

## THE BIBLE — IS IT RELIABLE? IS IT RELEVANT?

What does the Bible claim about itself? Take a look at Isaiah 40:8, John 16:13, 2 Timothy 3:16-17, 2 Peter 1:20-21; 3:15-16. But evidence do we have outside the Bible? Does it prove historical reliability?

- The Bible seems to be absolutely unique in ancient literature in four
  - \* Continuity & fulfilled prophecy - Though written over many centuries by many authors in many places, the Bible fits together as one unified story (Genesis 3:15; Psalm 22:16-18; Isaiah 7:14;53; Micah 5:2; Zechariah 9:9).
  - \* Lack of Distortion - The authors included even embarrassing truth without distortion, such as disorder in the churches and sins of the apostles (Romans 7; 1 Corinthians 3:1-3; Galatians 2:11)
  - \* Circulation and Translation - No book comes close to the Bible's circulation and translation: 1.3 billion by 1932; 1 or more books in 739 languages by 1966.
  - \* Influence - The Bible toppled empires, ruled the world, and inspired innumerable literature.

ways:

WORK	DATE WRITTEN	EARLIEST COPY	TIME SPAN	NUMBER OF COPIES	ACCURACY OF COPIES
Plato	427-347 BC	900 AD	1200 Years	7	-----
Aristotle	384-322 BC	1100 AD	1400 Years	49	-----
Thucydides	5th Cent. BC	900 AD	1300 Years	8	-----
Sophocles	496-406 BC	1000 AD	1400 Years	193	-----
Homer ( <i>Iliad</i> )	9th Cent. BC	400 BC	500 Years	643	95%
New Testament	40 - 100 AD	125 AD	25 Years*	over 24,000**	99+%

\* to earliest manuscript fragment of book of John; ~ 100 years to large NT texts; 250 years to single, complete NT (*Sinaiticus*)

\*\* 5,300 Greek texts, 10,000 Latin Vulgate translations, 9,300 other early translations.

- The Bible has unprecedented manuscript evidence:
  - \* Josephus, the preeminent historian of 1st century Jewish-Roman interaction, wrote in *Antiquities* completed ~93 AD "About this time there lived Jesus, a wise man. For he was one who wrought surprising feats and was a teacher of such people as accept the truth gladly. He won over many Jews and Greeks. When Pilate, upon hearing him accused by men of the highest standing among us, had condemned him to be crucified, those who had in the first place come to love him did not give up their affection for him. And the tribe of Christians, so called after him, has still to this day not disappeared."
  - \* Tacitus, the most important Roman historian of the first century wrote in 115 AD about Nero's persecution of Christians: "Nero fastened the guilt and inflicted the most exquisite tortures on a class hated for their abominations, called Christians by the populace. Christus, from whom the name had its origin, suffered the extreme penalty during the reign of Tiberius at the hands of one of our procurators, Pontius Pilate, and a most mischievous superstition, thus checked for the moment, again broke out not only in Judea, the first source of the evil, but even in Rome..."
  - \* Macrobius in his *Saturnalia* describes Herod's killing of all boys two and younger just as it is recorded in Matthew 2:16.
- Many Biblical events are authenticated by other historical sources: