

WHY SHOULD I LIVE *MY* LIFE BY *YOUR* BOOK?

- ✓ **Q:** “Why should I live my life according to the values of people who lived thousands of years ago? (Doesn’t our understanding of science – and don’t our modern inventions – prove that we’re smarter than they were?) Why would you take your social and moral cues from people who understood a fraction of what you do?”
- ✓ **A:** “I’m not taking my cues from them. I’m taking my cues from what God said through them.”

I. The Bible Makes Some Radical Claims About Itself

- 1.) It Was Recorded by Eyewitnesses. People who were actually there! (John 19:35; 1 John 1:3; 2 Pet. 1:16).

- 2.) The Bible Claims to be Inspired by God. (2 Pictures ...)

2 Pet. 1:20-21 – “Understand this first: no part of the Holy Writings was made up by any man. (No part of the Holy Writings came because of what man wanted to write.) But holy men of God spoke as they were moved (phero) by the Holy Ghost.”

Acts 27:14-15 – “But soon, a very strong wind blew down from the island. It caught the ship, and since it was IMPOSSIBLE to keep the ship headed into the wind, we gave up trying and let it be carried along (phero) by the wind ...” (TEV)

2 Tim. 3:16 – “All Scripture is given by INSPIRATION of God ...”

- ✓ Theopneustos – God-Breathed. God breathed into these men what they breathed out in their writings. (Spiritual CPR.) That’s why Peter could say, “God is the ultimate source of what they wrote” (2 Peter 1:21)
- ✓ That means the Bible isn’t written by someone less intelligent than us. It’s written by someone Who’s infinitely more intelligent.

- 3.) The Bible Claims to be Absolute Truth

Psalm 119:160 – “The entirety of Your word is truth.” (John 17:17; Psalm 33:4; Psalm 119:128; 1 Peter 1:25.)

- ✓ Jesus Held a High View of Scripture, and He Treated as if it Were 100% True.
- ✓ He referred to Creation (Mt. 19:4), Noah’s flood (Mt. 24:37-38), and the story of Jonah (Mt. 12:40), as if they were actual events.
- ✓ Bottom Line: The Bible claims to have come from God, and it claims to be the final authority for every generation.
- ✓ **Q:** “Okay, for now, let’s assume that the original manuscripts were inspired by God (and let’s suppose the Bible is ‘God communicating with man’). How do you know that what we have today, even remotely resembles what was originally handed down? At best, your Bible is a copy of a copy of a copy, and a translation of a translation of a translation. It was passed down for thousands of years without a printing press. How do you know it was copied correctly? How do you know that a tired scribe didn’t skip whole sections? And who’s to say that the stories weren’t corrupted by someone with an agenda? (Somebody who, one day, arbitrarily decided that Jesus should be God.) And, when comes to translating the Bible, how do you know nothing was lost in translation? Is there any evidence that the Bibles we have today are a reliable reproduction of the original?”

II. Can Today’s Bibles be Trusted?

A.) 4 Facts About the Manuscripts That Give Confidence

1. Their Vast Number

- ✓ We have nearly 25,000 manuscripts or fragments of manuscripts. No other ancient document even comes close to that. The next closest work is “The Iliad” (by Homer) with around 1,900 manuscripts.

- ✓ (How does having a lot of manuscripts help us?) Suppose a class of twenty-five 5th graders are taking notes as their teacher dictates an assignment. One of the kids lets his mind wander and he misses a few words. If that's the only copy you have, then you're forever missing those instructions. But, if you have all 25 copies, it would be easy to fill in the missing part (because you have 24 other copies.) For the Bible, we have *thousands* of copies. We can do a *lot* of comparing if we need to!

2. Their Diverse Locations

- ✓ Bible manuscripts come from so many places—Egypt, Palestine, Syria, Turkey, Greece, Italy ... No one church ever held all of the copies. (That fact alone makes collusion impossible. Even if one church had decided to change something, it would be super easy to detect, simply by comparing it to the other copies.)

3. Their Early Date

- ✓ Some papyri fragments date to within twenty-five years of the completion of the New Testament.

4. Their Consistency

- ✓ Because the manuscripts were hand copied, it's inevitable that there would be some variants between the copies. Atheists, like Bart Ehrman, love to talk about how many variants exist. But, averaged out, it comes to 8-16 variants per manuscript. And most of those are variants in spelling. Some manuscripts spell "John" with one "n", some with two. Savior can be spelled with or without a "u". (Obviously, that doesn't change the meaning of the word at all!) Sometimes a couple of words will be inverted ("Jesus Christ" becomes "Christ Jesus"). In a few cases, one too many zeros was added to a number. Even Bart Ehrman has acknowledged, "Essential Christian beliefs are not affected by textual variants ..."

B.) It's a Copy of a Copy. (Was It Copied Accurately?)

- ✓ The Rules Were Painstaking – Nothing—not a letter, not the shortest word, not even a yod (punctuation) — could be copied from memory; it had to be copied letter by letter. When he was done, the scribe would count the number of times each letter of the alphabet occurred in each book and compare it to the original. If it did not come out right, they destroyed the copy and made another.
- ✓ Dead Sea Scrolls – In March 1947, a Bedouin shepherd boy was searching for a lost goat. He tossed a stone into a hole in a cliff on the west side of the Dead Sea about 8 miles south of Jericho. To his surprise, he heard the sound of shattering pottery. Investigating, he discovered an amazing sight. On the floor of the cave were several large jars containing leather scrolls wrapped in linen. Because the jars were carefully sealed, the scrolls had been preserved in excellent condition for nearly 1,900 years. His discovery gave us manuscripts that were 1000 years older than anything we previously had ... When they were compared to the text of our modern Hebrew Bible, they were identical, word-for-word, for 95% of the text. The other 5% (where it was different), consisted of mainly spelling variations of the same word (Savior/Saviour). The greatest manuscript discovery of all time revealed that a thousand years of copying the Old Testament had produced only minor variations, none of which altered the meaning of the text or brought the manuscript's integrity into question.

C.) How New Translations Come About

- ✓ Again, sometimes atheists talk about how our Bibles are "a translation of a translation of a translation", but that's really misleading. New translations aren't derived from previous translations. (They didn't go from KJV to NIV to NLT, etc.) Each new translation goes back to the same manuscripts that all the earlier translations came from. (One Exception – a paraphrase. But no one is expecting a paraphrase to be as accurate.)