

Uniqueness of the Bible

by Josh McDowell

The Bible is a unique book in history, with its continuity, circulation, translation, and survival making it a one-of-a-kind text worthy of consideration by anyone seeking truth and wisdom.

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Scripture: Genesis 1:1, Exodus 20:1

Topics: "Bible"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the reliability of the New Testament. He emphasizes that the Bible is unique in its continuity, as it was put together over a period of 1600 years by 40 plus authors from various walks of life. The speaker highlights the numerous references in the scriptures where the authors claim to be speaking on behalf of God. He also mentions the archaeological discoveries that have confirmed the accuracy of the Bible.

Transcript

This message is entitled, The Uniqueness of the Bible, and it's given by Josh McDowell. I want to share with you on the uniqueness of the Bible. And I have to say that this is probably the most powerful thing that you can share, say in a literature class or an English class, on the Scripture.

Yet it's so simple. And yet to a non-Christian, to many Christians, it's so profound. Because so few people realize the uniqueness of the Bible.

Now, a lot of times you hear the phrase, well, yeah, I've got a Bible, it's up there with the other greats. And I usually say, what do you mean, up there with the other greats? Well, it's just one of the greats, I said, just a minute. Well, history shows that it's more than just another great.

It is unique. You hear a person say, yeah, I've got a Bible, but I never read it. Why? Because I'm intellectual.

That's an uneducated thought. If I didn't have a Bible, I sure wouldn't keep it in my library. That's an unsophisticated answer.

Because the Bible is absolutely unique, confirmed by facts of history. Now, Webster defined uniqueness this way. Different from all others, having no like or equal.

Different from all others, having no like or equal. When it comes to the Bible, it is absolutely unique, in the sense that it's different from all other books, and there is no like or equal to it. Now, this is how I share on the uniqueness of the Bible.

And I share this a lot with guys, you know, I'm going through, and they say, do you really believe the word of God? I say, yeah, let me show you how unique it is. Sometimes in 15 minutes I'll go through this, and just touch on each point, it just blows their mind. The Bible is unique.

First of all, the Bible is unique in its continuity. Its continuity, how it was put together. There was a book that was put together over a period of 1600 years.

60 plus generations. Background description. Four plus authors.

Now these authors that God spoke through, and almost everyone of them says, thus saith the Lord. More than 2,000 references to that in the scriptures. Thus saith the Lord, and the word of the Lord came to me.

40 plus authors from every walk of life. Every walk of life. Moses was a political leader.

Peter was a fisherman. Daniel a prime minister. Joshua was a military general.

Paul was a rabbi. Matthew was a tax collector. Luke was an historian and medical doctor.

Nehemiah was a cupbearer. Solomon was a king. All different walks of life.

God used in putting the scriptures together. Different places. Parts of the scripture were written in dungeons, prisons.

In synagogues. In the temples. On the hillsides.

On the beaches. Different places the Bible was written. Different times.

Parts of the scriptures were recorded in times of peace. Different times of war. They wrote in different moods.

You know how it influences the writing. Some wrote in the depths of sorrow, as their hearts cried out. Others at the heights of joy.

Different moods. All these things affect the writing. The Bible was written in three continents.

Africa. Asia. And Europe.

The Bible was written in three languages. Aramaic, Hebrew, and Greek. Now, most of the Old Testament was written in Hebrew.

Parts of Daniel, basically chapters 2 to 7, were written in Aramaic. Aramaic was a lingua franca. And this portion of Daniel was given directly to the Gentiles.

God had it given in the language of the Gentiles, Aramaic. Basically, Daniel 2 to 7. The rest of it is in Hebrew. The New Testament, often Christ spoke in Aramaic.

It was all recorded in Greek. Point A Greek. Now, you have something really unique here.

Between Hebrew and Greek. Hebrew is one of the most difficult languages to adapt to other languages. It has a very limited vocabulary.

Very limited. One man's entire vocabulary of Hebrew. Of Greek, it would be impossible.

For one man, it's so fancy. Now, the Hebrew is a centripetal language, in the sense that it came. Remember, the Jews were always to come in to Jerusalem.

They weren't to go out. They were to come in, come in. And God gave them a centripetal language.

In other words, the force comes in. And this kept them from having close relationships to even people around them, because it was so hard with their language. And so God, one way of protecting them, was giving them a centripetal language to come in.

But then, when it came to the New Testament, and the Messiah had come and everything, now it was time to go out to the world. Jesus said, go into all the world. In a centripetal language.

Greek. Greek can be adapted to any language in the world. And it was spread throughout the time.

And it could just go in and adapt to any language in the world. I think it's kind of neat where the New Testament came in, and God gave them a language which came in. And the New Testament gave them a language which is to go out.

Now, for a long time, the scholars thought that the Hebrew used in the Old Testament was a very kind of a classical Hebrew, an upper society Hebrew, that the common people could not understand. Again, through archaeology, they found out that the type of Hebrew in the Old Testament was not a special type of Hebrew. It was the Hebrew of their people.

And for a long time, the Greek of the New Testament was called the Holy Ghost language. Apart from the New Testament, there wasn't any reference to it. So a lot of times, scholars said, well, it must be just a special language that God gave to those recording the Scriptures, and that's what happened.

And so this caused a lot of criticism of these non-Christian scholars, saying, yeah, no one else understood it or anything, and so there were all these misinterpretations. Archaeology came along and discovered that it was not some special language. It wasn't some Holy Ghost language.

It was the language of the common people again, and it had been lost down through history. And how wise God was in giving it to the common people, and for years it was criticized by scholars. Now, through archaeology, there are three languages.

Now, the author, speaking to the influence of the Holy Spirit, spoke on literally hundreds of controversial subjects. Hundreds of controversial subjects. Now, a controversial subject to me is when I would mention something and immediately have four or five different opinions about it.

Let me tell you. You can go through the Scriptures and mention just one subject after another in a crowd on a university campus, and you'd have scores of different opinions. Controversial.

The moment you mention sin, it's controversial. That's just a mistake, just an error. Now, these authors wrote on hundreds of controversial subjects with absolute harmony from the beginning to the end.

There is one unfolding story from Genesis, the redemption of mankind through the Messiah, the Old Testament through the coming Messiah, the New Testament through the Messiah that has come. In Genesis, you have paradise lost. In Revelation, you have paradise given.

You can't understand Revelation without understanding Genesis. You can't understand Genesis without understanding Revelation. All interwoven together.

And hundreds of controversial subjects. Now, here's the picture. 1,600 years, 60 generations, 40 plus authors, different places, different times, different moods, different continents, three languages, writing on hundreds of controversial subjects, You know how unique that is? There was a man on one continent, one society, one life, one mood.

There was another man, another culture, another continent, another society, another language, another walk of life, another fame, controversial subject, and when the two are brought together, there's absolute harmony. The Bible is the only one that speaks of the unknown with the same authority that speaks of the known. When you take other religious writings and they speak of the unknown, future things like heaven, etc.

They don't speak with the same confidence that they do of the known things, recorded history. But the Bible is the one book that speaks of future things, things that are unknown, with the absolute certainty that it speaks of the known. This is amazing.

In other words, here was a man on one continent, one culture, one society, one walk of life, one language, writing about a future unknown. And here was another man, another culture, another society, another walk of life, another language, writing about that same future unknown, and when the two future unknowns are brought together, there's absolute harmony. Men and women, that is absolutely miraculous.

There is no other book in history that even compares to the uniqueness in this area of the country. The Bible stands alone. Now, Dick Day used to live in La Mirada, California, and I was up in his home, and a man from the great bookstores of the Western world came to Dick's place.

The great books of the Western world, the Encyclopedia Britannica, some of the great authors all put together for you to buy. And this man was recruiting salesmen. He knew that Dick worked in the universities, and so he came there to get some contact.

So he took and put out this list of books before him. He spent about five years telling us about the great book series, and we spent an hour and a half telling him about the great books. And we went through this thing right here with him.

And then we challenged him to do this. To take these authors before him, or any other authors, not over a period of 1600 years, just 10 years. Not 60 generations, all of them from one generation.

Not 40-some authors, just 10 authors. All from one walk of life, not the multitude of walks of life like the Bible says, but all from one walk of life. Whether historians, medical doctors, philosophers, you have to be careful of philosophy.

Francis Bacon said, nothing has been said so absurdly to be said by a philosopher. But all from one walk of life, these authors, in one place, one time, one mood, one continent, just one language, writing on just one controversial subject. Not thunders like the Bible does.

With harmony. Just in one controversial subject. I said, now doing this, would they agree? He looked down at the great book, he looked back at us, he looked back down and looked back at us, and he said no.

And then Dick said, what would you have? He said a conglomeration. And two days later, he saw the uniqueness of the Bible. Like the New Testament, interwoven with the Old Testament.

There are around 263 quotations of the Old Testament in the New Testament. There are more than 376 references, making a total of 639 in the New Testament references and quotes of the Old Testament. It's so interwoven.

In dinner introduction to the Bible, Geisler and Nix said this on page 24. The law gives the foundation for Christ. The law gives the foundation for Christ.

History shows the preparation for him in the historical books. In poetry, there's the aspiration for Christ. In prophecy, an expectation of Christ.

The gospel is the historical manifestation of the Christ. The acts relate the propagation of the Christ. The epistles give the interpretation of the Christ.

And in revelation is found the consummation of all things in the Christ. It's just one unfolding story. The Bible stands alone in its continuity.

And you know, 95% of the world don't even know how unique it is in that area. Next, the Bible is unique in its circulation. The Bible is unique in its circulation.

The first book in 1400 plus, around 1450, the Bible has had more circulation, read by more people, printed more times and more copies than any other book in history. The Cambridge History series of books says that there is no book that even approaches the circulation of the Bible. It stands alone.

It is absolutely unique. In fact, you could take numbers 3, 4, and 5, add them together, and see the circulation of numbers. In fact, two of them are about the Bible.

One is told of its progress. Now, this is not meaning that in a certain week or a certain month that it sold more than any other book. But it means in all history and every year it has sold more than any other book by Bible.

For example, in these facts that are printed on page 20 of Evidence of Demand Treatment, as of 1804, there were 409 million Bibles printed. The statistics here are only for the Bible societies. This doesn't include any of the publishing companies or anything.

Just the Bible society. It doesn't include the Christian organization, like Campus Crusade or anything, or our New American Standard, or anything like that. It doesn't include them.

These statistics. The National Bible Society of Scotland, 1928, just one Bible society, distributed 88 million. As of 1932, just the Bible society, there was 1,213,815 Bible societies.

In 1964, in the Bible societies, of Bibles and portions of Scripture, there were a hundred and some million printed. In 1965, 76,953,269. In 1966, 87 million printed.

Global distribution of the Bible and Scripture selections, in 1972, exceeded 200 million copies for the first time in history of the United Bible Society. There's 55 Bible societies, and they distributed, and you better write this down, 218,429,595 Bibles and selections. Selections would be like the Gospels, John, Prentice, Mark.

218,429,595 Bibles and 27.6% entries. Number one book in history, in circulation, the Bible. Let me read you something, a high-pickering, in his book on the Bible.

This is on page 21 of evidence. It says that 30 years ago, just one of these 55 Bible societies, now this is just one, the British Foreign and Bible Society, 30 years ago, to meet its needs, which was about one-fifth of what's being done today, had to publish one copy of the Bible every three seconds, day and night, 22 copies every minute, day and night, 1,369 copies every hour, day and night, 32,876 copies every day in the year. And they had to ship these to various parts of the world and 4,583 cases were in four weeks' time.

Now, this does not show along the continuity that the Bible is true. In fact, it doesn't even show that it's God's Word. But it does show one thing, that any thinking man that is seeking truth would certainly consider a book that has these qualifications.

I mean, any man that says, well, I'm really seeking truth would consider a book that has these qualifications. Not only is the Bible unique in its circulation, it is unique in its reading. The first book translated, recorded in Hebrew, the Septuagint, the Septuagint is the Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament, made between 250 and 200 B.C., the first book translated.

In fact, as you study the history of literature, almost every innovation in literature had to do with the Bible. Almost every innovation. The first book put into a codex form, one like this from the scrolls up, almost every innovation.

The Encyclopedia Britannica says that the Bible has been translated into 1,280 languages. The Encyclopedia Britannica says between 1950 and 1960, there were more than 3,000 Bible translators working every year on just the Bible. The Bible is unique in its translation.

It's been translated into more languages and more dialects than any other book. There is no quote. The closest second would come, I would estimate, around 300 languages or dialects.

Not only is the Bible unique in its translation, the Bible is unique in its survival. The Bible is unique in its survival. First of all, in its survival through time.

In other words, the manuscripts, now the manuscripts, whenever I use it, means a handwritten copy over against a printed copy. That's what a manuscript is. See, up until 1450, everything had to be copied by hand.

So a manuscript is a handwritten copy. Now, the Bible, up until 1450, had to be copied by hand, like all other classical literature, histories, etc. Now in its survival through time is this.

Its survival in the sense of the number of manuscripts that still exist that go way back to the 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 5th centuries of the scriptures before the time of printing. It was very easy for works to be lost. Many great works of historians have been totally lost in history and the only way we even know about them is somebody else quoted them and gave the number of volumes that they had written.

Dallas, the Samaritan historian, the time of Christ, all of this, the only way we know about them is other historians than him in the 2nd, 3rd, 4th centuries. Now, the Bible literature was on material perish, on papyrus reed that grew near the Nile River in Egypt. And these things would last maybe 100 years or so and then they'd rot away, especially in any damp climate.

And so then they'd have to be re-copied and re-copied and re-copied. And many of them would just totally perish and that would be it because they wouldn't be re-copied. Well, in the Bible, in its comparison with other literature, it is absolutely true.

For example, and now, tomorrow when we go into the reliability of the New Testament, we'll go into more detail on the manuscripts. But of the New Testament, there are now more than 14,000 manuscripts of just the New Testament. You know the closest book to that is the Iliad by Homer, 643 manuscripts.

In the Bible, there are 14,000 handwritten manuscripts. When it comes to survival through time, there is no close second. The Bible is unique, as Webster says, stands alone in its definition of unique.

Dr. J. Harold Greenlee says that the number of manuscripts of the New Testament is overwhelmingly greater than those of any other work of ancient literature. Dr. F.J. Hort, who spent 28 of his years studying the New Testament text, 28 years, in fact, he died as a result of the extreme studying that he had done. He said, in the variety and the fullness of the evidence of which it rests that the text of the New Testament stands absolutely and unapproachably alone among ancient prose writings.

There is no close second in its survival and accuracy down through history. For example, the annals of the famous historian Tacitus in the 2nd century. Only one manuscript is extant.

Extant means inexistent. So far as the first six books are concerned, this one manuscript in that date is from the 9th century. In the Iliad, there's more than 5% textual corruption.

In the New Testament, there's one half of 1%, where there's any question of what the word is. And yet both of them are religious works that were reverently preserved. Yet 5% of the Iliad is corruption.

Only one half of 1% of the scriptures. Of the Mahapharatas of the Hindus, which is about 8 times the size of the Iliad and the Odyssey together, roughly 250,000 lines, some 26,000 lines are intentionally corrupt. And yet that's religious literature.

And yet with the scriptures, in its survival, there's one half of 1%. Now this doesn't prove it's true, no. But I think it shows that any intelligent man would consider a book to have these qualifications.

Now the Bible is unique in its survival through persecution. There's never been a book that people have tried to destroy more than the scriptures. From the time of the Roman Empire to the communist countries today.

And yet the Bible stands stronger today than any other time in its survival through persecution. For example, AD 303, Diocletian gave his famous edict that every Bible in the world should be destroyed. Because they knew if they could destroy the scriptures, Christianity would fold.

And if you were caught with a book in your house after they came searching, it was automatic execution. In fact, if you called yourself a Christian, you were relieved of any type of job you had. That was in AD 303.

The irony of history is this. 25 years later, the next emperor, Constantine, gave the royal edict to the historian Eusebius for him to prepare 50 perfect copies of the scriptures at the expense of the government. What an irony.

And just 25 years before, they tried to destroy everyone. For example, Voltaire, which died in what, 1728? Voltaire was a great specialist, a man that destroyed the faith of many in Jesus Christ. He was the one that boasted that within 100 years of his lifetime, the Bible would disappear.

It would be wiped off the face of the earth. He made that boast, and he was quoted by the scholars and universities. But what happened? Voltaire became extinct, and the Bible was still being printed.

Voltaire passed off the scene, and the Bible became the number one seller. 200 and some million last year. The irony of history here is that 50 years after Voltaire made that statement, the heap of Bible sites moved into his house and used his printing presses to produce thousands of Bibles.

And just 50 years before, he said, every Bible would be wiped off the face of the earth within 100 years. Not only is the Bible unique in its survival through persecution, the Bible is unique in its survival through criticism. In its survival through criticism.

There's been no book that's been attacked more in its literature and its history to destroy it than the Bible. The higher critics, lower critics, in-between critics, and all the rest have tried their best to destroy any reliability and confidence in the Bible. More, I would say, than any other book in history by far.

And yet, thanks to the critics, more people read the Scriptures today, more people trust the Scriptures today, more people love the Scriptures and obey them today than any other time. And I really believe this because the negative critics have been refuted by history. And to fill in here, in about eight to nine days, I'll be speaking on the critics and the Bible.

And what I'm going to do is this, is go right down and document what these scholars, quote, scholars and universities and negative critics had to say about the Bible about some area had to show that it was absolutely myth and could not be reliable. And then just show how just a few years later archaeology totally exposed what these men said. It's almost funny.

It's going right down through history. This scholar says it has to be a myth. Twenty years later, totally turning this position.

And yet that man was quoted throughout the university and the two Christians. I put it this way. Archaeology is the greatest obstacle to liberalism yet.

Every time a seed goes into a ground, a liberal is buried. The military hypothesis is that Moses couldn't have written the first five books of the Bible. Even though Jesus said that Moses wrote the first five books of the Bible, Moses said he wrote the first five books of the Bible, secular authorities like Leviticus, Josephus said Moses wrote the first five books of the Bible.

Even though the writers of the testament said Moses wrote the first five books of the Bible, they were all wrong. Moses couldn't have written the first five books. A J writer had to, and then an E writer, and a P writer, and a D writer, and an R reader.

That came along and put it all together. Hundreds of years later, this is even funnier. This started at the end of the 1800s by Grotman and Elholtz.

You know what the whole basis of it was? There wasn't any writing at the time of Moses' 3500 years. He couldn't have written it. There wasn't any writing.

There wasn't even any alphabets. Assured results of higher criticism. No alphabets.

So then they came up ahead and they written it. I even hear men still teaching it in universities. I wish they would, instead of reading textbooks that have been reprinted, I wish they would revise them to catch up with the evidence and the facts of archaeology.

The archaeology has totally receded it now. There's a poem called Black Stella. It's intricate codes and moral and ethical laws written all over it.

With an alphabet. Was it after Moses? No. They found out it wasn't only before Moses, it went way back before Abraham.

Higher criticism. Totally receded it in history. Now they found five distinct languages going way back before the time of Moses.

In fact, if you read that article, it's the time of Abraham with letters on him. Now if you get that far you can believe it. It's all you.

The language. And yet the assured results of these higher critiques, Moses couldn't have written it because of that. They would take Genesis.

And they said, in the page where I found this, there's absolutely no record of them anywhere. Assured results of higher criticism. Now men like Dr. William F. Albright, one of the top archaeologists, and Kevin Williams from Mountain City say that archaeology has initiated historicity.

Thanks for asking. I'll be spending the whole hour on it. The Bible is unique in its prophecy.

25% of the Bible when it was written was prophetic. And the Bible is unique in that. In fact, there's no other book that contains minute prophecies like the Bible.

I mean, no other book. Prophecies about the downfall of future cities. The prophecy was given to confirm the scriptures.

It's God's Word. The prophecies about Jesus Christ. There is no other book that has prophecies about a man that was going to come in to the world years later with minute prophecies about his life.

Mohammed didn't have that. Buddha didn't have none of them. The Bible doesn't exist.

In fact, this is so unique. It's a victory publishing company in Denver, Colorado. They give you a \$1,000 reward if you do one of two things.

One, take the prophecy that all fulfilled in Jesus. We heard some. You find just 20 of them fulfilled.

Any other individual in history, they'll give you a \$1,000 reward. In fact, they'll say, if you find any book of prophecy with just 20 prophecies, not hundreds of Bibles, just 20 prophecies about any man to come into

the world, and were fulfilled in it, they'll give you a \$1,000 reward. The Bible is unique.

The Bible is unique in its history. When you read chapter 1 tomorrow, it'll fill in on your history. It is one of the most accurate and profound histories ever written of the Jewish people of the Old Testament.

Did you know the New Testament and the journeys of the Apostle Paul and the Book of Acts and the writings of Luke? These are the only histories of a man traveling through Asia Minor that we have for their religious or secular works. It's the only one? There's no record of any other journeys or anything through Asia Minor? Just the Apostle Paul? Sir William Ramsey was of the Taboo Gym School. I don't know if I'm pronouncing that right.

It was the School of Thought, which has changed quite a bit today. Like Frederick Christian Bauer and everything, saying that the New Testament couldn't have been written until way towards the end of the 2nd century. There were a hundred and some years, and all the traditions grew up and the myth and everything, then it was written down.

Well, some of the archaeology of the discoveries totally refuted that. But one of the men of that school was Sir William Ramsey, a historian archaeologist. He wanted to refute Christianity.

So he set out to refute it. He was going to do this. He was going to show that the New Testament history was not reliable.

That the historian Luke was inaccurate. He spent 15 years in Israel and Asia Minor and all the scholarly world was waiting for his book to come out to refute the history. He never told anyone what happened to become a Christian.

He came to the conclusion that Luke is unsurpassed in accuracy among historians. And he came to the conclusion that the New Testament had to be written around 50 A.D. And when his book hit the market, it shocked the scholarly world and his arguments have never been answered to this day. Sir William Ramsey.

Now, these things do not prove that the Bible is true. These things do not prove that the Bible is God's word. But it does show one thing, men and women.

If any man that is seeking truth would certainly consider a book that has these uniquenesses, these qualifications. Any man would say, I just wouldn't read it, it's not worth it. From that being intelligible.

From the facts of history. This is not philosophizing. This is evidence.

This is fact. The uniqueness of Scripture. It is unique.

Oh, how unique it is. What do other books try to do? They all try to gloss over the shortcomings, the errors in their writers and personalities. But the apostles even exposed their own sins.

The Jewish people even wrote about their own shortcomings and their failings. The Apostle Paul didn't point out the shortcomings, the flaws in his own personality. But what did they do with Marilyn Monroe? Well, it came out that Marilyn Monroe was Joan of Arc.

They totally glossed over her entire life and made her a beautiful thing. And yet the Bible doesn't do that. Well, if the writers have pointed out themselves as being flawless, then you might question the

flawlessness of Jesus.

But when all these other writers expose each other, everything, it presumes the flaws of the one that they died for. And it lends a lot of credence to it. Look at the Old Testament.

The Old Testament literally tore the Jews apart. I mean, he condemned them, judged them, everything. And yet the number one seller among the Jews in Israel is the Old Testament.

Now you try to write a book today and criticize the Jews, first of all they say you're anti-Semitic, second, it wouldn't even get across the border. And yet here is one book that totally criticizes the Jews and says anyone who's anti-Semitic, I guess it's God. The number one seller.

You know what cost it? No profit. No profit. Confirmed that these messages were from God.

The Bible is unique in its influence on surrounding literature. There's no book even close to influencing other literature being written about it. More literature has been written about the Bible than any other book in history.

I mean, you add up the commentaries, the dictionaries, the handbooks, the individual books about it, I mean, men and women, if I would have to say it would be a thousand times over, a thousand times. It is unique in its influence. You look at poetry, paintings, the great artists influenced by the scriptures.

It is unique. It doesn't show either this book is true or that it is God's word, but it does show one thing. I mean, there is no closer.

As far as I hear this in the classroom, today we want to cover the reliability of the New Testament. When we finish this hour, you will know more about the reliability of the New Testament than 90% of the faculty in secular universities. When you read the chapter in Evidence that Demands a Verdict, you will know more than 90%, and I'm not exaggerating, than the faculty in secular universities.

For a large degree of those in Christian universities. The majority of what I say will be found in various places in Evidence that Demands a Verdict. I'll just put it in a little different perspective.

Reliability of the New Testament. I was speaking at a history class where the man had set it up for a debate, sent some questions to the students to shoot me down when I came in, and there were about 200 students there and I was speaking. The man was there and he said this to me.

I made the statement that manuscript-wise, there's enough evidence for the reliability of the New Testament, more so than any ten pieces of classical literature put together. And he spoke up and he said, that's ridiculous. Making this statement, the New Testament is reliable.

A lot of the students in the class were kind of snickering, saying yeah, that's pretty ridiculous. This man had two PhDs. One from an American university, the other from the University of Berlin.

So I felt I had to call him down. I said, tell me sir, what are your tests that you apply to any piece of literature to determine its reliability and its accuracy? Two PhDs in literature. Did not have any tests to determine the reliability of any piece of literature, and yet he had the audacity to snicker at me in a classroom in a university when I made the statement that the New Testament was reliable, and yet he didn't even have any tests to determine it? I said, sir, that's ridiculous.

I mean, really a person like that, to me, doesn't have a right to teach in university. He ought to be down the junior high level. I said, sir, I have some tests.

You might not agree with me, but I said, at least I know why. And as a Christian, I think you ought to know why. Trust me.

I'm not talking about the inspiration in God's word. I'm just talking about its reliability, its accuracy in history. I said, I have three tests, and these tests are taken from Dr. C. Saunders.

He's not a Christian. He's a military historian, but I'm not being theologically biased. Introduction to Research in English Literary History.

And Dr. Saunders gives three tests for determining the reliability and accuracy of any piece of literature in history. This is why I love to have some professors say, ah, that's ridiculous, the New Testament's reliable, because I've never had a professor give me any tests for determining the reliability of a piece of literature. Three tests he gives, a bibliographical, one philosophy class, the student said, I knew you'd bring the Bible in.

I said, it's bibliographical, not Bible. Open mouth and search feet. The bibliographical test, the internal test, and the external test.

Briefly, we'll be going through these today. The bibliographical test is how the manuscripts are handed down to us. The internal test, are there internal discrepancies? Then the external test is what pieces of literature are there apart from the piece of literature you're studying that confirms the inward testimony that it is accurate.

In other words, is there literature apart from the Bible that confirms the inner testimony of the Bible? The bibliographical, internal, and external, and I said to this faculty who was the head of the history department, this panelist, and I said, sir, as I apply these three tests to the New Testament, tomorrow we'll do it to the Old Testament. I said I came to the conclusion that there's more evidence for reliability of the New Testament than any ten pieces of classical literature. This is not philosophized.

It's facts of history. Now the first test, the bibliographical, is this. It's an examination of the textual transmission by which documents reach us.

In other words, not having the original documents, remember, they were written on material that would perish. Somebody would say, hey, look, do you have the original documents? No, and you can't trust it? I'll say, do you have the original documents of Aristotle, Herodotus, Tacitus, et cetera, et cetera? No. Do you have the original documents of Tacitus, the Roman historian, of Clevis, do you see what I'm saying? No.

I said, look, let's apply the same test. Be careful here. Most people like to apply one test to the Bible, and then another test to secular literature.

Don't ever get stuck into that. Uh-uh. You choose the test.

But let's apply the same to both. It's like the communists. They like to apply one test to a free enterprise society and another test to a communist society.

Whenever I debate a communist, I say, look, you choose the test. You pick any you want to. Let's apply the same to both.

They always like to apply one to the Bible and one to other literature. Uh-uh. Like somebody would say, hey, didn't you know Jesus didn't write it down as followers did? They say you can't trust it.

I say, hey, many of your classical writers never wrote it down. Homer never wrote it down. Augustus Caesar never wrote down anything.

Charlemagne never did anything. That was the way many of them did it. So let's apply the same test to both.

It says this. Not having the original document, how reliable are the copies we have in regards to the number of manuscripts? See, the more manuscripts you have, the greater it is to compare them to recreate the original and to check any errors or discrepancies. And the time interval between the original and the extent or copy that is in existence.

In other words, how many years from the original to the copy you have today? 100? 200? 1,000? 2,000 years? What? In any piece of literature. Dr. Fenton John Anthony Hort, the man that spent 28 years studying the text, said this. The proportion of words virtually accepted on all hands as raised above doubt is very great, not less on a rough computation than 7 8ths of the whole New Testament.

Now the remaining 8th that there might be question of the exact meaning of the text, the remaining 8th therefore formed in great part by changes of order or other comparative trivialities constitutes a whole area of criticism or doubt of the New Testament. He says that the amount of what can in any sense be called substantial variation is but a small fraction of the whole residuary variation, and can hardly form more than a thousandth part of the entire text. 1,000 is all that there's any question about it.

Dr. Geisler and William Nix in General Introduction to the Bible say this. Only about 1 8th of all the variants had any weight as most of them are merely mechanical matters such as spelling or style. As soon as they'd recopy the manuscripts the words would be spelled differently, and so in the other manuscript they'd spell it the contemporary way, and so that would be a variant or difference from the original of what we have today.

You don't spell confusion today with a K. Of the whole then, only about 1 6th rises above triviality, or can in any sense be called substantial variation. In other words, mathematically, this would compute to a text that is 98.33% pure. In literature that is absolutely miraculous.

Dr. Frederick Kenyon, a man who was number one of anyone to give declarations about the reliability of any manuscript, for years he was head of the library in Manchester, said this. One word of warning already referred to must be emphasized in conclusion. No fundamental doctrine of the Christian faith rests on a disputed reading.

Keep that in mind. There's various disputed meanings. You know, what really is the word here? Should it be this word or this word? But not in one single case does it ever have to do with any doctrine or any major belief in the entire New Testament.

Constant references to mistakes and divergence of reading such as the plan of this book necessitates might give rise to the doubt whether the substance as well as the language of the Bible is not open to question. It cannot be too strongly asserted that in substance the text of the Bible is absolutely certain. Especially in the case with the New Testament.

The number of manuscripts in the New Testament of early translations from it and of quotations from it in the oldest writers of the Church is so large that it is practically certain that the true reading of every doubtful passage is preserved in one or other of these ancient manuscripts. This can be said of no other ancient book in the world. No other.

Dr. Millar Burroughs called M-I-L-L-A-R of Yale. In his book *What Means These Stones* says this Another result of comparing New Testament Greek with the language of the papyri, the early manuscripts of the Bible is an increase of confidence in the accurate transmission of the text of the New Testament itself. He goes on to say that the texts have been transmitted with remarkable fidelity so that there need to be no doubt whatever regarding the teachings conveyed by them.

Dr. Howard Voss in *Can I Trust My Bible?* said From the standpoint of literary evidence, the only logical conclusion is that the case for the reliability of the New Testament is infinitely stronger than that for any other record of the New Testament. Let's see what they mean. A lot of people say, well look we're so far removed.

Why, Josh, you live in the 20th century. Why, Jesus' words were recorded almost 2,000 years ago. Separated by 2,000 years, you can't trust what he said.

I mean all the errors, all the discrepancies have come in. Why, you can't hold the Bible and say it's accurate. How many of you have heard someone say something like that? I hear it almost every day.

You know what I say to someone like that? I use a word that really communicates in Iowa. Hogwash. That's just what it is.

Let's look at secular authors. Secular authors. Now in detail, this is recorded on page 48, but what I can give you is the significance of it.

Secular authors. Caesar. You know what's so funny? The same fellow head of the history department just snickered at me and I said the New Testament's reliable.

He'd done his dissertation on Caesar. I was just getting ready to put this in the overhead and just before I did it, he said let's talk about real literature. I said okay, you name it.

He said Caesar and the Gallic Wars. I said alright. I said I'm glad he picked the one I could do it with.

Kind of like the Holy Spirit had been leading him. I said it's like planning a Christian yawn. They ask you the question that the professor did.

I said do you believe Caesar fought the Gallic Wars? He said sure. I said how many people wrote about it? He said a lot of people did. I said the only way we even know Caesar fought the Gallic Wars is that he wrote about it.

This guy had done his dissertation on it and didn't even know it and yet it's taught in the university as accurate history. And I said sir, from people to people what we have is a millennium, 1,000 years. In other words, all the other manuscripts have died away.

Everything that we have in Caesar and the Gallic Wars is from a manuscript 1,000 years after he died. This man didn't even know it. Plato.

From the time Plato wrote to the closest manuscript is 1,200 years. In other words, all manuscripts have been lost. Tacitus, a 2nd century Roman historian, wrote his annals 2nd century and the closest manuscript is 1100 A.D., 1,000 years after he wrote.

Pliny the Younger, Pliny of Segundus wrote his history around 61 A.D. and the closest manuscript is 850 A.D. That's 750 years. Thucydides. Many people say that Thucydides is one of the most accurate historians of antiquity.

He wrote his history between 460 and 400 B.C. and the closest manuscript we have is 900 A.D. and yet they teach it as one of the most accurate historians yet there's 1,300 years gap from the time he wrote to the closest manuscript we have. Herodotus, the 5th century B.C. Greek historian, the time he wrote to the time of the closest manuscript is 1,300 years. Sophocles is 1,400 years.

Lucretius is 1,100. Cthulhu is only 1,600. Aristophanes is 1,200 years.

Aristotle wrote his Poetics around 345 343 B.C. and the closest manuscript we have of Aristotle's Poetics is 1100 A.D. 1,400 years from the time Aristotle wrote his Poetics and the closest manuscript and yet he's taught throughout the world. And yet I would say that 90% of the people do not realize the great gap. They've never studied it and yet they're the ones making assertions about the New Testament.

Well, when it comes to the New Testament, it's almost embarrassing, the wealth of evidence for the reliability and accuracy of the New Testament. Let me show you what I mean. Now, this work here, this documentation was taken from Dr. F.W. Hall, a companion to classical literature you'll find in almost any university library.

It's a classic. This is where all the documentation comes from, so you can't say, you know, theologically biased. Companion to classical literature, Dr. F.W. Hall.

Now, when it comes to the New Testament, the time span is we go, first of all, to the John Ryland manuscripts back to within 100 years to 130, some people date it now 100 A.D. The John Ryland manuscripts, they're located in the John Ryland Library of Manchester, England. It's the oldest fragment of the New Testament, just a small portion of it, parts of John. But this one discovery totally wiped out modern scholarship.

Men like Birdman Christian Bower of the Tubingen School taught back in the end of the 1800s that the New Testament was not written down to the last part of the second century, in other words about 150 to 200 A.D. Especially the Gospel of John was not until the end of the second century. This was taught in universities. This was scholarship, the assured result of criticism.

People quoted them around the world. People started to turn their back on the scriptures because they said in that 100 and some years all the myth grew up around it, you know, and everything was changed before it was written down. And then one discovery took it all the way back, and because of this, see, this was found way over in Egypt.

And all your scholars, even non-Christians will say that means that it had to be produced in the first century. And one little discovery caused a lot of men to commit intellectual suicide. As one man said, everything that I taught in universities for 30 years went out the window.

Everything. With one little discovery. John Ryland Manuscript.

If this would have been known back in 1850, this whole school of thought about the second century could never have come into existence. That was secular education. Next we have the Chester Beattie papyri.

Much more extensive. It goes back to 155 AD. And this is found in the Chester Beattie Museum in Dublin.

And part of it is also owned by the University of Michigan. Sir Frederick Kenyon in Bible and Modern Scholarship says that the net result of this discovery right here, by far the most important since the discovery of Sinaiticus, which we'll get to, is in fact to reduce the gap between the earlier manuscripts and the traditional dates in the New Testament books so far that it becomes negligible in any discussion of its authenticity. No other ancient book has anything like such early and plentiful testimony to its text.

And no unbiased scholar would deny that the text has come down to us, which has is substantially sound. Because of one discovery. And then you have the Papyrus Bodmer II, which is located in the Bodmer Library of World Literature.

And as Dr. Bruce Metzger says that this manuscript was the most important discovery of the New Testament manuscripts since the purchase of the Chester Beattie papyri. And then you have the Vaticanus. These are copies of almost the entire Bible.

The Vaticanus, Sinaiticus, and Alexandria taking back to 350 A.D. Now, the Sinaiticus is probably one of the best. And it was kind of funny how it was found. A scholar by the name of Titchendorf wanted to establish an accurate text of the New Testament.

So he was traveling to the Middle East to gather information. He was at a monastery. And he noticed some papers that were being used to start fires in the fireplace.

And it looked like manuscripts. So he went over and he pulled some out of the trash can. And he started looking at it and he said, Just a minute.

This is an ancient manuscript. So he asked if he could see the other manuscripts that they hadn't ripped up yet. And it was the Sinaiticus manuscripts.

And they preserved almost all of them. If it had been a day later, they wouldn't have any of them. And they took that and finally they gave it to the Tsar of Russia as a gift.

And they sold it for about \$350,000 or more, almost a half million to England. And now it's owned by Britain. Sinaiticus manuscripts, all by a mistake or an accident of looking in a trash can near a fireplace.

And it just blew Titchendorf's mind when he found it. Then you go on from there. Men and women.

When it comes to the time span, there's no comparison between the Bible and any other. Now they'll say, Well that's all in good. But we don't have enough manuscripts.

You really don't have enough to make a comparison to correct any discrepancies. You really can't trust it. I use that same word it communicates in Iowa.

Often goes over in Indiana too. Hogwash. It really is.

For example, let's go back to the secular literature. Caesar. Caesar and his Gallic Wars.

Ten manuscripts. In other words, everything in your university about Caesar and the Gallic Wars, everything that is printed today comes from one of ten manuscripts a thousand years after he died. Plato.

Seven manuscripts. Tacitus less than 20. Thucydides eight.

A gentleman came over from Germany to lecture two weeks at Ohio State on the history of Thucydides. A student heard me go through this and had read my syllabus on it. He asked his professor, This man was paid to come over for two weeks to speak on Thucydides.

That's how much reliability they give to it. This student stuck up his hand after about the first week and said, Sir, what's the time span in the manuscript authority from the time Thucydides wrote in the closest manuscript? You know this guy didn't know. He said, Oh, it's not very much.

I said, Excuse me, sir, it's 1,300 years. Now when I'm talking, the student put his hand up again and says, Tell me, sir, number-wise, bibliographically, how many manuscripts are there for the authenticity and reliability of Thucydides? The man says, Well, there's a lot. He didn't know there isn't.

There's only eight. This man didn't even realize it. Herodotus, eight.

Typically, there's a hundred, not bad. Aristotle, five of his poetics. Aristophanes, ten.

We get to the New Testament. 5,000 of the Greek handwritten manuscripts, 8,000 of the Latin Vulgate, all handwritten, and more than 1,000 of the early versions, giving us a total of 14,000 manuscripts of the New Testament alone. I mean, when it comes to the number of manuscripts, there's nothing in history that compares.

The closest one, as I said the other day, is the Iliad with 643. It is reliable. We have the evidence to check it out.

Now, when you exhaust all the manuscripts, you haven't finished with the evidence for the historicity of the New Testament, in other words, its reliability and accuracy. This is first brought to my attention by the Encyclopedia Britannica. And that's this.

You could take all the manuscripts of the New Testament, take every Bible in the world, and burn them. Destroy every manuscript and every Bible in the world. Within several hundred years of the time of Jesus Christ, going back even earlier than any manuscript evidence for any other book in history.

And in two to 250 years, I could reproduce all but 11 verses of the New Testament. Without any Bibles and without any manuscripts. The only book in the world you could do it.

I said, come on. Without any manuscripts, without any Bible, you could do it, yeah. The early Christian scholars, in their writing, they would quote the New Testament.

And in their writings, and I documented it on page 54 and 55 of evidence, documented 36,289 quotations. For example, Origen alone, in his works, of just the Gospels, 9,231 times, 349 times Acts, 7,778 times the Epistles, the General Epistles, 399 times, Revelation 165 times, giving a total of 17,922. And you can go back to the early Christian scholars, take their writings, reconstruct all but 11 verses.

They can just forget the manuscript. And then when you exhaust all of them, you still have not exhausted all the evidence for the New Testament. Because there are lectionaries.

And these lectionaries were kind of like Sunday school lessons for the early church. And they would take the Scriptures and divide them up into lessons to use for teaching. Then we have 2,135 lectionaries.

And you can go back to these lectionaries and study the text. And it comes to the bibliographical test for the New Testament. And hold it in your hand.

Say the manuscript evidence is there. Establish it. Now let's go to the next test.

Next test is the internal evidence test. Internal evidence test. This uses Aristotle's dictum from his Poetics, which is this.

The benefit of the doubt is to be given to the document itself, not irrigated by the critic to himself. In other words, in any piece of literature, you always give the author the benefit of the doubt until it's proven beyond a shadow of a doubt, an absolute discrepancy. Down a shadow of a doubt.

Now in the New Testament, this is beautiful, because no one has been able to show an absolute discrepancy. There's been some alleged discrepancies, but almost all of them have been cleared up by archaeology. One of the keys to the New Testament is they wrote as eyewitnesses.

They wrote as eyewitnesses. Luke 1, 1-3. Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile and account of the things accomplished among us, this is those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses.

They wrote as eyewitnesses. 2 Peter 1-16. For we did not follow cleverly devised tales, and we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses.

1 John 1. What our eyes have seen, what our ears have heard, what our hands have handled, we declare unto you. Then there's many other portions. Now what is the importance of them writing as eyewitnesses? Very simple.

Their testimony was put before the stage of the world. In front of their most severe opponents, they proclaimed their message as eyewitnesses. And they were exposed to criticism and correction by their opponents.

That happens to very few people. And that adds a tremendous factor to its internal reliability, is when immediately it is opposed by its critics. It was open to falsification.

This is why Dr. F.F. Bruce, the Rylands Professor of Biblical Criticism and Exegesis at the University of Manchester, says And it was not only friendly eyewitnesses that the early preachers had to reckon with. There were others less well disposed who were also conversant with the main facts of the ministering death of Jesus. The disciples could not afford to risk inaccuracies, not to speak of willful manipulation of the facts, which would at once be exposed by those who would be only too glad to do so.

On the contrary, one of the strongest points in the original apostolic preaching is a confident appeal to the knowledge of the hearers. They not only said, we are witnesses of these things, but also as you yourselves know, in front of the most severe opponents, to say, look, you know what we're talking about. You saw these things.

You heard these things. Acts 2.22. God performed these things in your midst, just as you yourselves know, because this has not been done in the court. Had there been any tendency to depart from the facts in any material respect, the possible presence of hostile witnesses in the audience would have served as

a further correcting.

Next test. The external evidence test. Do other historical materials confirm or deny the internal testimony provided by the documents themselves? Let me rephrase it.

What sources are there apart from the literature under analysis that substantiate its accuracy, reliability, and authenticity? Eusebius, in his ecclesiastical history, preserves writing of Papias. Now, Papias was the bishop of Hierapolis in 130 A.D. Now, Papias got this from the Apostle John, he says. It was in the action group of the Apostle John.

He said the elder, the Apostle John, used to say this also. Mark, having been the interpreter of Peter, wrote down accurately all that he, Peter, mentioned, whether sayings or doings of Christ. So then Mark made no mistake, writing down in this way some of the things as he, Peter, mentioned them.

For he paid attention to this one thing, not to admit anything that he had heard, and not to include any false statement among them. This was a man of that time confirming the internal testimony, totally apart from the scriptures. Irenaeus.

Irenaeus was bishop of Lyons in A.D. 180. He was a student of Polycarp. Now, Polycarp was the bishop of Smyrna.

This is on page 66. Polycarp was martyred in 156 A.D. Do you know this man had been a Christian for 86 years? He was a disciple of the Apostle John. It was in the master action group with him probably.

And he wrote this about Irenaeus, who was his disciple. According to Gregory of Tours, he, Irenaeus, converted almost the entire population of Lyons and sent other missionaries to other parts of pagan Europe. Now, Irenaeus, in his book, Against Heresies, says this.

So firm is the ground upon which these gospels rest that the very heretics themselves bear witness to them. And starting from these documents, each one of them endeavors to establish his own particular doctrine. In other words, the very opponents of Christianity, way back at that time, did not question the reliability and the accuracy of the documents.

No. But they started with those very documents to produce their own heresy. Now, they could have put a wedge into its reliability or accuracy.

They would have. They'd have been much stronger than trying to build their own doctrines to refute things. To show that it wasn't reliable.

They couldn't do it. Way back then, the scholars had to start with the very text and work from it. Irenaeus goes on to say that Matthew published his gospel among the Hebrews in their own tongue when Peter and Paul were preaching the gospel in Rome and founding the church there.

After their departure, in other words, that was about the time of the Neronian persecution, Mark, the disciple and interpreter of Peter himself, handed down to us in writing the substance of Peter's preaching. Luke, the follower of Paul, set down the gospel preached by his teacher. Then John, the disciple of the Lord, who also leaned on his breast, himself produced his gospel while he was living at Ephesus in Asia.

Extra-biblical sources. In the extra-biblical sources, we go into archaeology as a confirmation. Archaeology has confirmed the accuracy of the New Testament.

Remember yesterday, in the uniqueness of the Bible, I shared Sir William Ramsey that went over there to refute the reliability of the scriptures. After 15 years trying to do it, he became a Christian. He came to the conclusion that Luke is unsurpassed in history in his accuracy.

That's saying a lot from a man like that. For example, John 19, it talks about the pavement where Jesus was tried. But apart from the Bible, absolutely nothing.

Secular literature, Jewish literature at that time, maps of Jerusalem, everything. No such thing as a pavement. So everybody says, look, it's myth.

It's just an error. It's just dressing up the account. So everybody says, hey, you don't trust the New Testament, do you? You know, not many years ago, they were digging in that area and they found out that there was such a place as a pavement.

What had happened is that when Titus destroyed Rome in 70 AD, the Romans built barracks on the pavement. And then on top of that, some other buildings were built after they were destroyed. And most of the archaeologists just went back to the barracks foundation.

Well, some other archaeologists got a little nosier and went back further and they found the pavement. They even got the dimensions of it now. And they even found the place where Herod lived right near there and held court.

It assured results of higher criticism. And they said, uh-oh, they found the pavement. And John talks about the Pool of Bethesda, five porticles.

They said, look, there's no reference of it apart from the New Testament. Nothing. Nothing in Jewish literature, secular literature, maps of Jerusalem, stories of Jerusalem, nothing.

So it must be myth. So a guy was digging around the church of St. Anne and he discovered the Pool of Bethesda. How many porticles did it have? Four? No.

Like the Bible says, five. Archaeology has confirmed. This is why men like William F. Albright, William Foxall Albright, was one of the top archaeologists.

Any archaeology book you read, they will quote Albright. Passed away not long ago. He made the statement.

Every archaeological discovery has confirmed the scriptures. Dr. Nelson Gleck, spelled G-L-U-E-C-K, pronounced Gleck like G-L-E-K. The renowned Jewish scholar and archaeologist, the former president of the Jewish University of Cincinnati, Hebrew University, made this statement.

He made it at Temple Emmanuel in Dallas about two and a half, three years ago. He said, no archaeological discovery has ever controverted the scriptures. He's saying a lot.

And he touches on a lot of it in Streams in the Desert. I believe if any man says that the authenticity, reliability, and the accuracy of the New Testament is not established, then he would have to throw out all literature of antiquity. Unless he's very dishonest and used two different tests, one for the Bible and one for secular literature.

It's reliable. Tomorrow, we'll be going into the Old Testament. Now, in the Old Testament, we don't have very many manuscripts.

But I'll show you tomorrow why I believe that because we don't have the manuscripts, we can trust what we do have, more than if we had the manuscripts. Much more than we'll ever know. Much more than we need to grow.

Much more than we'll ever know. Much more than we need to grow. Much more than forgiveness alone.

Much more than the pathway home. Is the grace, grace of God. Much more than we'll ever know, much more than we need to grow In the grace, the grace of God He gives more grace abundantly He gives more grace to set us free That we might live victoriously So be strong in the grace, the much more grace of God He gives more grace abundantly He gives more grace to set us free You've set me free That we might live victoriously So be strong in the grace, be strong in the grace So be strong in the grace, the much more grace of God Be strong in the grace, the grace of God Be strong in the grace, the grace of God Be strong in the grace, the much more grace of God

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