

Basics of Christianity Series
The Reliability of Scripture

Why talk about reliability?

You don't follow what you don't trust. Following God's Word requires that we lay down our ideas of living in order to obey the Lord's way of living. Also, if we can't trust what it says in general then how can we trust the huge claims it makes about Jesus?

Aspects of Reliability:

- 1) Whether or not it's reliable to every culture in every era
- 2) Whether or not eye witness accounts and teachings are accurate with original events
- 3) Whether or not its commands and moral teachings are worth following

Can we trust that the Bible we have today is the one that was written?

Manuscript Evidence

We have 5,800 NT Greek Manuscripts

Some of these are complete editions of the New Testament. Others are only fragments of a page.

Only about 10% are from the first 900 years, but that doesn't include other translations. We have about 50 Greek manuscripts in the first 300 years. The earliest full New Testament we possess was written about 325 A.D., but the earliest fragment we have was written around 125 A.D. – about 100 years after Jesus. However, we have about 18,000 ancient translations of the New Testament (Syriac, Coptic, Latin, etc.). That makes close to 24,000 separate copies (partial and full) of the New Testament. If you stacked the Greek manuscripts and translations on top of each other they would be a mile high!

+We have enough NT quotations in the Church Fathers (bishops within 100 years after the apostles) to re-create the whole New Testament!

Methods of Copying

A giant telephone game? Monks with an agenda? Was it a conspiracy like in the Da Vinci Code?

For a good outline on how the New Testament was copied, see [Stand to Reason](#).

Travel and transfer of information in that day:

- You could go about 20 miles per day on land (Ephesus to Corinth was 50 days)
- Jerusalem to Rome by sea was 25 days and very expensive.

Moral and Supernatural Claims

The Bible makes big claims about the world, man, and God.

Read 2 Peter 3:15-16, Ephesians 2:20. These passages show that the New Testament letters were already viewed on par with Scripture. Paul's writings are seen by Peter as being twisted just like *the rest* of the Scripture. Also, we see from Ephesians that the foundation of the Church is built upon what the Apostles and prophets have given to us, which has been passed down in the form of the current writings that make up the NT.

The moral commands all depend on Jesus being God. All the evidence in the world will not convince you to deny your own heart if you don't believe Jesus showed you the Father. He is the crux of all Christianity because if you believe him to be God, then all other questions become moot – Does God exist? Do miracles happen? Is there really a coming judgment? Does sin matter? All these questions and more change when you believe that Christ was born by a virgin, came into this world to bring forgiveness of sins through his death and resurrection, and spoke of his coming return to bring judgment.