

## Can We Trust the Bible?

### Introduction

If you do not have the outline for the previous lesson, *Ten Terms or Phrases that Tell Who Jesus Is*, ask me. This outline will be referenced in a lesson coming up soon. We are still considering Christian Evidences. Let's consider what we have seen so far. (1) The Bible is not a book of fiction and folklore. It is reliable history. (2) The Bible records hundreds of prophecies in precise detail, which can be verified as being fulfilled. The Bible provides its own evidence as being the inspired word of God.

In this lesson, we will consider two fair questions. (1) Haven't the contents been altered so much by mistakes made by copyists, Jewish and Christian bias, and corruption that the Bible is unreliable? (2) How can we trust a document that is hundreds of years old when there is no one living today to verify the original words?

### I. Our Reliance on Historical Documents – Ancient World History

#### A. Clay Tablets of Sumer 4,500 – 4,000 BC

These tablets tell us about the ancient history of the Sumerians. Without these clay tablets and other artifacts, we may not know that this civilization existed.

#### B. China's *Classics of History* 551 – 479 BC, compiled by Confucius from earlier writings.

This document is accepted without question as actual history of China.

#### C. Old Testament documents

1. Before 1947 the earliest known manuscripts dated AD 900, the Aleppo Codex.

2. After the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls in 1947, the gap was closed by approximately 350 years closer to originals. No alterations of significance were found.

#### D. The New Testament compared to secular historical documents

1. Herodotus 484 – 420 BC

Known manuscripts – 8

Date of earliest manuscript – AD 900

Span of time from the originals 1,300 years

2. Julius Caesar 58 BC – 50 BC

Known manuscripts *Gallic Wars* – 9

Date of earliest manuscript – AD 800

Span of time from the originals 800 years

3. Livy 59 BC – AD 17  
 Known manuscripts *Roman History* – 29  
 Date of earliest manuscript – AD 300  
 Span of time from the originals 300 years
4. Tacitus AD 100 – 115  
 Known manuscripts *Annals* – 2  
 Date of earliest manuscript – AD 1000  
 Span of time from the originals 1,000 years
5. Josephus – AD 80 - 100  
 Known manuscripts *Jewish War* – 2  
 Date of earliest manuscript – AD 900  
 Span of time from the originals 800 years

II. The Record of the New Testament documents

A. Complete New Testament – AD 325

Span of time from the originals 275 years

Fragments of the New Testament – earliest AD 50 or before, Book of Mark, found in among the Dead Sea Scrolls

Span of time from the original 15 years or less

B. Comparing the New Testament manuscripts with secular history.

	<u>Available number of manuscripts</u>	<u>Span from the originals</u>
Herodotus	8	1,300 years
Tacitus	2	1,000
Julius Caesar	9	800
Josephus	2	800
Livy	29	300
New Testament	24,000 + (whole and in part)	whole 250 yrs., earliest 15 yrs.

Conclusion

The New Testament is the best preserved ancient document in the history, but how can we know we have all of what the originals contained? This will be the topic of the next lesson, “The Acid Test.” Keep in mind, we are still answering these questions. (1) Haven’t the contents been altered so much by mistakes made by copyists, Jewish and Christian bias, and corruption that the Bible is unreliable? (2) How can we trust a document that is hundreds of years old when there is no one living today to verify the original words?