

“Cracking the Da Vinci Code” Can We Trust the Bible?

The Da Vinci Code, I believe, has the potential to wake Christians up, as well as awaken skeptics, and make students out of all of us. When someone challenges something you hold near and dear, you don't just roll over and play dead. You dig in and study! No one wants to base their life on a lie. If what we believe is just a fable, why bother with praying, giving, serving and listening to preachers?

So what do you believe? Is the Bible credible history? Is it accurate, or has it been edited over the years, changed, revised. For example, how sure can I be that when I read the gospel of John that it was the same gospel of John that John penned nearly 2,000 years ago?

And besides that, what makes John such an expert on the life of Jesus? Why should I believe his gospel account any more than that of the gospels according to Mary Magdalene, the Egyptians, Nicodemus, or Joseph the Carpenter? (all of which are just a few of the writings known as the Gnostic gospels, none authored by an apostle or eyewitnesses to Jesus' life)

When Was It Written?

- The complete Old Testament was accepted as “the Word of God” nearly **400** years prior to the birth of Christ, covering events spanning well over **4,000** years.
- The New Testament books were all written no later than **95** AD (Revelation), with the vast majority written prior to **65** AD. (Remember, Jesus' crucifixion occurred in 30 AD), and accepted as “the Word of God” prior to 150 AD.

Dates of the New Testament

James	46-49
Galatians	49-55
I Thess.	51
2 Thess	51
Mark	55-65
Matthew	60-68
1 Cor	57
2 Cor	58
Romans	57
Luke	60-64
John	93
Acts	70-90
Ephesians	60/61
Colossians	60/61
Philemon	60/61

Philippians	62
I Tim	62/63
Titus	62/63
I Peter	63/64
2 Peter	64/66
Hebrews	64-68
2 Tim	67
Jude	66-80
1 John	90
2 John	90
3 John	90
Revelation	95

- *Why is this important? Written during lifetimes of witnesses/critics*

Who Wrote It?

- In the OT, princes, priests, gatekeepers, judges, shepherds, prophets, kings, farmers, slaves, etc. were all used to write the scriptures.
- In the NT, we have eyewitnesses to the life of Jesus Christ who were fishermen, carpenters, tax collectors, doctors, lawyers...even a half brother of Jesus.
 - *Is there a common theme?*
(Yes! Though mankind is rebellious and hard-hearted, God pursues a relationship and reveals His nature to us, redeeming us from the curse of sin through the sacrifice of His Son...that is the common thread through all of scripture, written by 40 authors over thousands of years and different continents without the benefit of teleconferencing or computers!)

How Did They Know What to Write?

- *“Inspiration 101”*: 2 Timothy 3: 16; Hebrews 1:1,2; 2 Peter 1: 20, 21;
- From historians (Moses) to prophets (Jeremiah) to gospel writers (Luke) to the ultimate end-time writer (John’s Revelation)

Why Did Some Books Make the Cut and Some Not?

- Criteria for “Canon” (measuring rod, plumb line, true)
 - *Is it divinely inspired? Does it speak with authority?*
 - *Was it written by a recognized prophet of God?*
 - *Does it record actual facts?*
 - *Is it dynamic, living and active, life transforming?*
 - *Has it been accepted as divinely inspired by the people of God?*
- *A book is not inspired because men made it canonical; it is canonical because God inspired it*

How Do We Know What We Have Now Is The Same as the Original Writings?

- Old Testament Scribes – The Original Xerox Men
- The Dead Sea Scrolls discovered in 1947 surprised the skeptics!
 - **The Oldest Old Testament manuscript prior to Dead Sea Scrolls were AD 900**
 - **The Dead Sea Scrolls contained a complete manuscript of Isaiah dated at 125 BC, making it one thousand years older!**
 - **How close were they?**
 - **There are 166 words in Isaiah 53**
 - **There is only one three letter word in question after 1,000 years of transcribing, and it has no bearing on the meaning of the passage...wow!**
- New Testament? **25,000** manuscripts that are within 50-250 years of originals...
 - **Natural History** by Pliny – 7 copies, 750 year gap from original to earliest copy
 - **Gallic Wars**, written by Caesar – 10 copies, 1,000 year gap
 - **The Iliad**, written by Homer – 643 copies, 400 year gap

What Proves the Bible is From God?

- History & Archeology – Names, places, events...
 - From Hittites to Jericho to obscure cities and extinct tribes and nations...
- Prophecy – Well over 1,000 with **300** specific to Jesus

For Jesus to fulfill just 15 major messianic prophecies = 10 to the 60th power!

To illustrate this would be impossible; just put up a picture of the milky way or stars...with this written at the bottom “And remember, there are 300 prophecies he fulfilled...”

- Bottom line...changed lives are still the best proof!