

**How we got the Christian Bible, Lesson #1:**

**Usefulness of History to confirm the reliability of the Bible**



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**Why this series**

*All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.*

*2 Timothy 3: 16,17*

- The Bible is
  - Essential for every aspect of our knowledge about and growth in the Christian life
  - Sadly more lip service to it than knowledge of it
  - Lost in the mass of other spiritual writings, secular viewpoints, voices, media & life

**Goals of this course**

- To change all that
- And make the Bible a priority in your life
- Learn its history
- See its uniqueness
- Enable you to trust it
- Become excited about it
- Read it
- Live it



**Overview of the Lessons**

- **Lesson 1:** Usefulness of History to confirm the reliability of the Bible
- **Lesson 2:** Why the Christian Bible is unique among all other scriptures
- **Lesson 3:** Old Testament: history and reliability
- **Lesson 4:** Apocrypha: history and reliability (or lack thereof in this case)
- **Lesson 5:** New Testament: history and reliability
- **Lesson 6:** Canonicity: how we got the books we have
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**Before we talk about history:**

*Why do you believe what you believe?*

- Why is your belief better than any other?
- How do you answer when someone questions you about your faith?
- How do you answer your own doubts?
- How do you know what is true?



**Truth is not whatever we want it to be**


- This is a very popular view today.
- But that view violates the logic of the law of non-contradiction.
- Two contradictory things can't each be true.
- Either you are listening to this lesson or you aren't.
- In religion, all can't be true because their teachings contradict each other.
- Different views of Jesus, salvation, scriptures, eternal life.



**What is true?**


### Truth Corresponds to Reality

- Definition of Truth: ***“the body of real things, events, and facts; the property of being in accord with fact or reality”*** Merriam-Webster Dictionary
- Geisler: ***Falsehood, . . . does not correspond. . . . The intent behind the statement is irrelevant. If it lacks proper correspondence [with reality], it is false.***
- So how do we find out if the Bible corresponds to reality?




### History is one option

- Foundational—because for any religion to be true theologically, it should also have a true historical basis.
- Every religion requires that believers accept more than facts, and have faith.
- BUT. . . . .
- ***The historical facts of any religion should be true; they should correspond to reality.***



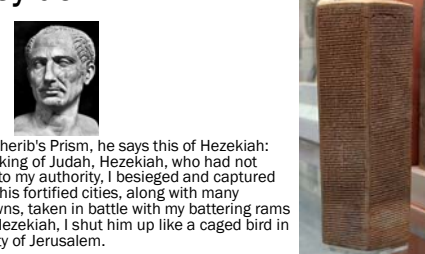
### The Christian faith claims it does

- That it is: Historical & Evidential
- True history based on true evidence
- The Bible is full of verifiable historical content:
  - *“In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. Luke 2:1”*
  - *“In the fourteenth year of King Hezekiah’s reign, Sennacherib king of Assyria attacked all the fortified cities of Judah and captured them. Kings 18:13”*
- We’d expect these events to correspond to historical fact.



### And they do

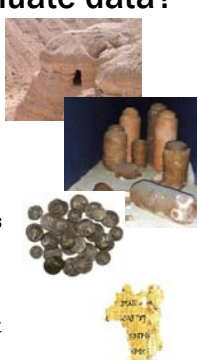
- Caesar
- On Sennacherib’s Prism, he says this of Hezekiah: *“As for the king of Judah, Hezekiah, who had not submitted to my authority, I besieged and captured forty-six of his fortified cities, along with many smaller towns, taken in battle with my battering rams . . . As for Hezekiah, I shut him up like a caged bird in his royal city of Jerusalem.”*



D.P. Ur - sa - li - im - mu ali sharru - ti -shu  
 Jerusalem his royal city.


### How do historians evaluate data?

- Obviously cannot go back to the events themselves
- **Look at: artifacts and documents**
- Artifacts, what’s found with documents & where
- **Documents: Source criticism**
  - **Date written, others follow from this**
  - Authorship
  - Reliability of the sources used
  - Credibility of the author
  - Authenticity or corruption of the text



### How historical documents are dated

- We’ll do an exercise on dating a manuscript—I will describe for audio
- **Because dating is the foundational issue**
- Authorship, validity, reliability all based on it
- **Not just Biblical—all historical documents**
- For this exercise, we’ll look at Biblical manuscripts from about 50 AD to medieval times, 500-1500 AD
- This time corresponds to:
  - When NT documents were written
  - When manuscripts from medieval monasteries were copied, where we find the majority of documents about the ancient world



# The Story of the Christian Bible

## Lesson One

Many have seen charts like this that show the superiority of the NT Manuscripts, but how do we get these dates?

AUTHOR	When Written	Earliest Copy	Time Span	No. of Copies
Caesar	100-44 B.C.	A.D. 900	1000 yrs.	10
Livy	59 B.C.-A.D. 17	A.D. 900	1000 yrs.	20
Plato (Tetralogies)	427-347 B.C.	A.D. 900	1200 yrs.	7
Tacitus (Annals of Rome)	A.D. 100	A.D. 1100	1000 yrs.	20
Pliny the Younger (History)	A.D. 61-113	A.D. 850	750 yrs.	7
Thucydides (History)	460-400 B.C.	A.D. 900	1300 yrs.	8
Suetonius (De Vita Caesarum)	A.D. 75-180	A.D. 950	800 yrs.	8
Herodotus (History)	480-425 B.C.	A.D. 900	1300 yrs.	8
Sophocles	496-406 B.C.	A.D. 1000	1400 yrs.	193
Catullus	54 B.C.	A.D. 1500	1600 yrs.	3
Euripides	480-406 B.C.	A.D. 1100	1500 yrs.	9
Demosthenes	383-322 B.C.	A.D. 1100	1300 yrs.	200+
Aristotle	384-322 B.C.	A.D. 1100	1400 yrs.	49*
Aristophanes	450-385 B.C.	A.D. 900	1200 yrs.	10
Homer (Iliad)	900 B.C.	400 B.C.	500 yrs.	643
<b>New Testament</b>	<b>A.D. 50-100</b>	<b>A.D. 125</b>	<b>25yrs.</b>	<b>over 24,000</b>

\* all from one copy.  
\* of any one work.



You can tell a lot about the date of a manuscript just by looking at it—even if you aren't a scholar.

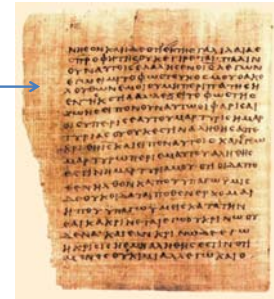


### Criteria to date manuscripts

- **Media used:**
  - Papyrus (200s & earlier)
  - Parchment, vellum (used 300 on)
- **How the letters are constructed**
  - Uncial is written entirely in capital letters commonly used from the 1st to 8th centuries AD by Latin and Greek scribes.
  - Miniscule (upper/lowercase) 8th century on
- **Word spacing**, early MSS all words run together
- **Illumination**, not used until later, in monasteries
- **Archeological materials** found with manuscripts, coins, pottery, etc.



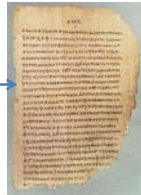
- John's Gospel from about 200



- 50-125



- Chester Beatty manuscript, 2 Cor., 200's



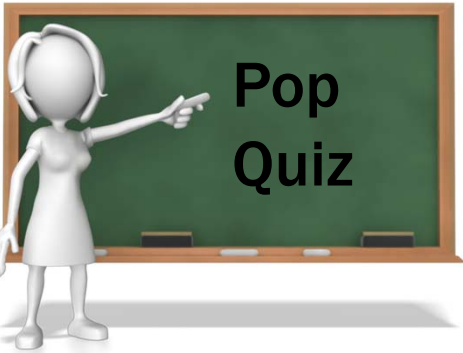
- Fragment of Mark from Qumran, tentatively dated 50AD



- 1240-1260
- Latin Codex (means book as opposed to scrolls)


**And this**

- Bible
- 1225-1250





**So if you find this**

- Matthew
- 1250-1299




**Or this**




Paul's letters, mid to late 200s


**Imagine you found this**



**Codex Sinaiticus 330-360**




Constantine Tischendorf  
in 1844



St. Catherine's Monastery  
At the foot of Mt. Sinai

**Not alone, we have.....**  
**Codex Vaticanus**



Codex Vaticanus,  
300-350

## Codex Alexandrinus



- From Alexandria
- 400-440
- Given to King Charles of England (son of James of the KJV)

## Keep in mind as we go forward

- Historical, manuscript evidence is not....
- Esoteric, hidden, or a field requires any advanced intelligence to understand—pretty simple actually.
- Wikipedia.com (and the web) has all the images, history, stories
- *Historical evidence that confirms the usefulness of the true manuscript dating is still a long way from asserting God as the author of the Bible and believing everything in it, but it's very hard to even begin that journey if you can't trust the documents. . . . and it's a great start!*



## Where we will go from here

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## Discussion Questions

- What are some questions you've heard others ask about the Bible?
- How would you answer them?
- Why is the historical reliability of the Bible important to how you interact with people who don't know Jesus?
- Why is the historical reliability of the Bible important to you personally?