nailed to a cross between two thieves
While dying, his executioners gambled for his clothing
The only property he had on earth

When he was dead
He was laid in a borrowed grave
Through the pity of a friend

Nineteen centuries have come and gone
And today Jesus is the central figure of the human race
And the leader of mankind's progress
All the armies that have ever marched
All the navies that have ever sailed
All the parliaments that have ever sat
All the kings that ever reigned put together
Have not affected the life of mankind on earth
As powerfully as that one solitary life

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