

# CHRISTIAN APOLOGETICS

Can we trust the Bible regarding  
it's preservation and translation?

**OUR FAITH IN JESUS IS DEPENDENT ON  
THE NEW TESTAMENT BEING RELIABLE  
AS A HISTORICAL DOCUMENT!**

- **BUT IF WE DESIRE TO HAVE A "STRONG FAITH" FOR OURSELVES AND OTHERS...**
  - Then we need to understand our dependency upon the New Testament
  - We need to know how to demonstrate the evidence which supports it as a reliable, historical document!

# **THE EVIDENCE FOR THE EARLY EXISTENCE OF THE NEW TESTAMENT**

- INTERNAL EVIDENCE...
- PAPYRI FRAGMENTS...
- PATRISTIC WRITINGS...

- In all, Luke names thirty-two countries, fifty-four cities, and nine islands without error."
  - A. N. Sherwin-White states, "For Acts the confirmation of historicity is overwhelming. . . . Any attempt to reject its basic historicity must now appear absurd.
  - Roman historians have long taken it for granted."

# CHRISTIAN APOLOGETICS

Can we trust the Bible regarding  
it's preservation and translation?

# Has the Bible we have today been altered or corrupted...?

- We have no original "autographs" (manuscripts penned by the authors)
- All we have are copies of copies, made over the years

# How do we know there hasn't been...

- Significant changes or errors made in the process of copying?
- Collusion (secret cooperation for deceitful purposes) by those who possessed the early copies?

It is not uncommon to hear such statements as...

- "The Bible was corrupted by the Catholic church who possessed it" (Mormons, JW's)
- "Only Catholic Bibles are reliable, since the church possesses the oldest copies" (Catholics)

Yet it is possible to have confidence in the Bible, that it...

- Contains the Scriptures as they were originally written
- Is free from attempts to twist the Scriptures to support a particular church or doctrine

# Confidence comes from.....

- **Textual evidence**
- **Translation guidelines**

# Textual evidence for the Old Testament

- **The Massoretic Text (900 A.D.)**
  - Earliest complete text of Hebrew OT, copied by Jewish scribes called the Massorettes
  - Comparison with earlier Greek and Latin versions
    - Reveal vary careful copying
    - With little deviation during the thousand years from 100 B.C. to 900 A.D.

# **Textual evidence for the Old Testament**

- **The Dead Sea Scrolls (150 B.C. - 70 A.D.)**
  - Discovered in 1947, containing copies of OT books dating back to 100 B.C.
  - Compared with the "Massoretic Text" of 900 A.D., they confirm the careful copying of Jewish scribes for over 1000 years!

# **Textual evidence for the Old Testament**

- **The Septuagint version of the OT (200 B.C.)**
  - A Greek translation of the OT, done in 200 B.C. by 70 scholars
  - It also confirms the accuracy of the copyists who gave us the Massoretic Text

# **Textual evidence for the Old Testament**

- -- In his book, **Can I Trust My Bible**, R. Laird Harris concluded, "We can now be sure that copyists worked with great care and accuracy on the Old Testament, even back to 225 B.C....Indeed, it would be rash skepticism that would now deny that we have our Old Testament in a form very close to that used by Ezra when he taught the word of the Lord to those who had returned from the Babylonian captivity."

# **Textual evidence for the New Testament**

- **The number of the manuscripts**
  - Over 4,000 Greek manuscripts
  - 13,000 copies of portions of the N.T. in Greek

# **Textual evidence for the New Testament**

- **The location of the manuscripts**
  - Found in various places: Egypt, Palestine, Syria, Turkey, Greece, Italy
  - Making collusion very difficult (not one church or religion contains them all)

# Textual evidence for the New Testament

- **The date of the manuscripts**
  - Several papyri fragments have been dated to within 50-100 years of the original
  - We have several nearly complete N.T. Greek manuscripts within 300-400 years
    - Codex Sinaiticus, found near Mt. Sinai
    - Codex Alexandrinus, found near Alexandria in Egypt
    - Codex Vaticanus, located at the Vatican in Rome

# Textual evidence for the New Testament

- **The variations of the manuscripts**
  - The vast majority are very minor (spelling, differences in phraseology, etc.; modern translations often note the differences in footnotes)
  - Only 1/2 of one percent is in question (compared to 5 percent for the Iliad)
  - Even then, it can be stated: "No fundamental doctrine of the Christian faith rests on a disputed reading...It cannot be too strongly asserted that in substance the text of the Bible is certain: especially is this the case with the New Testament." - **Sir Frederick Kenyon** (authority in the field of New Testament textual criticism)

# **Textual evidence for the New Testament**

- **Other translations of the manuscripts**
  - More than 1,000 copies and fragments in Syriac, Coptic, Armenian, Gothic, Ethiopic
  - 8,000 copies of the Latin Vulgate, some almost dating back to Jerome's original translation (ca. 400 A.D.)

# **Textual evidence for the New Testament**

- **Writings of the early "church fathers" (100-400 A.D.)**
  - Early religious leaders who left 1000s of quotations of the NT in their writings
  - Even if all the NT manuscripts and translations were to disappear overnight, it would be possible to reconstruct the NT from their quotations, with the exception of 15-20 verses

# **Textual evidence for the New Testament**

- The evidence is sufficient to show that the Greek text of the New Testament has been faithfully preserved, without the possibility of collusion or corruption by any one religious party or faction**

# TRANSLATION GUIDELINES

- **BEWARE OF THOSE BY ONE INDIVIDUAL...**
  - Some translations are the work of one person; for example:
    - **The Living Bible**, by Kenneth Taylor
    - Which is not really a translation, but a paraphrase

# **TRANSLATION GUIDELINES**

- **BEWARE OF THOSE BY ONE INDIVIDUAL...**
  - Though well intentioned, such translations often:
    - Express the views of one person
    - Convey the theological bias of that individual

# **TRANSLATION GUIDELINES**

- **BEWARE OF THOSE BY ONE INDIVIDUAL...**
  - It is better to find translations produced by a committee of scholars
    - With often hundreds of experts in Hebrew and Greek
    - Who examine and critique each other's work in the translation

# **TRANSLATION GUIDELINES**

- **BEWARE OF THOSE BY A PARTICULAR DENOMINATION...**
  - Some translations are the work of one religious group; for example:
    - The New World Translation
    - Produced by Jehovah's Witnesses

# TRANSLATION GUIDELINES

- **BEWARE OF THOSE BY A PARTICULAR DENOMINATION...**
  - Such translations are often slanted to prove doctrines favorable to the group
    - E.g., the NWT translation of **Jn 1:1-2** ("the Word was a god")
    - E.g., the NWT translation of **Co 1:16-17** (inserting "other" four times)

# **TRANSLATION GUIDELINES**

- **It is better to find translations produced by representatives from different backgrounds**
  - Who are members of different religious organizations
  - Who check each other's work to prevent theological bias

# **RECOMMENDED ENGLISH TRANSLATIONS...**

- **King James Version (KJV)**
- **New King James Version (NKJV)**
- **American Standard Version (ASV)**
- **New American Standard Bible (NASB)**

# RECOMMENDED ENGLISH TRANSLATIONS...

- **Other translations useful as references:**
  - **New International Version (NIV)** - easy to read, but prone to theological bias
  - **New American Bible (NAB)** - approved for Catholics, useful to show differences in doctrine are not due to translations