

Question: How can we trust the Bible when it has been translated so many times?

Answer:

The Bible consists of 66 books which were written by about 40 different authors over a period of about 1500 years, and in 3 different languages. Over time these 66 books were assembled into one, and that is what we now call the Bible.

Moses wrote the first five books of the Bible, so in the early days that is all the people had. Then God raised up His prophets and kings and later His apostles. So step by step the Scriptures increased as the Bible was written.

The two main parts of the Bible are the Old Testament (before the incarnation of Christ) and the New Testament (from the life of Christ and the early church).

The Jewish people preserved the ancient writings because they knew that God had given this responsibility. Israel's reverence for God's Word led them to create a remarkable copying system which left no room for error.

Something to keep in mind about your concern that there are mistakes in the Bible: Comparing ancient texts, such as the Masoretic text with the Dead Sea Scrolls, proves that there are no major alterations and that the Bible we have today is virtually flawless. The Dead Sea scrolls were discovered in some caves in 1947 and confirmed that we still have the same Old Testament as they did in Jesus' day.

The New Testament is derived from a scrupulous study and scientific analysis and cross-comparison of over 50,000 manuscripts and fragments dating from 120 AD to 600 AD. All variants are fully documented in the Cambridge text, and none make the slightest historical or theological difference.

We have the original Bible through our manuscript copies. The oldest surviving complete copy of the New Testament is the Codex Sinaiticus, scribed around 350 AD. It's in the British Museum.

There are earlier surviving copies of the various books (several complete/intact, the rest fragmentary/damaged) that are earlier than 350. The earliest is a tiny fragment (dated 120 AD) from John's Gospel, now in the John Ryland's Library. The first complete copies of single New Testament books are dated around 200 AD. All the manuscripts and fragments are in research universities and museums.

In addition to these Greek manuscripts, we also have many early translations into Syriac, Coptic, Ethiopic, Slavonic, Gothic and Armenian, also in universities and museums. We also have the Patristic writings: in fact, if we did not have any New Testament manuscript, we could reconstruct 98% of it just from quotations by the Church Fathers from the 2nd-4th centuries.

There are copies of the New Testament that come from different geographical locations and have been translated into other languages at a very early time. This helps us, as we can compare texts found in two different geographical locations and surmise that where they match up they're accurate to their original copy. So when we compare a number of manuscripts from a very early time period and different geographical locations, it is very easy to see what is accurate and if there have been any manmade errors.

Unbelievers seem to think that if one word is translated incorrectly, if one phrase is left out or added, Christians should lose their faith. Our faith is not that weak that we cannot see the hand of God through the Bible. God has revealed Himself through His Word.

'The grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of our God stands forever' (Isaiah 40:8).

Question: Did Constantine remove parts of the New Testament?

Answer:

There is lots of misinformation and rumour that circulates about Constantine. Some have portrayed him as the Roman Emperor who basically invented the Gospel for his own political ends. There also seems to be a number of legends about the First Council of Nicaea (325AD) in circulation on the internet, presented as fact. Some people seem to think that the council, which was the first council of all the Bishops of the Christian Church, either invented the New Testament, or edited it to remove certain references, or burned large numbers of heretical works, etc. These claims are in error.

Constantine was Roman Emperor from 306-337 AD. Prior to his rule many of the Roman Emperors were openly hostile to the Gospel, killing and persecuting many of the followers of the Christ. The Emperor Nero started this trend in 64 AD, when he took first century followers of the gospel, bound and dipped them in oil, and burned them alive as human torches for lighting in his palace gardens!

Successive Emperors Domitian, Marcus Aurelius, Diocletian and others continued this kind of treatment. But Constantine issued the Edict of Milan in 313 AD, granting religious tolerance to all views. Constantine became sole emperor of Rome by being victorious in a series of military campaigns against other rivals. During these campaigns he converted from paganism to Christianity. There is much debate today whether his 'conversion' was

sincere, or whether he did so for political gain. We will find out on the Day of Judgment.

In 325 AD Constantine convened the Council of Nicaea, the first empire-wide meeting of church leaders to discuss various controversies. People often wonder if the gospels were changed or corrupted, or even selected (in some back-room conspiracy) for inclusion in the Bible at this time. In fact, the main point of discussion was the theological understanding of the relationship between Jesus and God. One camp (led by Arius) held that they were of different essences, and the other camp (led by Athanasius) held that they were of the same essences. Therefore we know that theological understandings were staked out and the summary Nicene Creed was authored from this council convened by Constantine.

Were the gospels changed and/or selected at this council? There are many manuscripts on-hand today that come from up to two hundred years before the time of Constantine (and the Council of Nicaea). If this council (or Constantine) changed the documents of the New Testament then we would see this change in the copies that pre-date the Council of Nicaea from those that come after. But the copies show no such change.

Were the 'wrong' gospels selected into the Bible at this point? We also know that this was not the case because both sides of the debate (Arius and Athanasius) used the same gospels and epistles (the ones that are in the Bible now) to argue their case. Arius and Athanasius did not disagree on what the scriptural documents stated, nor did they disagree on which documents should be 'in' the Bible. They disagreed, with heated debate, on the interpretation of these same scriptures.

Constantine did have a huge impact on the development of Christianity in Europe. But the Gospel is not about culture or government power. It is a good news message about the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ which can be freely received in the hearts and minds of people. Since the books in the Bible were not invented, modified or corrupted by Constantine, we can use them to get a view of Jesus and His Gospel that has been around since His disciples went forth proclaiming His message.

What about the theology and creeds that came from the Council of Nicaea? Are they corrupt? Since the scriptures upon which these interpretations were debated are open and available to us today, we ourselves can consider the scriptures, understand its message, and assess those very same interpretations and creeds. Then we can make our own decisions about what we believe, simply by reading the Bible for ourselves. Therefore read the Bible yourself and then decide whether you will believe and follow the Lord Jesus Christ or not.

Jesus believed that His Word would spread around the world (Matthew 24:14; Mark 13:10). Therefore He entrusted His Word to those who love God and would get this done.

Jesus said, *"If anyone chooses to do God's will, he will find out whether my teaching comes from God or whether I speak on my own"* (John 7:17).

DO YOU BELIEVE IN JESUS?

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ANSWERING FALSE ARGUMENTS AGAINST THE BIBLE

The Bible is the most widely printed and published book in the world. It is the source of wisdom and revelation for what we need to know about God, Jesus, salvation, and the Christian life. Yet the Bible has always had its critics and enemies. Despite their vicious attacks the Bible has stood the test of time.

Jesus said, *"Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away"* (Matthew 24:35).