

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)
 - (3rd book) Gospel of Luke
 - 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

Work	Originally Written	Earliest Comp Ms	Difference
New Testament	~75	~ 350	~275
Josephus	~90	~1000	~900
Plutarch	~100	~950	~850
Tacitus	~100	~850	~750
Old Testament	1400-400	~350	750-1750
Enuma Elish	~1750 BC	~650 BC	~1100
Rigveda	1500-1000	~1350 AD	~2600
Iliad	bef 700 BC	~1050 AD	1750+

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.

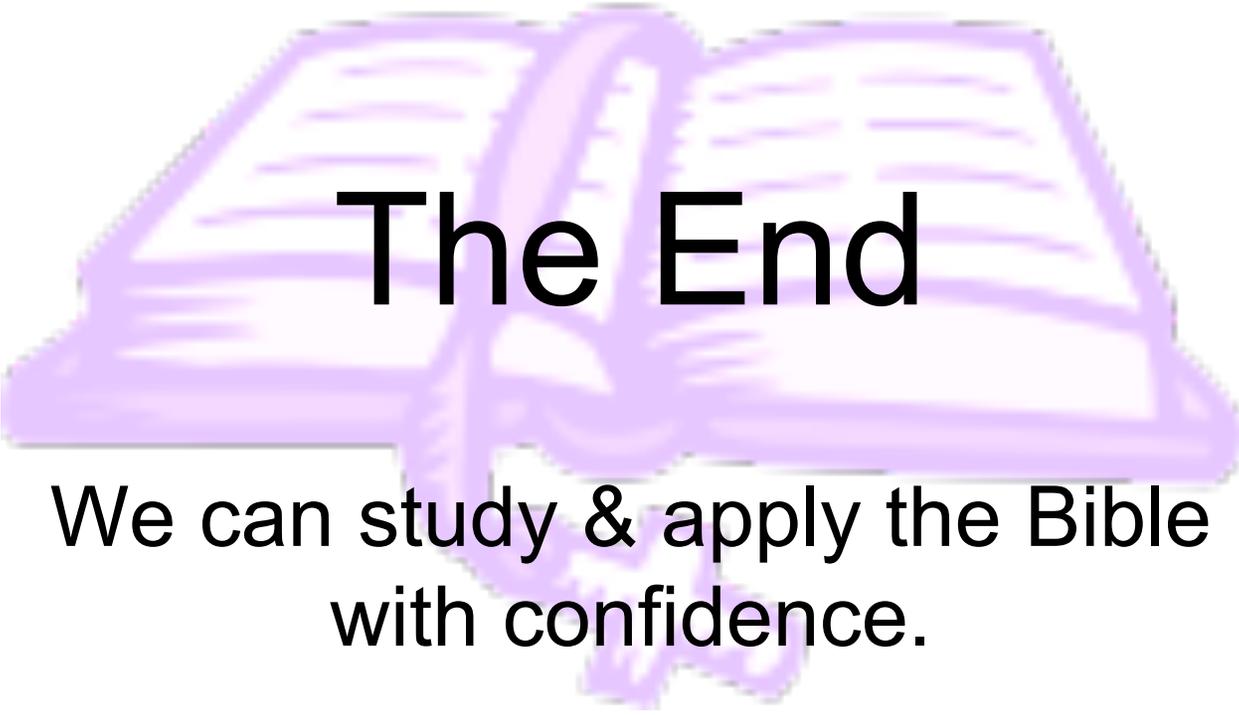
Bible Translation

- 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.