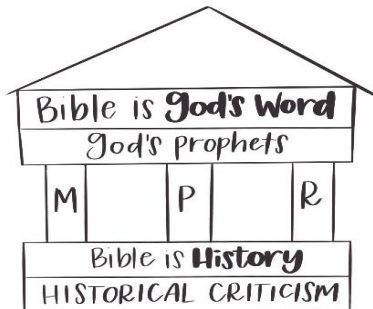


# Historical Reliability

## Evidence for Christianity Session 4

William L. Custer

1. Review
  - a. Faith and Evidence
  - b. Miracle and The Resurrection
  - c. Prophecy



2. Historical Criticism
  - a. Document is "Fair on its Face" – Aristotle
  - b. Internal Evidence
    - Statement of authorship and date in the document
  - c. External Evidence
    - Other writers attest to the authorship
    - Details consistent with other historical sources
  - d. Miracles not ruled out
3. Fair on Its Face = Appears Genuine
  - a. Aristotle's dictum – the benefit of the doubt is to be given to the document itself
  - b. Eyewitness - Luke/Acts claims careful interviews of eyewitnesses Acts 1:1-4, II Pet 1:16
  - c. Signed - Letters of Paul, Peter & James, Revelation
4. Internal Evidence
  - a. Authorship and date recorded in the document – Eg. Caesar's Census in Luke 2
  - b. Events of known date recorded in the document – Eg. Destruction of Jerusalem in Matt 24
  - c. Example: the geography of the book of Acts fits the first century and not the second.
  - d. This pushes the date for Luke's gospel into the first century.
5. External Evidence
  - a. Other writers attest to the authorship, date, etc
  - b. Consistent with known events and documents
  - c. Question: There are Creation & Flood narratives in all cultures. But the Genesis record is the most credible. Does this count as external evidence?
6. God Progressively Revealed Himself in History
  - a. God walked with Adam and Eve Most cultures have this story
  - b. God sent the flood but saved Noah Most cultures have this story
  - c. God spoke to Moses and the prophets Evidenced by The Law & The Prophets
  - d. Jesus Resurrection and Messianic Prophecy He was bruised for our iniquities – Isa 53
  - e. Historical events are recorded attested sources

7. Distinctions - The Autograph, Copies and Translations
  - a. See Halley, "How We Got the Bible," p. 1070
  
8. Historical vs Textual Criticism
  - a. Textual criticism (lower) – establishing the original text.
  - b. Historical criticism (higher) –
    - Date of the text
    - Literary style and structure
    - Literary form –
    - Historicity
    - Sources –
    - Authorship
  - c. Neither concept is bad in itself
  - d. "Historical criticism is a broad term that may be limited to three areas: techniques of dating documents and traditions, verification of events contained in those documents, the writing of history, the reconstruction of events and their explanation." Geisler/Nix p. 433-35.
  - e. Critical disciplines include: source, form, tradition, and redaction (editing) criticism
  
9. Negative Historical Criticism
  - a. Assumed that miracles cannot happen.
  - b. Flowered in Germany in the mid 1800's though had its beginning some 200 years earlier
    - For OT – Julius Wellhausen, Introduction to the History of Israel, 1878
    - For NT – F. C. Bauer at Tubingen.
  - c. Questioned the authorship of pretty much everything including the books of the Bible.
  - d. To many, Troy was a mythical city, as was Babylon.
  - e. To many, Moses could not have written the Pentateuch because they thought writing was not invented yet.
  - f. See Geisler/Nix pp. 156-63; 433-39. See Wikipedia "historical criticism"
  
10. Resulting Negative Critical Claims
  - a. Late dates, not written when we thought or by whom
  - b. Multiple writers of Pentateuch - JEDP
  - c. Prophetic books written after any predictions
  - d. Major editing (redacting) after the original writing
  - e. Eg. Strauss, The Life of Jesus, 1835 concluded that it was all a myth. Halley, p. 1004
  - f. Eg. Albert Schweitzer, The Quest for the Historical Jesus, 1906
  - g. See Wikipedia "Historical Jesus"
  
11. Expectations and Mr. Brown's Salary
  - a. What are your expectations?
  - b. About evidence in general?
  - c. About historical evidence?
  - d. About New Testament historical evidence?
  - e. Compared with other decisions in life such as buying a house, stocks, choosing a mate
  - f. Compared with our age of copy machines, smart phones, videos, and internet

12. Classical Manuscripts: Greece and Rome - Years Between Writing and Earliest MSS
  - a. Homer 400 years
  - b. Herodotus 1350 years
  - c. Livy 400-1000 years
  - d. Tacitus 1000 years
  - e. New Testament 50-150 years ←
  
13. NT Manuscripts: FF Bruce
  - a. There are 4000 MSS of the NT (now 5000)
  - b. 1475 Codex Vaticanus, AD 350 – Vatican Library in Rome
  - c. 1933 Codex Sinaiticus, AD 350 – British Museum
  - d. 1931 Chester Beatty Biblical Papyrus, AD 200-250 – Most of the NT
  - e. 1935 Gospel Papyrus Fragments, AD 150 – written by someone with the four gospels in front of them
  - f. 1917 Papyrus Fragment of John, AD 130 – Found in Egypt - John Rylands Library - Jn 18:31-33, 37
  - g. 1956 Bodmer Papyrus II, AD 200 – Bodmer Library of Geneva – Much of John’s gospel
  - h. Apostolic Fathers quote selected verses
  
14. NT Manuscript Preservation
  - a. NT manuscripts are closer to the time of writing than most documents of classical Greece and Rome which historians accept
  - b. This evidence in spite of the burning of the library at Alexandria, thought to be the second greatest in the world at that time
  - c. Quote from FF Bruce, p. 15
  
15. NT Authorship Testimony
  - a. Testimony of the Fathers – Eg. Papias, Polycarp, Irenaeus
  - b. These testimonies Interlock
    - See Chart of quotes from R.C. Foster, Life of Christ: Introduction and Early Ministry
  
16. External Evidence for NT Authorship – Papias
  - a. Was bishop of Hierapolis (modern Turkey) A.D. 130
  - b. Knew the Apostle John
  - c. Mark wrote The Gospel of Mark – Thiessen, p. 140
  - d. Matthew wrote The Gospel of Matthew – Thiessen, p. 131
  
17. External Evidence of NT Authorship – Polycarp
  - a. Polycarp was bishop of Smyrna (modern Turkey) martyred A.D. 156
  - b. A disciple of the Apostle John
  - c. Received apostles accounts of Jesus (eyewitnesses) – Thiessen, 131
  
18. External Evidence of NT Authorship – Irenaeus
  - a. Irenaeus – bishop of Lyons in Gaul A.D. 180
  - b. Irenaeus was a student of Polycarp
  - c. Matthew, Mark, Luke, John all written by the person whose title they bear.
  - d. For quotes see Thiessen, pp. 131, 141, 150, 164
  
19. Four Gospels – Four Testimonies: Simon Greenleaf
  - a. Simon Greenleaf a lawyer, “The Testimony of the Four Evangelists”
  - b. This was a strong legal argument based on four independent historical witnesses

- c. Two-source theory of the gospels would have reduced 4 witnesses that we do have to two witnesses (ur-Mark and Q) that we do not have.
- d. The two-source theory has been discredited
  - Neither “Q” nor “Ur-Mark” exist, they are a theory
  - Theory does not account for both the similarities and differences
  - Matthew, Mark, and Luke share many of the same stories but each has its own details
- e. Two-source theory is old and has been superseded by source, form, tradition, and redaction (editing) criticism. See Archer, Bruce, Geisler/Nix for evaluation

#### 20. NT Sources – Real and Supposed

- a. Critics proposed two sources, not four; because of similarities the writers must have copied from two more primitive sources Ur-Mark and Q. But we do not have Ur-Mark and Q, therefore we do not have eyewitness testimony.
- b. Response – Must explain both similarities and the differences. Matthew, Mark, Luke heard the preaching of each other often enough to quote. It doesn’t need to be shared documents.
- c. Response – A good student is like a cistern that does not leak
- d. Response – African story teller told a one-hour story that was recorded. Twenty years later he was recorded the telling the same story. There were only one or two words different

#### 21. Archaeology Helps with Dates

- a. Illustration – many can date a photograph by hair style and fashion
- b. Pottery styles changed in ancient times, giving a method of dating.
  - Sir Flinders Petrie, perfected by W. F. Albright, practiced by G Ernest Wright
- c. Coins
- d. Carbon-14
- e. Archaeologist Nelson Glueck was president of Hebrew Union.
- f. Reuben Bullard of CCU

#### 22. Important for Archaeology and the Bible

What makes a discovery important? Some important discoveries.

- a. 1868 Troy Discovered - Heinrich Schliemann
  - Result was to see Homer’s Iliad and other literature as historical.
  - Details of Schliemann’s work and his character have been questioned but identification of Troy stands.
- b. 1890 Asia Minor - William Ramsey / Book of Acts
  - Result – moved the date of Luke and the gospels from the second to the first century
- c. 1947 Dead Sea Scrolls
  - Established the reliability of the OT Text.

See Halley, “Rediscovering the Biblical Past,” p. 1092

#### 23. NT Dates of Writing and Geography – Sir William Ramsey

- a. Critics proposed a second century date for all of the Gospels, therefore it was not eyewitness testimony
- b. Response – Sir William Ramsay pushed the date of Acts from the second to the first century by examining geographical names used in Acts. These match the first and not the second century. This pushes Luke into the first century as well.

24. NT Criticism – Conclusion by F.F. Bruce
- a. “The evidence for our New Testament writings is ever so much greater than the evidence for many writings of classical authors, the authenticity of which no-one dreams of questioning. If the New Testament were a collection of secular writings, their authenticity would generally be regarded as beyond all doubt.” Bruce, p. 15
25. OT Dates
- a. Fair on its face.
  - b. The OT connects with events reported outside the OT. Eg Battle of Carchemish, Fall of Babylon
  - c. Jesus and the NT writers accepted the OT as historical
  - d. Septuagint Translation (LXX) – Seventy scholars in Alexandria translated the Hebrew OT into Greek 250-150 BC; the NT writers often quoted from it. Archer, p. 38, Halley, p. 527
26. OT Criticism – Pentateuch Sources
- a. JEDP Theory: Pentateuch had Multiple Writers
  - b. Multiple writers – Multiple Moses slide
  - c. Contrast the claim that Moses was educated in all the knowledge of the Egyptians
  - d. Obviously, Moses didn’t write the last chapter of Deuteronomy
27. OT Manuscripts: Masoretic Text (Archer & Kaiser)
- a. Leningrad B19a is the oldest complete Hebrew manuscript (MSS), dated AD 1008-1009. It is kept in the Leningrad Library
  - b. Masoretic Text is a term normally restricted to this MSS created by Aaron Ben Asher in the tenth century after examination of hundreds of medieval MSS.
  - c. The Hebrew text is all consonants, with no vowels.
  - d. Without changing the text, the Masoretic scribes added several features to help preserve it (Kaiser, p. 44)
    - Marginal notes beside and below the text to help the copyist
    - Colophon (end piece) containing total number of consonants, the middle of the book, etc., used by copiers to check their work
    - Vowels called “vowel points”
    - Diacritical marks for punctuation, chanting the text, and accent marks for pronunciation
    - Paragraph divisions
    - Handful of preserved needed corrections
    - *Kethiv-Qere* Notes on how to read the text differently without actually changing it
28. OT Manuscripts: Samaritan Pentateuch (Archer & Kaiser)
- a. Samaria sits between Judea and Galilee
  - b. Samaritans intermarried with Assyrian captors after 721 BC
  - c. Samaritans worshipped on Mt Gerizim, see John 4.
  - d. They had only the first five books, date around 175 BC
  - e. “... a modernized, smoothed-over and somewhat expanded text as compared to the Masoretic, Kaiser, p. 44
29. Dead Sea Scrolls
- a. Discovered in 1946
  - b. 800 scrolls with parts of every book of the OT except Esther.
  - c. A complete copy of Isaiah, another copy of Isaiah 40-66
  - d. Some in Hebrew, some Aramaic, some Greek
  - e. Dated variously 250 BC to AD 135.

- f. Important because there is very little difference between these scrolls and the Masoretic text, this shows that over 1000 years of copies, there was little change
- g. Where there are textual differences, sometimes the Dead Sea Scrolls favor the Septuagint

### 30. Septuagint – Greek Translation of the OT

- a. Translation 250-150 BC by seventy scholars, hence called the LXX.
- b. No OT book can be later than the date of this translation, except Esther.
- c. Answers those who do not believe in miracles and try to date the OT books very late,
- d. OT messianic prophecy must be almost 200 years before Jesus
- e. The NT sometimes quotes the LXX rather than the Hebrew

### 31. OT Date and the Exodus

- a. Was the Exodus from Egypt 1446 BC or 1290?
- b. I Kgs 6:1 puts the Exodus 480 years before the 4 year of King Solomon, see Halley, p. 129
- c. Exodus 1:11 mentions building the city of Ramses which it is argued must be named for Pharaoh of that name. is used to support the late date is an argument from silence
- d. Archer p. 191-198 argues persuasively for the early date of 1446, yet acknowledges difficulties.

### 32. Summary and Conclusions

- a. How Compelling is the Evidence?
- b. Jesus Commanded to Go
- c. Create your elevator speech

### Helpful References

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