

# Why Trust the Bible - Week 2

## Chapter 1: Don't Believe Everything You Read

### Week 1 Highlights

- **1 Peter 3:15** “But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give **the reason** for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect”
- When we believe God's Word is true to our core, we live it out very differently than if we don't
- It is impossible to Mathematically or Logically “prove” History; that is not History's goal
- The Old Testament was canonized by the 5th century BC and is rooted in oral tradition, history, prophecy, poetry, and psalms that began to be documented in the 16th century BC
- The New Testament was canonized quickly in the very early church in the 2nd century AD based on 4 criteria: Apostolicity, Antiquity, Orthodoxy, and Universality
- Truly studying Scripture can be difficult, because we have to remember that **it cannot mean to us today, what it did NOT mean to them then.** Hermeneutics & exegesis are tools we can use to help us better understand Scripture based on the time & place of its writing.

### What is Trust?

According to Merriam Webster, trust, as a verb, means *to have confidence in, to deem reliable, to believe.*

## Chapter Questions

**Do you trust the Bible? Why or why not?**

**What are some bad reasons to trust the Bible?**

**What are some good reasons to trust the Bible?**

**What did Jesus think about the Old Testament? Why does it matter?**

If we can establish that there is sufficient evidence to conclude that Jesus was who He said He was, we have a whole new, authoritative endorsement of the Bible, in its *entirety*. We can trust the Bible as true and accurate because the God of the Universe said it is so.

1. Jesus *believed* the Bible
2. Jesus *authenticated* and *endorsed* it as the Word of God
  - He lived according to the law
  - He quoted the scriptures
  - He referred to people from the Old Testament as real
  - He corrected the religious leaders' interpretations of scripture

## **Truth in Science versus History**

### Chapter Questions

The author writes on page 16, "It's turtles all the way down for all of us, no matter what you take as your final authority for knowledge."

**What does he mean?**

**Do you agree with him? Why or why not?**

**Can you think of any examples where we accept these kinds of arguments?**

Richard Dawkins on the Origin of Life: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GIztEjtlirc>

### Seeking Truth in Science

The modern atheist claims vehemently that science has given us everything we need to explain the universe, specifically absent any intelligent designer or deity. However, many post-millennial scientists, specifically molecular biologists and genome scientists, many of whom profess no religious affiliation, are finding significant issues with accepting this approach.

## Deeper Dive: The Human Genome Project

The Human Genome Project was an international scientific research project with the goal of determining the base pairs that make up human DNA, and of identifying, mapping and sequencing all of the genes of the human genome from both a physical and a functional standpoint.

It is the biological instruction manual for creating (and maintaining) a human being. And it remains the world's largest collaborative biological project.

The text of the Human Genome is roughly 3 billion letters long, written in a cryptographic sequencing of 4 character groups. If a person read it aloud at 3 letters per second, without stopping, it would take 31 years to read. Printing the characters in a regular font size on normal bond paper and binding them would result in a book the height of the Washington Monument.

Francis S. Collins, respected international scientist, and leader of the Human Genome Project (also a former atheist) helped President Bill Clinton, in his congratulatory speech, coin the phrase “Today, we are learning the language in which God created life.”

Biologists now understand that even forming a single-celled organism, the most simple form of “life” we can conceive, would require the aligned sequencing of roughly 250 proteins. Put simply, science basically says in order to achieve life, we need a 4 character sequence (e.g. ACDB-BCAD-AACD) sequenced correctly, 250 groups long.

[illegible]

Not only in spite of new scientific discovery, but because of it, it is becoming increasingly difficult for molecular biologists to ignore a theory involving an intelligent designer. Cells are simply too complex for time and evolution to be a rational explanation.

## The Origin of Life

In spite of rigorous claims from atheistic advocates like Richard Dawkins, neither Darwinian theory nor modern science provides any explanation for where “life” began. Only that once it was here, it started evolving in certain ways.

This is where the notion of “science has given us everything we need to explain the universe” should be checked at the door.

In spite of the scientific community's Babylonian hubris regarding its own achievements, through all of our technological marvels, science cannot yet answer the simple question "Where did we come from?"

## Seeking Truth in History

This is why, as humans, we put so much trust in documented history. We accept the testimony of others, when we deem them to be historically accurate and without ulterior motive. We want, and need, to learn from the trials, victories, and experiences of others. What they saw, what they heard. What they did right, and mistakes they made.

Finding truth in accurately documented history has been instrumental in all areas of human progress, science included (perhaps first and foremost).

But in order to discover this truth, we must first establish trust in the historical documents we are analyzing.

***Epistemology*** (pg17) - the investigation of what distinguishes justified belief from opinion.

## Chapter Questions

In this chapter, the author spends time talking about presuppositions (*Reason is reasonable, logic is logical, our senses are trustworthy, we really do exist*):

**Can you identify any presuppositions you may have?**

**Is our belief that the Bible is the Word of God a presupposition? Or a confident conclusion drawn from examining evidence?**

**The author claims that this book is an exercise in “doing history.” Do you feel that is an acceptable approach? Why or why not?**

## Deeper Dive: Examining the Presupposition of Reality

Philosophy can be fun. Our unique and gifted brains can come up with all sorts of craziness, and flexing those muscles can be enjoyable and cathartic. A word of caution, however... What does postulating that we are all the product of some giant's dream do to serve our life's purpose?

The eventuality of running down these types of philosophical arguments is hitting the point at which we acknowledge that it is theoretically possible that nothing exists, or that we're all a dream.

Rather than pursuing this nihilistic course, which is completely unproductive (unless you're writing the movie “The Matrix”), be encouraged that your senses, your experience of waking up everyday, having relationships, fond memories, etc, is sufficient enough evidence for you to believe that you are, indeed, real.

To boot, no brain, or sufficient computing system, is powerful enough to hold all of the information in the world, and keep it organized enough to produce your reality on a daily basis =)

Rejecting nihilism (or non-existence) is critical to taking positive action in our world and relationships.

## Determining Trust in History

Analyzing the trustworthiness of historical documents is an ambitious exercise. We cannot cover all of the angles in which to analyze the gospels, however, the **“Chain of Reliability”** is a good start, and we will add more flavor from our own studies as is appropriate.

The **“Chain of Reliability”** is a chain of evidence based on a series of 5 questions that you can ask to determine if the historical document you are reading is reliable.

1. Can we be confident that the *translation* of the Bible from the original language into our language accurately reflects the original?
2. Can we be confident that the *copyists* accurately transmitted the original writing to us?
3. Can we be confident that we are looking at the *right* set of books?
4. Can we be confident that the original authors were, themselves, *trustworthy*?
5. Can we be confident that the events the original authors described *really* took place?

## Chapter Questions

**What is the difference between Historical Confidence and Mathematical Certainty?**

**How do you feel about someone saying: “I’m not going to act on anything without first hand experience of it.”?**

## Reliability of Historical Documents

Alexander the Great died in 323 BC. The two earliest biographies about him were written by Arrian in approximately 160 AD and Plutarch in approximately 100 AD. Both were written *more than 400 years* after Alexander’s death, yet historians consider them trustworthy.

Now, follow this timeline that Craig Blomberg lays out to Lee Stroble in “A Case for Christ”:

- Acts ends somewhat suddenly (Paul’s testimony to Agrippa), with no mention of what has happened to Paul after that. This implies that it was written prior to his death in 62AD.
- Luke wrote his gospel prior to documenting the Acts of the Apostles, so probably no later than 61AD
- Luke incorporated information from Mark’s gospel writing, so Mark’s account was likely written no later than 60AD.

Therefore, the first gospel was written *no more than 30 years* following Christ’s crucifixion and resurrection.

## More on Reliability

Lee Stroble asks other great questions pertaining to the reliability of the gospels, such as:

- Is there credible evidence for Jesus outside His biographies?
- Does archaeology confirm or contradict Jesus biographies?
- Is the Jesus of History the same as the Jesus of Faith?
- Was Jesus really convinced He was the Son of God?

Anecdotally, those are literally chapter titles in his book “The Case for Christ”. This is a great starting point for further examining Biblical reliability.

## Something to Meditate Upon

From the Gideon's Bible Introduction (author unknown):

The Bible contains the mind of God, the state of man, the way of salvation, the doom of sinners, and the happiness of believers.

Its doctrines are holy, its precepts are binding, its histories are true, and its decisions are immutable.

Read it to be wise, believe it to be safe, and practice it to be holy.

It contains light to direct you, food to support you, and comfort to cheer you.

It is the traveler's map, the pilgrim's staff, the pilot's compass, the soldier's sword and the Christian's charter.

Here too, Heaven is opened and the gates of Hell disclosed.

Christ is its grand subject, our good its design, and the glory of God its end.

It should fill the memory, rule the heart, and guide the feet.

Read it slowly, frequently, and prayerfully.

It is a mine of wealth, a paradise of glory, and a river of pleasure.

It is given you in life, will be opened at the judgment, and be remembered forever.

It involves the highest responsibility, rewards the greatest labor, and will condemn all who trifle with its sacred contents.

## Homework from Ty (if you want it)

With respect to reliability, a question that I have been pondering lately, though without much time to do any legitimate research has been:

Let's assume that the Pharisees and Sadducees, as compared to Jesus' followers, at the time of his death and resurrection, had immense resources: money, power, political connection, even commodities like papyrus on which to write. Let's also assume (which I think is a safe assumption), these people hated Jesus, even enough to kill him, which they did.

If we can safely assume these two statements, I pose this question:

*Where are all the writings from Jewish leaders at the time refuting Jesus' miracles, death, and resurrection?  
Where are the documents written by the people who hated Him the most, refuting everything He ever did?*

I would love partners in researching this. My hypothesis?

We won't find them. Why? Because Jewish leaders are still bound by the law of Torah, which would prevent them from historically documenting lies for future generations.