

THE HISTORICITY OF THE BIBLE

This topic deals with the question, “Is the Bible a reliable historical document? There are many who question the historicity of the Bible but would never question other ancient literary works. There are three ways historians evaluate a document for historical reliability—The Internal Test, The External Test and the Biographical Test. That will be the focus of this section.

THE NEW TESTAMENT

THE INTERNAL TEST

Does the Document Claim to Be Written by an Eyewitness?

- Luke was an eyewitness (Lk. 1:1-4)
- Peter was an eyewitness (2 Pet. 1:16-18)
- John was an eyewitness (1 Jn. 1:1-3)
- The writer of Hebrews spoke to eyewitnesses (Heb. 2:3)

Did it Really Happen?

- If the Biblical narratives never happened they could have been easily disproved. There would have been those living at the time who could have contradicted the Biblical accounts. These things were not done in secret (Acts 26:24-26).

- The disciples had nothing to gain and everything to lose by making their claims about Christ. It was their commitment to Christ that eventually caused their martyrdom. Few people are willing to give their life for a lie.
- Facts are recorded that would work against the purpose. If things were fabricated, truly somethings would be left out. For instance, recording that women were the first to see Jesus after His resurrection. In this culture the testimony of a women was not given a lot of emphasis and in some cases was not even admissible in a court case.
- Their writing were in sync with each other. They were four different writers with four focuses.

THE EXTERNAL TEST

Is there external material that confirms the reliability of the document?

Archaeology

Archaeology has confirmed many things spoken of in the New Testament. For example the Caiaphas Ossuary

Quotes by the Church Fathers

If every New Testament in the world were destroyed, the whole New Testament (all but eleven verses) could be reconstructed based on the quotes of the Church Fathers.

Outside References

One example is the reference in Acts 18:2 where all Jews were asked to leave Rome. Suetonius says, “Because the Jews at Rome caused continuous disturbances as the instigation of Crestus [Latin for Christ], he [Cladius] expelled them from the city.”

THE BIOGRAPHICAL TEST

Are there documents that have survived to support the writings? In order to make the Biblical information in the original autographs accessible to others, copies were made. Over time, the original either deteriorated, were lost or destroyed.

Time Gap

Therefore, the closer a copy to the original, the less time for errors to creep in.

The Number of Copies

The more copies available the easier it would be to make comparisons to determine the original writing.

THE HISTORICITY OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

THE INTERNAL TEST

(Does the document itself claim to be written by an eyewitness?)

THE EXTERNAL TEST

(Is there material external to the document that confirms the reliability of the document?)

THE BIBLIOGRAPHICAL TEST

(How many manuscripts copies have survived and how distant are they from original autographs?)

THE INTERNAL TEST

(Does the document itself claim to be written by an eyewitness?)

- Luke was an eyewitness (Lk. 1:1-4)
- Peter was an eyewitness (2 Pet. 1:16-17)
- John was an eyewitness (1 Jn. 1:1-2)
- The writer of Hebrews spoke to eyewitnesses (Heb. 2:3)

THE EXTERNAL TEST

(Is there material external to the document that confirms the reliability of the document?)

- Archaeological Material
- Historical Material

- Scientific Material

THE BIBLIOGRAPHICAL TEST

(How many manuscripts copies have survived and how distant are they from original autographs?)