

Notes on the Reliability of Scripture

Taken from the Josh McDowell Video (1986)

This is an outline of Josh McDowell's video called, "The Reliability of Scripture", back in 1986. This information is given in detail in his book, "**The New Evidence that Demands a Verdict**", by Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1999.

The discussion is of the Bible undergoing tests which the secular world offers to authenticate a work as reliable and to discern whether or not the work we have today is an entirely trustworthy copy of the original.

PART ONE – BIBLIOGRAPHY TEST

1. Old Testament

1. Preservation – Most copies were buried in the desert which when located closes time gaps of original to copies.
2. Accuracy – The Meticulous methodology of the Jews was nothing short of an artform:
 1. Scrolls were written with special ink on specially prepared skin by a highly regarded school of scribes (professionals).
 2. Specified columns, specified spaces between letters were among many of the rules for transcription.
 3. Special pen and rules for just writing the holy name of God speak to the importance placed on making exact copies.
 4. Scribes copied letter by letter and counted everything (actually known as "the counters")
 5. 3 Mistakes and the manuscript would be destroyed.
3. Proof – Dead Sea Scrolls – 200BC year old copies found in a cave near the Dead Sea match almost exactly to 1000AD old copies we already had. There is no other work which has been treated like this, even among writings of other religions.

2. New Testament

Comparing copies of the New Testament to copies of other historical "Classics," shows NT as in a category all its own.

1. Time between Original Writings and Earliest Copy (the shorter the time the more reliable the copy is in reflecting the original).
 1. Aristotle
 1. Original Writing – 384-322 BC
 2. Earliest Copy We Have – 1100 AD
 3. Time Span – 1,400 Years
 2. New Testament
 1. Original Writing – 48-96 AD
 2. Earliest Copy – 125 AD, Whole NT 200 AD
 3. Time Span – 75-100 Years
2. Number of Manuscripts (the greater the number the ease of reflecting original)
 1. New Testament – 24,633 Manuscripts
 2. Sophocles - 193
 3. Aristotle – 49
 4. Tacitus – 20
 5. Caesar – 10
 6. Aristophenes – 10

PART TWO – INTERNAL EVIDENCE TEST

1. **Internal Agreement** (Contradictions would be an indication a work has been tampered with)
 1. Old Testament Prophecies are fulfilled in Old and New Testament histories, and in world history.
 2. Later Old Testament prophets quote earlier passages as authoritative.
 3. Jesus and the apostles in the New Testament quote Old Testament passages as authoritative.
 4. New Testament authors quote each other as authoritative.
 5. Extremely few internal contradictions exist, and can be clearly ascribed to transmission (translation, archeology) of manuscripts and non of are any significance as to meaning and especially not as to teaching.
2. **Self Declaration – 2Timothy 3:16**
 1. Scripture declares itself to be the inspired Word of God. Very few works declare such a thing.
 2. Scripture declares itself to be inerrant. Again, very few works declare such a thing.
 3. Scripture declares itself to be authoritative...
 4. All Scripture is included, all 66 books. A study of how the Bible was recognized points to the self declared truth that it is truly all sufficient.

PART THREE – EXTERNAL EVIDENCE TEST

1. **Reliability of Authors as Eyewitnesses**
 1. Acts 1:3 Jesus taught disciples for 40 days after His resurrection and promised them he would empower them to write down all his teachings by his Spirit.
 2. 11 of 12 Apostles died for the truth of Scripture. John died of old age, never recanted.
 3. Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and John written by eyewitnesses.
 4. Paul's writings (except Romans) are letters from Paul to churches which he had founded or had visited.
 5. All of the New Testament was written during the lifetime of the apostle John, the last living apostle, so a whole generation of eyewitnesses had opportunity to confirm or deny the New Testament.
2. **Reliability of Authors as Official Recorders**
 1. Old Testament authors were Prophets, Priests, or Kings appointed by God in their roles.
 2. The nature of most Old Testament writings is official historic record, with the exception of Leviticus and Deuteronomy which are legal documents to govern the people.
 3. Over half of the New Testament Historical writings are from Luke, who is identified as both a physician and a historian.
 4. Luke wrote the Gospel of Luke and the Acts of the Apostles as a detailed chronological account of the life of Christ and the beginning of the Church up through the ministry of Paul as a legal treatise.
3. **Acceptance of Opposition**
 1. First Century heresies were all based on mystical/symbolic interpretation of Scripture, and never contesting the Scriptures themselves which is an actual testimony to their authority.
 2. Religious divisions through the centuries to follow always were based on the meaning of Scripture, not to the acceptance of Scriptures, again another implicit testimony to authority.
 3. Primary Cults – Mormons etc. Add to the Scriptures, but do not deny scriptures.
4. **Historians and Archeologists**
 1. Historians have long relied on Scripture as a reliable source of historic record, especially Luke is noted as being the best historian of his age.
 2. Archeologists have proven aspects of Scriptural historic record over and over and often rely on the places as described in the Bible to locate ancient sites of ancient cities.