



The contrary of a truth can never be demonstrated - Thomas Aquinas

Confident Christians

Can We Know God – Is the New Testament Reliable?

Treating the Bible like it's any other book to prove it's unlike any other book

Bibliographical Test

This deals with the reliability of the manuscripts and the dating of the writing.

Key proof points:

- The New Testament was written during the lifetime of the eyewitnesses by nine authors who exhibited the highest degree of ethics and truthfulness.
- There is no account in history where myth has entered into an account where two generations had not passed.

Dating of the Gospels (from New Testament scholar David Alan Black):

- Matthew: AD 42.
- Luke AD 58-60.
- Mark AD 66.
- John AD 90.

Evidence of early dating:

- The New Testament can be reconstructed via early church father's quotes except for 27 verses (mostly in 3 John).
- Early church fathers living between AD 95-110 quote from nearly every New Testament book.

Available manuscript evidence:

- There are 24,000 early manuscripts available of the New Testament; closes rival is the Iliad with 643 copies.

Internal Evidence Test

This concerns itself with asking the question of if all the accounts cohere and tell the same story, or if meaningful contradictions exist.

- Jesus came to die for the sins of the world
- Jesus chose twelve disciples to follow Him
- Jesus lived a sinless and virtuous life
- Jesus was opposed by the religious leaders of His day
- Jesus openly delivered teachings to His disciples and crowds
- Jesus worked miracles to validate His message and Person
- Jesus was condemned, crucified, and died under Pontius Pilate
- Jesus was placed in a guarded tomb for three days
- Jesus was resurrected from the dead and appeared to His disciples

The key points from Paul's writings about Jesus:

- Born of a virgin and is deity
- Lived sinless life
- Death on cross
- Jews put Him to death
- Burial and resurrection

Bottom line: No meaningful contradictions are found in the New Testament

External Evidence Test

This test asks the question of what external evidence exists to corroborate the manuscripts truth claims.

The following extra-biblical authors verify New Testament persons or events:

- Josephus – persons of Jesus, John the Baptist James, Pilate, Festus, Annas; death of James and John the Baptist
- Tacitus – person of Jesus and persecution of Christians
- Pliny the Younger – person of Jesus and worship of Christians
- Lucian of Samosata – person of Jesus and His worship by Christians
- Celsus - person of Jesus and His worship by Christians
- Jewish Talmud – death of Jesus

Jesus is referenced by 43 authors outside the Bible (vs. 10 for Tiberius Caesar).

Examples from archaeology:

- Jesus' brother James coffin found in 1955; inscription reads "James son of Joseph, brother of Jesus"
- The city of Nazareth (1955)
- Inscription to Caiaphas found
- Name of Pilate (as prefect of Judea) found in 1961 and dated to be A.D. 26-37

25,000 digs support the Bible; none refute it.

The New Testament has more evidence for its reliability than any other ancient work.