A person's hand is shown holding a thick, orange leather-bound Bible. The person is wearing a dark, long-sleeved shirt. The background is a soft-focus outdoor scene with a dirt path, green grass, and trees under a bright sky.

SO... HOW DO WE KNOW THE BIBLE IS REALLY GOD'S WORD, ANYWAY?

Examining the Evidence



**HARVEST
BIBLE
CHAPEL**
PITTSBURGH NORTH

DISCIPLESHIP SERIES

Harvest Bible Chapel

Discipleship Series

According to recent surveys, Bible readership is on a steady decline. It is a disturbing trend, especially among younger respondents. As people distance themselves from the Bible we see the devastating effects in our culture. Wickedness is running rampant: traditional marriage is under assault, people are experiencing gender identity crisis, violence is escalating at an alarming rate, abortion is being celebrated as a virtue, and on and on...

There is a direct relationship between how our culture views the Bible and the societal decay that we're experiencing. If people really believed that the Bible was God's direct message to them... if they really believed that the Bible was God's way of revealing Himself, exposing our sinful human nature, and what God's requirements of humans are... then there would be massive revival in our land. This is the heart of the issue: for whatever the reasons may be, many people (self-proclaimed Christians included) simply do not believe the Bible is God's way of communicating to us. They have a hard time with the fact of the Bible being God's book. Our sincere hope is that they might be convinced, however, if presented with the facts.

The evidence for the Bible being the very Word of God is both overwhelming and undeniable. The purpose of this course is present a convincing body of evidence so that Christians will know why they believe what they believe concerning the Bible. After all, Christians are called upon to give a reasonable explanation for the hope that lies within them (1 Peter 3:15). For the skeptics, this course will hopefully provide enough truth to break through any doubt they may have.

Disclaimers

Some of the content of this course has been the result of study and data collection over a number of years from different places and the sources may not have been cited at the time. However, throughout the course, attempts were made to cite sources where possible.

The basic outline of the class and some of the information is based off of sections in Josh McDowell's book: "The New Evidence that Demands a Verdict".

Scripture quotations taken from the New American Standard Bible® (NASB),
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Discipleship Series



- 1). To honor the divine Author of scripture by having a higher and loftier view of His Word, trembling with holy reverence each time we open the Bible.
- 2). To obtain an increased confidence that the Bible really is what God said it is in 1 Thessalonians 2:13, 'the Word of God' which is sufficient for all matters of faith and conduct. We want to have an increased trust in the veracity and accuracy of the Scriptures.
- 3). To be better equipped to give, to those ask us, a reason for the hope that lies within us (1 Peter 3:15).
- 4). To meditate upon, memorize and believe what the Apostle Paul told his son in the faith, Timothy, regarding the Word of God:

"All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.

- 2 Timothy 3:16-17



The Canon of Scripture

The term 'canon' comes from a Greek word (kanon) which means:

Measuring rod or rule

It refers to the collection of individual writings that comprise the Old Testament and New Testament.

Churches, councils or people did not 'decide' or 'pick' which books would be considered part of the canon of scripture, but rather 'recognized' which ones were inspired by God.

The church '**received**' the canon.



What was the criteria used to recognize God's inspired books?

The authority of the writer

- Old Testament: Had to be a lawgiver, prophet or the leader in Israel. Recognition of OT canon probably took place under the influence of the scribe Ezra (a very long process, given the OT books were written over many centuries).
- New Testament: Had to be an Apostle or a colleague of an Apostle (Mark was an associate of Peter; Luke was an associate of Paul)

Internal evidences of the books themselves

- Teaching must be orthodox - the books must be consistent in doctrine.
- The books must have some evidence of their unique character as being inspired and authoritative.

- The content should commend itself to the reader as being different from an ordinary book in communicating the revelation of God.
- The book should bear evidence of high moral and spiritual values that would reflect the work of the Holy Spirit.
- Books may be verified by other scripture (Peter refers to Paul's writings in 2 Peter 3:16, as 'other Scriptures'. Paul quotes from Luke 10:7 in 1 Timothy 5:18). In other words, the early church had a 'functional canon' from the beginning.

Reception by the early church

- There is surprising unanimity among the early church as to recognizing which books belonged in the canon of scripture.
- Although there were a few books that were temporarily doubted, no book whose authenticity was doubted by any large number of churches was later accepted.

Relevance

- Widespread and longstanding usage within the church

170 AD Muratorian Fragment

Oldest known list of New Testament books.

Discovered by Ludovico Antonio Muratori in a manuscript in the Ambrosian Library in Milan.

Dated at 170 AD because of a reference to Pius 1 of Rome as being recent (Pius 1 died in 157 AD).



The list contains **22 of the 27** NT books, leaving out Hebrews, James, 1 and 2 Peter, and 3 John.

320 - 330 AD Eusebius

Greek historian of Christianity

22 of 27 NT books



350 AD Cyril of Jerusalem

26 of 27 NT books

364 AD Council of Laodicea

26 of 27 NT books

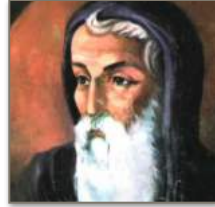
Excluded Revelation

Council included things like, regulating the conduct of church leaders and members, how to handle heretics, outlining liturgical practices, and specifying Biblical canon.



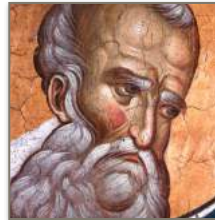
367 AD
Athanasius

First time to recognize all 27 of 27 NT books



390 AD
Gregory of Nazianus

Recognized ALL 27 of 27 NT books

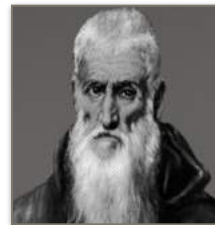


393-419 AD
African Canons

Recognized ALL 27 of 27 NT books

394 AD
Jerome

Recognized ALL 27 of 27 NT books



395-400 AD
Augustine of Hippo

Recognized ALL 27 of 27 NT books



397AD
Carthage Synod

26 of 27 NT books - Excluded Revelation



419 AD
Carthage Synod
27 of 27 NT books - Brought back Revelation

404 AD

Jerome and the Latin Vulgate

He was a master at the Hebrew language and was considered to be the greatest Christian scholar in the world.

Many early translators did not possess a good command of the Greek languages and so there were many copies of old Latin manuscripts in circulation of poor quality.

Jerome was committed to go back to the original Hebrew and Greek. He spent 23 years translating the Bible into Latin by himself, removing all the inaccuracies introduced by earlier copyists.

This translation was known as the Latin Vulgate (from 'vulgus', meaning 'common language').

For 1,000 years, translators worked from the Vulgate, until the Reformation when the scholars began working from the original Greek.



1268-1289 AD

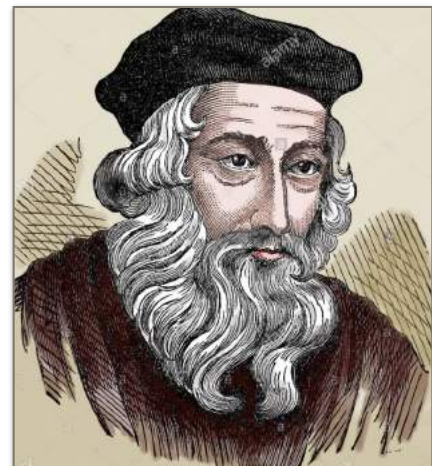
Eyeglasses

The invention of eyeglasses aided in the copying process. The earliest eyeglasses were worn only by scholars and monks.

1380-1382 AD

John Wycliffe

Translated the whole Bible into English for the first time. Wycliffe is known as '*The Morning Star of the Reformation*' because his work sparked the dramatic events of the Reformation.



1455 AD

Gutenberg Printing Press

Mass production eliminates the need to hand-write Bibles.

200 copies of the Gutenberg Bible printed.

Sold at 1455 Frankfurt Book Fair at a cost equivalent to 3 years salary of the average clerk.

The Gutenberg Bibles were stunningly beautiful, hand-illuminated with rainbow color and liquid gold.

Roughly 50 copies in existence today.



1526 AD

William Tyndale

Theologian and scholar who was the first to take advantage of printing the Bible on Gutenberg's moveable-type printing press.

Translated the New Testament into a form of modern English with the aid of reformer Martin Luther in Wittenberg

"I defy the pope and all his laws. If God spares my life, ere many years, I will cause the boy that driveth the plow to know more of the Scriptures than you."

Before being strangled at the stake and his dead body burned, he cried out with a loud voice: *'Lord! open the king of England's eyes.'*

Approximately 85% of the King James Version of the Bible follows Tyndale's translation.



1560 AD

Geneva Bible

First English Bible to add numbered verses in each chapter.

One of the Bibles to be taken on the Mayflower to America.

Based on Greek & Hebrew translations and revisions to William Tyndale's Bible.

Popular translation with extensive margin notes written by Reformation leaders like John Calvin (history's first 'study Bible').



1611 AD

King James Bible

Political and religious polarization. People looking for stability when King James ascended to the throne in 1603.

King James was agitated at the 'revolutionary' tone of the margin notes of the Geneva bible.

He commissioned 50 of his best scholars to write a non-biased translation using old and familiar words and popular idioms of the day.



421 word changes from 1611 to today.

Updated: 1795, 1804, 1810, 1821, 1828, 1829, 1835, 1838, 1840, 1847, 1857, 1859, 1865, 1868, 1870, 1876, 1880, 1881.

Common Modern Bibles

1903 - American Standard Version (ASV)
1952 - Revised Standard Version (RSV)
1963 - New American Standard Bible (NASB)
1971 - The Living Bible (TLB) paraphrase
1979 - New International Version (NIV)
1982 - New King James Version (NKJV)
1996 - New Living Translation (NLT)
2001 - English Standard Version (ESV)

To get a reliable translation of the Bible in our own language was accomplished by many committed individuals through a series of amazing events.

Only a Sovereign God could have orchestrated all of this!!

Historians

31-100 AD

Flavius Josephus

A Romano-Jewish scholar.

The son of a priest, he became a Pharisee, a military commander in the Jewish resistance, and an eyewitness to Jerusalem's destruction in AD 70.

Eusebius, the first church historian, calls him "the most famous Jew of his time".¹

"At this time there was a wise man called Jesus, and his conduct was good, and he was known to be virtuous. Many people among the Jews and other nations became his disciples. Pilate condemned him to die. Those who had become his disciples did not abandon his discipleship. They reported that he had appeared to them three days after his crucifixion and that he was alive".²



61-113 AD

Pliny the Younger

Describing early Christians in a letter to Roman Emperor Trajan:

"They were in the habit of meeting on a certain fixed day before it was light, when they sang in alternate verses a hymn to Christ, as to a god, and bound themselves by a solemn oath, not to any wicked deeds, but never to commit any fraud, theft or adultery, never to falsify their word, nor deny a trust when they should be called upon to deliver it up; after which it was their custom to separate, and then reassemble to partake of food—but food of an ordinary and innocent kind."



¹ <https://answersingenesis.org/bible-history/is-josephus-reliable/>

² Jewish Antiquities (A18:63)

80-140 AD

Phlegon

Julius Africanus mentions historian Phlegon, who wrote a chronicle of history around 140 AD. In this history, Phlegon mentions the darkness surrounding the crucifixion in an effort to explain it:

“Phlegon records that, in the time of Tiberius Caesar, at full moon, there was a full eclipse of the sun from the sixth to the ninth hour.”³



1851-1939

Sir William Ramsey

The world's most eminent authority on the geography and history of ancient Asia Minor of his day. He approached a study of the NT with skepticism. After studying the book of Acts, desperately seeking help for some unanswered questions, he changed his former view that scripture was historically unreliable. He said:

“I take the view that Luke’s history is unsurpassed in regard to its trustworthiness...you may press the words of Luke in a degree beyond any other historian’s and they stand the keenest scrutiny and the hardest treatment.”⁴



³ Africanus, Chronography, 18:1

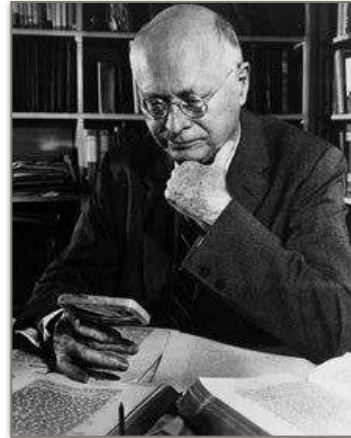
⁴ Sir William Ramsay, *Luke The Physician*, pp 177-179

1891 - 1971

William F. Albright

Expert in reconstructing past civilizations from their artifacts. A wide reputation for his identification of 'lost' biblical towns, he said:

*"The reader may rest assured: nothing has been found to disturb a reasonable faith, and nothing has been discovered which can disprove a single theological doctrine.... We no longer trouble ourselves with attempts to 'harmonize' religion and science, or to 'prove' the Bible. **The Bible can stand for itself.**"*



Roman historian A.N. Sherwin-White on the book of Acts:

"The confirmation of history is overwhelming... Any attempt to reject its basic historicity must now appear to be absurd. Roman historians have long taken it for granted".⁵

Josh McDowell on applying consistent criticism to books of antiquity:

"After trying to shatter the historicity and validity of the Scripture, I came to the conclusion that it is historically trustworthy. If one discards the Bible as being unreliable, then one must discard almost all literature of antiquity".⁶

⁵ Josh McDowell, *The New Evidence that Demands a Verdict* (Campus Crusade for Christ, Inc: Here's Life Publishers, Inc, 1999), 66.

⁶ Josh McDowell, *The New Evidence that Demands a Verdict* (Campus Crusade for Christ, Inc: Here's Life Publishers, Inc, 1999), 68.