

Discovering God's Word: Can the Bible be Trusted?

Wylie United Methodist Church
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2 Peter 1:15-2:3 (written by Apostle Peter about 65AD)

15 And I will make every effort to see that after my departure you will **always be able to remember these things**. **We did not follow cleverly invented stories** when we told you about the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but **we were eyewitnesses** of his majesty. 17 For he received honor and glory from God the Father when the voice came to him from the Majestic Glory, saying, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased." 18 **We ourselves heard this voice** that came from heaven when we were with him on the sacred mountain. 19 And **we have the word of the prophets made more certain**, and you will do well to pay attention to it, as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts. 20 Above all, you must understand that **no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation**. 21 For **prophecy never had its origin in the will of man**, but **men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit**. 22 But there were also false prophets among the people, just as **there will be false teachers among you**. They will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the sovereign Lord who bought them—bringing swift destruction on themselves. 2 Many will follow their shameful ways and will bring the way of truth into disrepute. 3 In their greed **these teachers will exploit you with stories they have made up**. Their condemnation has long been hanging over them, and their destruction has not been sleeping.

History of New Testament:

- The 1st century church relied significantly on oral testimony from the apostles and those close to them.
- Many of Paul's epistles (letters) were written between 50-60AD.
- The NT Gospels most likely were written down after the fall of the temple in 70AD.
- Mark was most likely the first Gospel written around 70AD.
- Matthew, Mark & Luke are known as Synoptic Gospels because they share similar Content, Language & Structure.
- All NT Gospels were written in 1st Century within the lifetime of eyewitnesses.
- Most disputed "gospels" were written centuries later.
- Early church leaders quoted from Matthew, John and Paul's epistles, referring to them as scripture.
- The Council of Nicea in 325 AD (convened by Constantine) recognized the books that make up the New Testament (The Canon),
- Canon (measure of authenticity)
- But the 4 Gospels and other New Testament letters had been written and recognized as authentic hundreds of years earlier.

HOW DO WE KNOW THAT THE BIBLE CAN BE TRUSTED?

Criteria for New Testament:

1. **APOSTOLIC** – each book had to be written by an apostle or someone closely associated with them, usually verified by eyewitness accounts.
2 Peter 1:16 We **did not follow cleverly invented stories** ...but **we were eyewitnesses** of his majesty.
(over 500 people witnessed the resurrected Jesus)

2. **AUTHENTIC** – each book had to be universally accepted by the local churches as authentic.
If people in the first century began to make things up about Jesus, there were people still living that knew it would be false and they would not have stood for it.
Luke 1:1-4 (written by Luke about 75 AD – companion of Paul – author of Acts)
1 Many have undertaken to draw up an account of the **things that have been fulfilled among us**, 2 just as they were **handed down to us by those who from the first were eyewitnesses and servants of the word**. 3 Therefore, since **I myself have carefully investigated everything from the beginning**, it seemed good also to me to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, 4 **so that you may know the CERTAINTY of the things you have been taught**.
 3. **DIVINELY INSPIRED** – each book had to be universally accepted by church leaders as being divinely inspired by the Holy Spirit.
John 16:12-13 "I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear. But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, **he will guide you into all truth**.
2 Timothy 3:15-17 ... **the holy Scriptures, ... are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work**.
 4. **CONSISTENT** – each book had to be consistent with the doctrine that the church already possessed – namely, the OT and apostolic teaching.
Matthew 5:17 "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; **I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them**.
After His resurrection, Jesus speaks of fulfilling OT prophecy
Luke 24:44
He said to them, "This is what I told you while I was still with you: **Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me** in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms."
- Why should we believe in the authenticity of God's Word?
1. The gospels are **rooted in multiple eyewitness testimony**.
 2. The gospels were **written too close to the actual events** to be untrue.
1 Corinthians 15:3-8
3 For what I received I passed on to you as of **first importance**: that **Christ died** for our sins **according to the Scriptures**, 4 that **he was buried**, that **he was raised** on the third day **according to the Scriptures**, 5 and that **he appeared to Peter**, and then **to the twelve**. 6 After that, he appeared **to more than five hundred** of the brothers at the same time, **most of whom are still living**, though some have fallen asleep. 7 Then he appeared **to James**, then **to all the apostles**, 8 and last of all **he appeared to me** also.
 3. The NT **contains embarrassing and hard to explain material** that the authors would have deleted if they weren't true. (ex. Women discovering the empty tomb)
 4. **Archaeology and ancient writings** outside the Bible tend to **corroborate** the New Testament Gospels.
24,000 manuscripts of NT compared to 2nd place Homer's Iliad (600)
 5. Most of the **NT authors were martyred** for their beliefs. Would you die for a lie?
 6. It **CHANGED MY LIFE !!**
John 20:30-31 (written by Apostle John about 95AD)
30 Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. 31 But **these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name**.