

You're Not Crazy to Believe That...The Reliability of the Bible, 5/4/25

We are starting a 5 week series before we head back into our study of the life of David. It's called-"You're not crazy to believe that." It's an apologetics series. Now a lot of people think apologetics means apologizing for our faith. Those words actually don't have anything to do with each other, that are kind of opposites actually. This term comes right from **1 Peter 3:15** *"But in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense [apologia]*

to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect." A defense of your faith. My wife tells me sometimes that when I'm apologizing, that I'm actually giving an *apologia*...that's not what we want to do guys. But as Christians we should always be ready to give an *apologia*, a defense, a reason for why we have put our hope in the gospel of Jesus Christ.

One of my favorite movies of all-time is Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade. And one of my favorite scenes of all-time was the **leap of faith**. Indy comes this far, only to come to what appears to be an impossible chasm to cross. And just as each deadly obstacle he faced getting to the holy grail represented a test of the Christian faith, this one was no exception. He realized in order to get to the other side it would require a step of faith. So Indy holds his heart and steps off. And instead of falling to his death, he is suspended in mid-air. It was an **optical illusion**. He was on a bridge that safely took him to the other side. Now we won't build an entire theology on a Hollywood movie, but let me just point out that many people think Christianity requires a leap of blind faith into darkness, but actually, what it requires is to step of faith into the light. God does not ask us to check our brains at the door, but actually to use the brain he has given us to discern the path of faith he has laid out for us. Christianity is utterly unique in that it is not only morally and psychologically satisfying (in the sense that it gives the best explanation for our moral world and it practically works in real life) but it is also intellectually and historically satisfying because it stands up to the most rigorous scrutiny.

Maybe you are skeptical or maybe curious but not convinced about Christianity like I once was. I'm glad you are here, stay with us for these 5 weeks and be open-minded to what you discover. Don't hesitate to ask questions, you can text them into our Series Google Voice Number- **(302) 217-6594**. What we want to do in this series is give a defense using what I consider five of the most compelling arguments for the credibility of Christianity. The first is the reliability of the Bible. It's really an obvious place to start, as C.S.Lewis also once said about the Bible- *if it's false, is of no importance, and, if true, of infinite importance. The one thing it cannot be is moderately important."* The reason is because it is the basis for our entire faith and hope, and because of what the Bible claims for itself. **2 Peter 1:20-21** *Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation of things.*

For prophecy never had its origin in the human will, but prophets, though human,

spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit. It claims to be divine in origin, from God himself, and therefore it holds ultimate authority.

2 Timothy 3:16-17 *All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness,*

so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work. It claims to be inspired by God and preeminently practical for our growth.

Hebrews 4:12 *For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit,*

of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart. It claims to be alive, that when we interact with it with a humble receptive heart, it's life-giving and supernatural. It reads us, it convicts us, and changes us from the inside out. And that has absolutely been my experience.

Now, these are big claims, and claims that historical Christian Orthodoxy has claimed from the beginning. And while they are certainly faith propositions, they do not, however, require blind faith. In fact, just the opposite is true which is what we will see today. The Bible is by far the most scrutinized book in history, it has been examined under high literary and historic criticism, and has passed the test. Josh McDowell once said "After more than two centuries of facing the heaviest of scientific and literary guns that could be brought to bear,

the Bible has survived—and is perhaps better for the siege." I think he's right. What this barrage has done is raise up generations of men and women who dedicated their lives to the deep, rigorous research and study of the credibility of the Bible, and their work has been immensely helpful. So I'm standing on their shoulders today in this message. Today I want to show you what I consider the 4 most compelling reasons for the Reliability of the Bible.

#1 The Bible is the Seamless "Bedrock" Story. The Bible is not one book, but really a two volume library the Old Testament and New Testament totaling 66 books, written over a period of 1600 years, written by about 40 authors, across three continents, in 3 languages (Hebrew and Greek) and one minor language (Aramaic). Now if any other library of books was like that you would expect them to be totally incongruent, random, contradictory, no metanarrative holding it together. And yet, what is so compelling as you read the Bible from beginning to end is you come to the stunning conclusion that it is one seamless story. Not only is it seamless but it tells the bedrock, the foundational story of the world. Who is God, how did we get here, what went wrong, and the redemption story of God's grand plan to rescue and restore the world, the universe and everything in it the ultimate hero Jesus. Popular podcaster Dr. Jordan Peterson who himself is on a spiritual journey in recent years came to this understanding through reading the Bible. He said, "It's not just that the Bible is true. It's that the Bible is the precondition for the manifestation of truth..."

Every grand story we tell now is a variation on themes first articulated in the biblical story.”¹

Whether you're reading Tolkien, watching Marvel films, or analyzing Shakespeare you will over and over again see the echoes of biblical structure in the conflicts, redemptions, and moral dilemmas at the heart of these narratives. Maybe it's not that we are telling a story that humans like to tell over and over again, maybe it's that we are telling the story of God that he has implanted in the human heart, it's the story of the Bible that tells the grand story of the universe. Read any other sacred book of any other religion, friends there's nothing like the story of the Bible. But the Bible isn't just a grand story.

#2 The Bible is Historically Credible

The last 100 years of archaeology in the Middle East has demonstrated with amazing accuracy the historical credibility of the Bible, a claim that many other religions cannot claim with their sacred books. When the Bible discusses people, places, events, customs and culture over and over again it has proven to be true. While there are hundreds and hundreds of examples of this I just want to share one from the Old Testament and one from the New.

Customs of Abraham For decades, critics of the Bible said that the book of Genesis was completely out of step with the customs of the Ancient Near east in 2000 BC...Until, Two archaeologists, between 1920-1940s uncovered the **ancient city of Nuzi** in Modern day Iraq, where Abraham came from, 1000s of tablets telling of the customs, the comparison is so exact...The greatest scholar and archaeologist of ancient near east, **William F. Albright- It is now becoming increasingly clear that the traditions of the patriarchal age preserved in the book of Genesis**

reflect with remarkable accuracy the actual conditions of the ancient near east in the middle bronze age.

Pool of Bethesda. Ivy League professors in the early 20th century were declaring that the Gospel of John could not be trusted because in John 5 he says there was a place called Bethesda where there was a pool for cleansing that had five colonnades. But they said, “We've done the archaeological work. There's no place called Bethesda and there's no five colonnades there, so abandon your Bible, forget about it.” And sadly, I'm sure there were lots of people that dropkicked their Bibles because so-called authoritative scholars told them to. But in the mid 1900s they dug a little deeper and wouldn't you know it, there's **[Picture of Me] Bethesda!** I've been there 3x, with its pool and five colonnades, just like the Bible said.

Sir William Ramsey, Professor at Oxford, was a critic of the Bible. He got sick of students arguing with him about the Bible. And so he went to Turkey and Greece and took the book of Acts from the Bible with him **[Footsteps of Paul Slide]** Which by the way is exactly what we are going to do in the Fall, you can register for the trip. Well Prof. Ramsey went on his own Footsteps of Paul tour, tracing every place in Acts to prove that it is inaccurate and unreliable so the students are proved wrong. He became convinced the book of Acts was right, and eventually he became a

¹ Jordan Peterson, *The Psychological Significance of the Biblical Stories* lecture series

Christian. “Luke is a historian of the first rank; not merely are his statements of fact trustworthy...

this author should be placed along with the very greatest of historians.”² To summarize this compelling point, let me use the words of Nelson Glueck, a renowned Jewish archaeologist he said, “It may be stated categorically that no archaeological discovery has ever contradicted a Biblical reference.”³

#3 The Bible Displays Prophetic Trustworthiness

[Skip for the sermon] Let me just touch on this briefly, the Bible contains hundreds of fulfilled prophecies. In Isaiah 13, for example, the fall of Babylon was described in great detail 200 years before these events took place. Or in the book of Daniel where 500 years of political reign was accurately predicted (the fall of Babylon; rise of Persia; rise of Alexander the Great, his death, and the splitting of his empire into four parts; and the rise of Rome, until the kingdom of Christ would destroy all other kingdoms). These prophecies were so accurate that the only thing critics can do is argue that they are a hoax—and some have. Skeptics argued that the texts could have been altered after the fact (50 BC) and presented as Daniel’s original writings. It was a possible argument up until the caves of Qumran where 40,000 fragments of the Old Testament were found dating to 160BC, among them was the book of Daniel that said exactly what our Bible says today, even though the copy was dated a hundred years before these historical events. In addition, there are at least 60 prophecies about Jesus the Messiah that have been fulfilled. Peter Stoner, a mathematician and scientist who applied probability theory to biblical prophecy: “The chances of one man fulfilling just 8 prophecies is 1 in 10¹⁷. That would be like covering

the state of Texas in silver dollars two feet deep, marking one, and having a blindfolded man pick the right one on the first try.”⁴

#4 The Bible’s Abundance and Accuracy of Ancient Manuscripts

The skeptical argument goes something like this. You can’t trust the Bible we have today because everything written about Jesus was written hundreds of years after the events they describe, or probably corrupted by the Roman Catholic church once they were in power, think Da Vinci Code if you remember that book or movie, and even if it wasn’t corrupted, no one has the originals and so we can’t trust the copies of copies of copies aren’t accurate. Some comedians on youtube have talked about how crazy it is to trust the Bible because of these claims. But as Christian Apologist Wesley Huff at Liberty U. convocation just said a couple weeks ago, “If you are getting your Bible history from standup comedians don’t be surprised if it turns out to be a joke.”⁵ The truth is, all three of those false claims have been resoundingly undone. Over the last 75 years, biblical historians, both Christian and none Christian alike, have agreed that the Bible is the most reliable document of antiquity.⁶ Why? Three reasons- 1- The Dating of the New Testament. One of the key methods that historians use to consider whether writings of antiquity can be trusted is how close the writings were to the events they describe.

Need four volunteers. Earliest biography for Alexander the Great was written 400 years after he lived? The Hadith of Islam, which are the sacred writings about what Muhammed said and did, were written 150-200 years after he lived, after everyone's dead and gone that actually would have seen Muhammad live and could either confirm or deny their claims. The New Testament

² Sir William Ramsey, *The Bearing of Recent Discovery on the Trustworthiness of the New Testament*.

³ Nelson Glueck, *Rivers in the Desert: A history of the Negev*

⁴ Peter W. Stoner, *Science Speaks* (1958)

⁵ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=urV0I-6uhdA>

⁶ F.F. Bruce, *The Books and the Parchments*

however was written within 50 years of Jesus' life. The earliest likely within 15 years. The Apostle John says in his letter 1 John- *That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes,*

which we looked upon and have touched with our hands, concerning the word of life. I was there, I saw Jesus up close. Here's why that matters, at the time of their writing, many of the people who witnessed Jesus and what he did, and Paul's ministry, and the miracles, and the growth of the church- they were still alive to verify it. Thank our volunteers!

How many of you have been alive for the last 50 years? Keep your hands up if you have lived in this area for the last 30 years. OK, if I said to you, "The DuPont company never did massive layoffs in the mid-1990s, that was just a myth." You would say, "Nope- you are totally wrong. I was there, I worked for them, I went through that time." This is the power of eye-witness testimony.

2nd reason for reliability is because of the incredible *abundance of ancient manuscripts* from ancient near east and the Greco-Roman region. That's important because the more copies you have the more you can compare them and get a sense of accuracy. You know the copy of Alexander the Great's earliest biography? There are only 8 copies of that. Historians consider that authentic and accurate. In comparison, the New Testament has 25,000 ancient copies. NT is in a category of its own in reliability.

3rd reason is the *accuracy of those ancient manuscripts*. Due to the massive number of manuscripts and early dating, scholars can reconstruct the New Testament with over 99% accuracy. Most of the small differences (called textual variants) are spelling errors or word order, not affecting key doctrines. The next highest of antiquity, *Homer's Iliad* has about 5% textual uncertainty.

All of this really crushes the myth that the Bible has been written much later and corrupted by the church of the Roman Empire. As respected scholar and Biblical historian, Dr. James White, said: *"There has never been a time when a man or a group of men had control over the text of the New Testament.*

All assertions like adding doctrine, changing theology, removing teachings, etc. are without merit.

*The Christian church was a persecuted minority without power to enforce a uniform textual transmission."*⁷ Sorry, but the "the corrupt people in power" narrative just doesn't work for the people.

All of these are compelling reasons, but the greatest reason I trust the Bible is because it accurately tells the reality of what's wrong with my heart, the world, and provides the only

⁷ Dr. James White, *The Reliability of the New Testament*

solution. The Bible is not a book about rules to allow mankind to reach God, but the story of what God has done to forgive us and restore us to be with him forever. Remember our friend Indy standing at the edge of the chasm holding his heart taking a step of faith? The Bible tells us it's Jesus that is that bridge above the chasm of death, that makes a way to God and everlasting life with him. He became that bridge through his sacrifice for our sin.

Communion