

# DEFENDABLE FAITH - ANSWERING TOUGH QUESTIONS ABOUT CHRISTIANITY

## Is the Bible Reliable? - The Preservation of Scripture

Introduction: Let us do a quick review of what we have studied in order to be able to answer the question, “Is the Bible reliable?” Years ago, many would have considered that very question to be unthinkable and certainly unspeakable. Not anymore. Among the lost, it is far more common for people to believe the Bible is an ancient religious book full of \_\_\_\_\_ and legends and reflecting the \_\_\_\_\_ and misconceptions of the human authors than it is to consider it a perfect treasure of divine truth.

Therefore, if we are going to be ready to give a reasoned explanation (apologetic) for the hope that is in us, we must be able to explain why we believe the Bible is reliable. Here is what we have learned.

### 1. The Bible is reliable because it is from \_\_\_\_\_.

It is true that God used many different men to put His words on paper, but the ultimate source of the Bible is God Himself. The evidence of the single ultimate source is the continuity of the Bible and its single message on a multitude of \_\_\_\_\_ subjects. The Bible stands alone as a multi volume, multi author book in which every author and every book \_\_\_\_\_ on everything! The only reasonable explanation for this is that behind the forty plus human authors, there was a single \_\_\_\_\_ author, God Himself. And that is exactly what the authors themselves tell us. As they write, they say, “Thus says the Lord...,” “All Scripture is inspired by God...,” and “...men wrote as they were \_\_\_\_\_ by the Holy Spirit...”.

### 2. The Bible is reliable because its books were selected with virtual \_\_\_\_\_ by the people of God because those books clearly demonstrated divine authorship.

And today we will see that...

### 3. The Bible is reliable because it was supernaturally \_\_\_\_\_ by God.

Interestingly, skeptics have tried to use the very evidence of God’s supernatural preservation of the Bible as \_\_\_\_\_ against it. Usually armed with only a superficial knowledge of the facts, their argument goes like this:

Why there are so many ancient \_\_\_\_\_ of the Bible, who can know what “the Bible” is supposed to say. There are more than 200,000 \_\_\_\_\_ in the readings of the manuscripts, so they cannot all be true. These variations of readings are reflected in the \_\_\_\_\_ of versions of the Bible today and in the disagreement among the Christian \_\_\_\_\_.

As you will see, such an accusation involves a great misunderstanding or \_\_\_\_\_ distorting of the truth, but it is good to know what we are up against.

**What is the evidence that the Bible was supernaturally preserved by God?**

## **THE SUPERINTENDENCY OF THE \_\_\_\_\_ .**

I offer two examples of God's miraculous work to cause His Word to be preserved accurately across the years.

- **Von Tischendorf finds Codex Sinaiticus (written around A.D. 350)**

In the mid 1800's Dr. Constantin Von Tischendorf of the University of Leipzig began to travel in the mid-east in search of ancient manuscripts of the Bible. During the course of his travels, he went three times to the monastery of St. Catharine at the foot of the \_\_\_\_\_ Mount Sinai on the Sinai Peninsula.

On the first trip he spied some old parchments in a waste basket being used as tender to \_\_\_\_\_ the ovens. Upon examination he found the papers to be a portion of the Septuagint version of the Old Testament. To his dismay, the monks told him that two other baskets of papers from the same manuscript had already been burned.

On the third trip to the monastery, Von Tischendorf was talking with a steward who said that he personally possessed another \_\_\_\_\_ copy of the Septuagint which he kept wrapped in a large red cloth. When the steward allowed him to see it, Von Tischendorf stayed up all night examining its contents. It proved to be a very old manuscript, written about \_\_\_\_\_ A. D., and contained most of the Old Testament and \_\_\_\_\_ of the New!

This manuscript was eventually purchased by the British Museum, and is today one of the very \_\_\_\_\_ manuscripts for textual criticism. Praise God He allowed it to be found before it was used for the lighting of fires.

- **A Shepherd boy finds the Dead Sea Scrolls (written between 200 B.C. and 100 A.D.)**

Prior to 1947, scholars of the Hebrew text transmitted through the Masoretes pondered about the accuracy of the writings in \_\_\_\_\_ to the autographs and even to copies in use during the days of Jesus, who Himself authenticated the versions in common use in His day. The oldest Hebrew manuscript of any complete book of the Old Testament was written in A.D. \_\_\_\_\_. The oldest manuscript of the complete Old Testament was 200 years younger still. And in textual authentication, \_\_\_\_\_ is always better!

But in 1947 a Bedouin shepherd boy was looking for a lost goat in some caves on the west bank of the Dead Sea. He threw a rock into a cave to see if it caused the scurry of the goat he was pursuing. Much to his surprise he heard the rock shatter

something. He investigated and found several \_\_\_\_\_ which contained leather \_\_\_\_\_ sealed in cloth.

The scrolls were sold to the archbishop of the Syrian Orthodox Monastery and to a professor at the Hebrew University. The archbishop invited the director of the American Center for Oriental Research to examine and photograph one of the scrolls. It turned out to be a scroll of \_\_\_\_\_. It was ten inches high and 24 feet long. The American director sent the photographs by air mail to Dr. W. E. Albright who was considered the dean of American archaeologists.

Dr. Albright wrote him back, "My heartiest congratulation on the greatest manuscript discovery of modern times! ... What an absolutely incredible find! And there can happily not be the slightest doubt in the world about the genuineness of the manuscript." The Isaiah Scroll has been dated about \_\_\_\_\_ B.C. The original Scroll of Isaiah was written near 700 B.C. Scrolls are sometimes used as long as 500 years. This means it is possible that the Isaiah Scroll found in the caves of the Dead Sea was a copy of Isaiah's original scroll!

Since 1947, the many caves of the Dead Sea area have been excavated, and some \_\_\_\_\_ inscribed fragments have been found. From these fragments more than 500 books have been reconstructed. Many of them are extra biblical, but \_\_\_\_\_ of them are of the biblical text. There is at least some portion of a manuscript of every book in the Old Testament except \_\_\_\_\_.

The amazing thing to those who had no confidence in God's supernatural preservation of His Word was that when manuscripts were found that were at least 1,000 years older than those previously examined, the accuracy of the Masoretic text was authenticated and \_\_\_\_\_. Almost every word is the \_\_\_\_\_. The few differences that are apparent are from different spelling of words and a noticeable slip of the pen on the part of a copyist. The bottom line was a tremendous verification of the text of the Old Testament.

**CONCLUSION:** No book of ancient times has anywhere near the verification of authenticity nor the \_\_\_\_\_ of transmission as the Bible, both Old and New Testaments. Any open minded and honest evaluation of the evidence will yield a positive result in the mind and heart of any examiner that this book is indeed the \_\_\_\_\_, dependable Word of God.

Next week, we will look at how God prevented the text from being changed over the process of time.