

## Apologetics: The Gospels and the Reliability of Scripture

10/12/22 for Growth Institute on Apologetics

### My Notes

Overview: 5 questions

1. Why do we need to use the Bible in apologetics?
2. Why do we believe the Bible is trustworthy and authoritative?
3. Why do we believe that what's in the Protestant Bible is all that should be in the Bible?
4. Why do we believe that what's in the Bible today is an accurate representation of what was originally written?
5. How should we engage with people who are skeptical about parts of/all of the Bible?

#### **Question 1: Why do we need to use the Bible in apologetics?**

Biblical reasons:

The Bible is a truth assertion to a relativistic culture that confronts that relativism.

#### **Question 2: Why do we believe the Bible is trustworthy and authoritative?**

Biblical reasons:

Logically:

Jesus believed the Bible was true.

External evidence

Internal consistency

For Further Study: JI Packer, *'Fundamentalism' and the Word of God* or Warfield, *The Inspiration and Authority of The Bible*.

Josh McDowell, *Evidence that Demands a Verdict* and *The New Evidence that Demands a Verdict*.

**Question 3: Why do we believe that what's in the Bible is all that should be in the Bible?**

Biblically:

What about the canon of Scripture?

Criteria for Canonicity

There are 4/5 requirements Protestant Evangelicals point to explain which books have been included in the Old and New Testament:

1. **Apostolic Origin**
2. **Universal Acceptance**
3. **Liturgical Use**
4. **Consistent Message**
5. **Dynamic:**

OT & NT Books

Other Books

For Further Study: *Michael Kruger, The Question of Canon Challenging the Status Quo in the New Testament Debate*

**Question 4: Why do we believe that what's in the Bible today is an accurate representation of what was originally written?**

Biblical reasons:

Manuscript stuff from CARM:

For Further Study: <https://carm.org/about-the-bible/manuscript-evidence-for-superior-new-testament-reliability/>

**Question 5: How should we engage with people who are skeptical about parts of/all of the Bible?**

Biblically: 1 Peter 3:15 Hebrews 4:12-13 and Isaiah 55:10-11

Things to remember to harmonize the slightly different views of some events in the 4 gospels:

How should you answer tough questions?

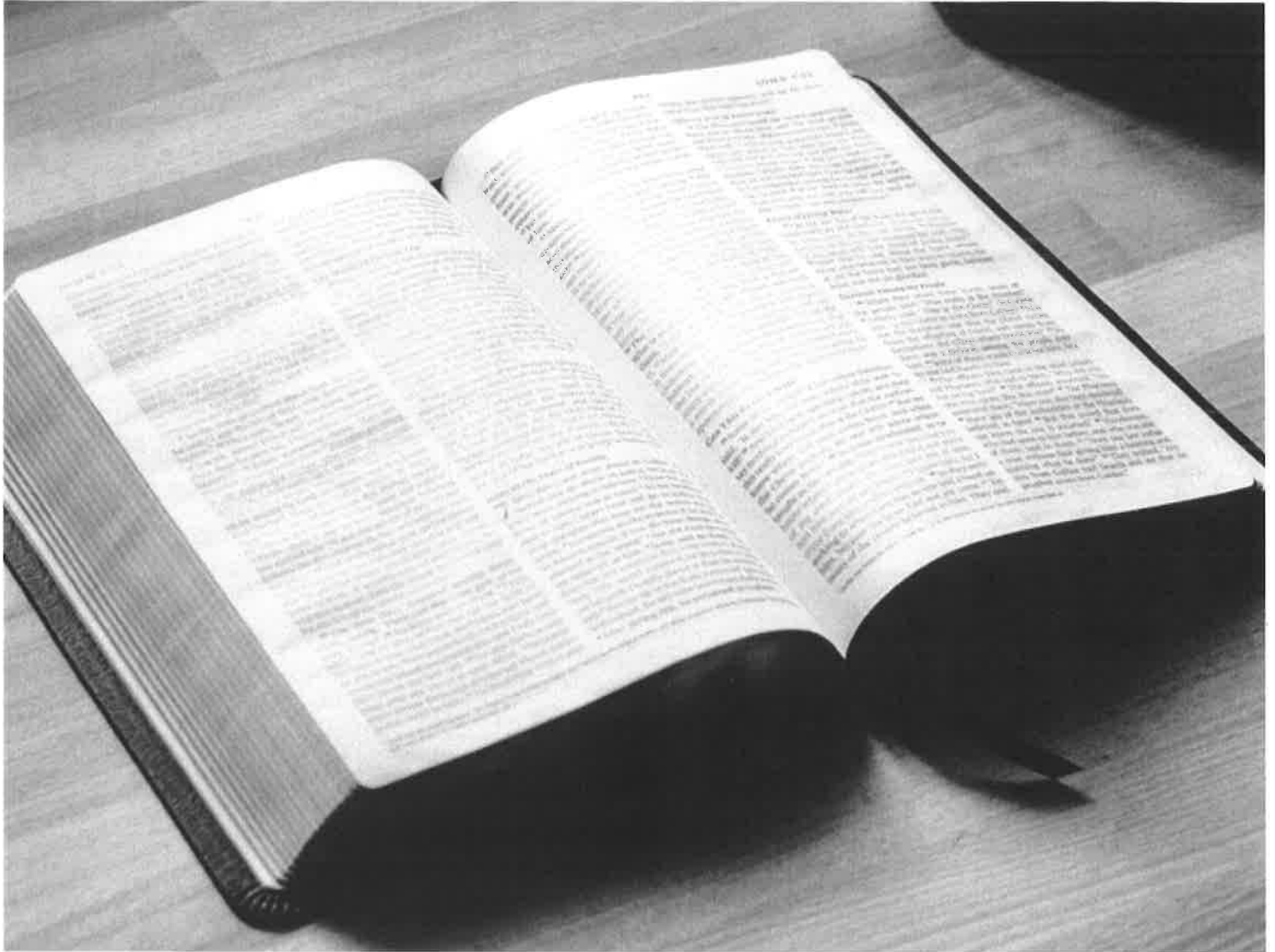
Let the lion out of the cage.

For Further Study: The Bible

Norm Geisler and Thomas Howe's *The Big Book of Bible Difficulties: Clear and Concise Answers from Genesis to Revelation*

**Homework:** <https://reasonabletheology.org/reliability-bible-4-quick-thoughts/>

**For next week:** <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/why-the-resurrection-changes-everything/>



# The Reliability of the Bible: 4 Quick Thoughts

🕒 5 minute read

📖 With these 4 quick thoughts on defending Scripture...



Reasonable**THEOLOGY**



If you're into [apologetics](#), you're likely familiar with many great resources you can go to for an in-depth look at how well Scripture has been preserved throughout the ages.

However, in the midst of a conversation it is not always practical to bring these resources into the discussion and it can be difficult to recall the relevant information that you've studied.

This article seeks to provide a way to confidently outline some important aspects of defending the Bible.

Instead of trying to memorize specific facts, I recommend focusing on understanding these four areas of evidence that support the reliability of Scripture. Having a firm grasp of these larger, more generalized topics can give you the confidence to introduce others to the facts about why we can trust that our Bible's accurately preserve what was originally written by the authors.

These four areas will give an overview of the reliability of Scripture and includes a few memorable supporting facts for each.

These points are by no means an exhaustive discussion on defending the validity of the Bible, and they are not intended to be. They will, however, help you navigate a



Once you've introduced these four areas of evidence for the reliability of Scripture, you can supplement the arguments by recommending resources or introducing additional information.

## 1. We Have Thousands of Biblical Manuscripts

The fact is, we do not have any of the original writings of Biblical books. The original writings were often written on animal skin and other materials that deteriorated rather quickly. So if what we have are copies of copies of the originals, how can we know that they are accurate?

Fortunately, there is an incredibly high number of surviving copies of original Biblical writings. These copies are called manuscripts, and there are roughly 6,000 surviving manuscripts for the New Testament alone. This makes it the best attested document of all ancient writings. The next closest contender is Homer's *The Iliad*, which has only 600 existing copies.

The value of having a large number of manuscripts is that it provides us with ample opportunity to compare writings, which is especially valuable when cross-checking manuscripts from different geographic areas or from different time periods.

When making these comparisons you can determine whether it is apparent that the documents were reliably copied from the same source, and you can quantify how much they may have strayed from that source by seeing where and how they differ.

In short, having an abundance of manuscripts shows us that copying Scripture was not like a game of "telephone." Comparing the incredible amount of manuscript



Most importantly, you should know that not a single variation in these thousands of manuscripts has been shown to affect a theological issue in any way. While there are undoubtedly differences among the manuscripts, we can have confidence that they stayed true to the originals because the copies themselves are so close to one another, despite being written at different times and in different places.

## 2. Archaeology Supports the Biblical Record

Archaeology has repeatedly confirmed the accuracy of Biblical places, events, and people. Thousands of archeological finds have corroborated the accounts of the Bible, and such evidence quickly puts an end to allegations that the history recorded in the Bible is suspect. [BeThinking.org](https://www.bethinking.org) has a few important examples of such evidence from archaeology.

It is important to remember that no archaeological finds have ever disproved a single Biblical event, civilization, or individual. On the contrary, there are numerous incidents where archaeology has upheld the facts recorded in Scripture and disproved the skepticism of academics.

Archaeology provides further value when considering the discovery of ancient manuscripts, such as with the Dead Sea Scrolls discussed next.

## 3. The Original Writings Were Faithfully Preserved

The discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls in the 1940's allowed scholars to compare Old Testament manuscripts that were separated by hundreds of years. Of particular importance was the newly discovered copy of Isaiah, which predated the earliest



Comparing the two ancient documents revealed that they were nearly identical, except for some minor spelling or stylistic differences. Even though one of the manuscripts had been copied countless times more than that which was found among the Dead Sea Scrolls, there was no substantial difference between the two texts ([Learn more about the Dead Sea Scrolls at GotQuestions.org](#)).

This is one important example of how faithful scribes were when copying the Scriptures. These copies were accurately created by those dedicated to preserving the Word of God. Even though we do not possess any of the original writings, we can be confident that the copies we do have were reliably handed down over the centuries.

## 4. The New Testament Was Written Shortly After the Events it Records

Once you have established that our Bibles contain reliable copies of what was originally written, you may find it necessary to provide evidence that the originals were accurate to begin with. After all, it would mean very little to have accurate copies of New Testament writings if the originals were not true. So how can we present the fact that the Bible provides an accurate account of historical events?

When it comes to the New Testament, it is important to know that the gospels were recorded relatively soon after the events which they record. At the very latest, the four gospels were written 40-60 years after Jesus' resurrection.

Many New Testament books predate the gospels. Paul's letters to the Galatians and Ephesians, for example, were likely written 15-20 years after the time of Christ. (See





While this may seem like a great deal of time between the events and the writings, it is helpful to note that these dates are remarkably early for ancient documents.

Since the written record was created in close proximity to the actual events, those who wrote these books were in a position to know if they were true or not. Furthermore, there would have been living eyewitnesses who could have discredited these texts if they were not accurate.

When Paul defended the reality of the resurrection in 1 Corinthians 15, he said “Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep.”

## Conclusion

There are many compelling facts you could commit to memory and hundreds of resources you could point to for further study in this area. The purpose of this article has not been to give an extensive defense of each of these aspects, but to instead equip believers with a general road map that they can use to navigate a conversation regarding the accuracy and reliability of the Scriptures.

I strongly recommend further study into why we can have confidence that our Old and New Testaments are accurate depictions of historical events that have been faithfully preserved through the ages.

## Here are some recommended resources:

- Why I Trust the Bible - My interview with Bill Mounce



## BIBLE &amp; THEOLOGY

# Why the Resurrection Changes Everything

MARCH 28, 2013

MATTHEW BARRETT

Does the resurrection of Christ matter? Does it truly make a difference? The apostle Paul sure thought so. In writing the Corinthians, Paul was faced with the startling news that some in Corinth denied the future resurrection of the body. Such a view was adopted by many in the Greco-Roman world. Death was the end. Actually, not much had changed since the first century. Today, the same view is held by skeptics of the faith.

What was so shocking, however, is that in Paul's day, some Christians, who affirmed the bodily resurrection of Jesus nonetheless denied the future resurrection of the body. Paul responds with boldness, arguing that you cannot have one without the other. If there is no future resurrection for believers, then Christ himself has not been raised! If Christ has not been raised, then everything changes. Let's explore the consequences of the resurrection of Christ on the Christian life.

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## 1. The resurrection of Christ is inseparable from the gospel of Christ.

In 1 Corinthians 15 Paul begins by reminding his brothers of the “gospel I preached to you . . . by which you are saved” (15:2). This gospel, Paul says, revolves around the death of Christ, who “died for our sins in accordance with the Scripture” (15:3). But notice, Paul does not end there. Christ did not remain dead, but he was also “raised on third day in accordance with the Scriptures” (15:4), before appearing to his disciples.

Have we, as gospel-centered, gospel-saturated believers, left the resurrection out of our gospel message? I know I am guilty. After reflecting on an opportunity I had to share the gospel with an unbeliever, I suddenly realized that not once had I mentioned, at least in any depth, the resurrection of Christ. I fear that my experience is not my own, but that of evangelicals everywhere. But Paul teaches us that we must come to grips with the biblical reality that the resurrection of Christ cannot be divorced from the death of Christ when we speak about the gospel. Should we separate the two, we will seriously miss the significance of the resurrection for our salvation. As Thomas Schreine states, “Christ’s death and resurrection are inseparable in effecting salvation.”

## 2. The resurrection of Christ is the fuel that ignites our preaching to a lost world.

Ask yourself this: Would your preaching look any different if Christ had not risen from the dead? If your answer to that question is no, then there is a serious problem. For Paul, the resurrection of Christ made all the difference in the world when it came to preaching. If Christ has not been raised, Paul says, “then our preaching is in vain” (15:14).

The reason is simple: you are misrepresenting God, for you are preaching that he raised Christ when he did nothing (15:15). In short, if Christ did not rise from the grave, we have no good news.

## 3. The resurrection of Christ saves.

Perhaps the most sobering statement Paul makes in 1 Corinthians 15 is that “if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins” (15:17). So often we limit our understanding of salvation to the death of Christ. And certainly the death of Christ, as Paul says in Romans 3:25-26, is the very basis of our justification. It is through his “one act of righteousness” (Rom. 5:18), the “propitiation by his blood” (Rom. 3:25-26), that sinners are declared righteous in God’s sight. But there is more, much more, to be said. Not only does the substitutionary death of Christ save, but so also does his resurrection. For example, Paul states in Romans 4:24-25 that like Abraham we are counted righteous for we believe in him “who raised from the dead Jesus our Lord, who was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification.”

By raising Jesus from the dead, God declared his satisfaction and approval of the payment Christ made on our behalf for our sins, on the cross. And as those who are in Christ (Rom. 6:6-11; Eph. 2:6; Col. 2:12; 3:1), God’s approval of Christ’s substitutionary death, demonstrated in raising Jesus from the dead, is likewise directed towards us, so that when we believe we receive the favor of God. Therefore, our justification is a real consequence of Christ’s resurrection. No wonder Paul can say that “if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins” (1 Cor. 15:17). And if we are still in our sins, we have no confidence, no assurance of our salvation whatsoever. It is no overstatement to say, then, that the resurrection of Christ saves.

## 4. The resurrection of Christ is the basis for future hope.

How practical Christ’s resurrection is—precisely because Christ has been raised, we can tell those looking into the casket of their loved ones that this is not the end of the story.

If your loved ones believe in Christ then even though they have “fallen asleep” they have fallen asleep “in Christ” (1 Cor. 15:18). And since they are united to this resurrected Christ, they have not perished but their souls have gone to be with Christ (Phil. 1:23), and they await that day when they will receive their resurrected bodies. As Paul tells the Corinthians, Christ’s resurrection is the firstfruits of that great harvest to come. Though death came by the first Adam in the second Adam “shall all be made alive” (15:22).

Apart from the resurrection of Christ, we have no future hope. As Paul says in no uncertain terms, if Christ has not been raised then we, out of all people, are to be “pitied,” for our hope in Christ fails to extend beyond this present (1 Cor. 15:19). But since Christ has been raised, we are those who can look death in the face knowing that it has no final victory, no lasting sting (1 Cor. 15:54-55).

I love how Paul ends 1 Corinthians 15. “Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain” (15:58). Because Christ is risen, we, as those who are in Christ, have every assurance that our labor in sharing this gospel of the risen Christ is not pointless or without purpose, but will matter for all eternity. Therefore, do not forget this Easter that the resurrection of Christ changes everything. Without it, we have no gospel, no salvation, no saving message, and certainly no future hope.