
Week 03: The Validity of the Bible

Topic to be covered:

- Validity of the bible
- Do we have early testimony?
- Do we have eyewitness testimony?
- Do we have testimony from multiple and dependable sources?
- Do we have attestations of polemical rhetoric against Christianity?
- Do we have embarrassing details about the authors?

Validity of the Bible:

Who has the correct view?

- Jews, Christians or Muslims?
 - Christians ... because the bible says so!
- Historians generally employ the following criterions¹ for determining the validity of

historical documents:

1. Early Testimony
 - a. Ex: journal entry
2. Eyewitness Testimony
 - a. Ex: witnessing a crime
3. Multiple Testimony

¹"I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist" by Normal L. Geisler (pages 230-231) for details. For further discussion in this subject see: "Qualitative Research, An Introduction to **Methods and Designs**" by Stephen D. Lapan and Marylynn T. Quartaroli. "After the Fact, The Act of Historical Detection", Sixth Edition, by James West Davidson and Mark Hamilton Lytle.

- a. Ex: car accident
- 4. Embarrassing details about author
 - a. Ex: filling a job application

Early Testimony:

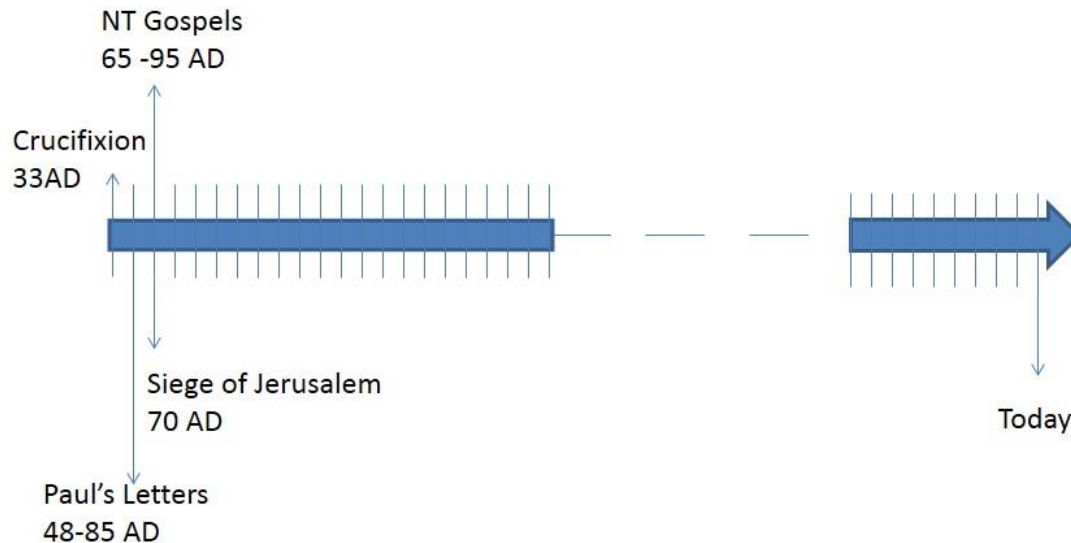


Figure 1: Timeline of New Testament Documents

- Many people wonder why we should trust the bible since it was written 2000 years ago.
 - This is a good thing.
 - Ex: Keeping a journal
 - The longer we wait to write an event, the more likely we are going to forget it.
 - On the other hand, once you write a journal entry, the accuracy of it will not change over time.
- Mainstream media states that the bible was written centuries after Jesus
 - Most of the books in the New Testament were written before A.D. 70.

- We know this because there is no mention of the Jewish temple being destroyed
- Some state even a decade after the life of Christ is too long of a period.
 - Oral Tradition
 - Israelites had a unique ability to memorize since **the art of writing was a phenomenon that was newly emerging**
 - Hence, even if the bible was written a few years after the ascension of Christ, they would have most likely memorized the teachings
- *We can conclude the bible fulfils the first requirement of “Early Testimony.”*
- Compare with Quran:
 - ‘Jibril’ (Gabriel) is said to have met the prophet Mohammad in 610AC.
 - The Quran was then compiled in successions of about 23 years.
 - Note: this is nearly 600 years AFTER the death of Christ.
 - Quran does not fulfil the first requirement.

Eyewitness Testimony

In most cases, the authors of the New Testament were **eyewitnesses of Jesus** or at the very least **close associates and contemporaries** of the eyewitnesses:

- Peter (author of two epistles):
 - *“For we were not making up clever stories when we told you about the powerful coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. We saw his majestic splendor with our own eyes 17 .. **2 Peter 1: 16-19***
- John (author of a Gospel, three epistles, and Revelation)

- *“We proclaim to you the one who existed from the beginning, **whom we have heard and seen**. We saw him with our own eyes and touched him with our own hands. He is the Word of life.²³ We proclaim to you what we ourselves have actually seen and heard so that you may have fellowship with us. **1 John 1:1-4***
- Paul (author of 14 epistles)
 - *“I passed on to you what was most important and what had also been passed on to me. Christ died for our sins, just as the Scriptures said.⁴ He was buried, and he was raised from the dead on the third day, just as the Scriptures said.⁵ He was seen by Peter^[c] and then by the Twelve.⁶ **After that, he was seen by more than 500 of his followers^[d]** at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have died.⁷ Then he was seen by James and later by all the apostles.⁸ Last of all, as though I had been born at the wrong time, I also saw him.” **1 Corinthians 15:3-8***

They challenged their readers to check the evidence:

- *“After that, he was seen by more than 500 of his followers at one time, **most of whom are still alive**” **1 Corinthians 15:6***
- We also know that they were eyewitnesses because their description of history is accurate.
- They properly identified:
 - Historical people: (i.e. Agrippa I and II, Ananias, Cesar Augustus, Caiaphas, Claudius, Herod Antipas, Herod the Great, Herodias, Pontius Pilate)
 - Historical places: (cities, lakes, ports, mountains, exc.)
 - Understood the culture
 - Contemporary clothing, politics, economic status
- They had no reason to lie

- All of the New Testament writers (except for John) were martyred because they continued to talk about Christ
- No political, social or economic benefit
 - They encouraged their followers to follow the same government that was persecuting them
- *We can conclude the bible fulfils the second requirement of “Eyewitness Testimony.”*
- Compare with Quran:
 - *And with the truth We have sent the Qur'an down, and with the truth it has descended. And We have not sent you, [O Muhammad], except as a bringer of good tidings and a warner. And [it is] a Qur'an which We have separated [by intervals] that **you might recite it to the people** over a prolonged period. And We have sent it down progressively. **Sura 17:105-16***
 - *And he revealed to His Servant what he revealed. The heart did not lie [about] what it saw. So will you dispute with him over what he saw? **Sura 53:10-12***
 - Note: Mohammad himself was not around at the time Christ Jesus existed.
 - Mohammad was not an eyewitness of Jesus Christ.

Multiple Testimony:

- Multiple independent testimonies (eight authors of the New Testament)
 - *“At noon, darkness fell across the whole land until three o'clock.”⁴⁶ At about three o'clock, Jesus called out with a loud voice, ‘Eli, Eli¹ lema sabachthani?’ which means ‘My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?’” **Matthew 27: 45-46***

- *“At noon, darkness fell across the whole land until three o’clock. ³⁴ Then at three o’clock Jesus called out with a loud voice, ‘Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?’ which means ‘My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?’”* **Mark 15:33-34**
- Dr. Richard Carrier (an atheist) claims the authors plagiarized
 - because they are **too similar**
 - Accuracy is most likely **accredited to Oral Tradition and not plagiarism**
- Apparent contradictions:
 - Dr. Bart D. Eherman claims authors **contradict one another**
 - not enough facts that are alike
 - *“Now it was about the sixth hour, and there was darkness over all the earth until the ninth hour. ⁴⁵ Then the sun was darkened, and the veil of the temple was torn in two. ⁴⁶ And when Jesus had cried out with a loud voice, He said, “Father, ‘into Your hands I commit My spirit.’” Having said this, He breathed His last.”* **Luke 23:44-46**
 - *“After this, Jesus, knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the Scripture might be fulfilled, said, “I thirst!” ²⁹ Now a vessel full of sour wine was sitting there; and they filled a sponge with sour wine, put it on hyssop, and put it to His mouth. ³⁰ So when Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, “It is finished!” And bowing His head, He gave up His spirit.”* **John 19:28-30**
 - Recall “car accident” example!
- Background information:
 - Luke (the Journalist) composed his gospel after speaking with the crowd that saw the crucifixion
 - Friday was a day that most people would go to the market to shop in public

- The romans would crucify most of their criminals on this day
- John, along with the Virgin Mary, were right below his feet.
- All of His other disciples had abandoned Him at that point
- Luke explicitly says: “Jesus had cried out **with a loud voice ...**”
- On the contrary, John says: “It is finished!” **And bowing His head**, He gave up His spirit”
- *We can conclude the bible fulfils the third requirement of “Multiple Testimony.”*
- Compare with the Quran
 - As we have seen, Mohammad is the only person who met with Gabriel.
 - No one else can testify what Mohammad saw.

Embarrassing details:

- The disciples deny Christ:
 - *“Then he began to curse and swear, saying, **“I do not know the Man!”** Immediately a rooster crowed.⁷⁵ And Peter remembered the word of Jesus who had said to him, “Before the rooster crows, you will deny Me three times.” So he went out and wept bitterly”* **Matthew 26: 74-75**
 - Why would they include this information?
 - What is the motivation to lie?
 - Ex: job application
- But (perhaps) the most embracing event is **the discovery of the empty tomb.**
 - The resurrection of Christ is the center of our belief.
 - Without the resurrection – there is no Christianity!
 - Each gospel’s climax is the resurrection

- Prior to that we read that Christ:
 - is crucified
 - dies on the cross
 - is buried
 - On Sunday morning the tomb of Christ was found empty ...
 - and this discovery was made by ... **women?!!\$\$#@\$\$**
- *We can conclude the bible fulfils the fourth requirement of “Embarrassing details.”*
- Compare with Quran:
 - *You are not, [O Muhammad], by the favor of your Lord, a madman. And indeed, for you is a reward uninterrupted. And indeed, you are of a great moral character. **Sura 68:2-4***
 - Nothing negative or ‘embarrassing’ is written about Mohammad in the Quran.
- Note: we are using the term ‘embarrassing’ to mean information provided by the author that would logically not make sense to make up.