

The Bible – Reliability

2 Timothy 3:16

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Paul Collins

Let me start tonight by telling you about a document called the Iliad.

The Iliad is an account by an ancient Greek poet by the name of Homer, which recounts some of the significant events of the final weeks of the Trojan War and the Greek siege of the city of Troy.

Written in the mid-8th Century BC, *“The Iliad”* is usually considered to be the earliest work in the whole of the Western writings.

It has the second largest amount of manuscripts of any ancient writing available from which History has formed its understandings of the Trojan war.

Some of its major points are:

The Iliad

- The Iliad has the second most collected list of manuscripts of any surviving ancient writings to date.
- The manuscripts give Historians a great glimpse of what the events towards the end of the Trojan War were, and what that war actually looked like.
- Because of the amount of manuscripts found, Historians believe with the amount of information contained in the Iliad (which is a poem) they can now get an accurate glimpse into the Trojan War.
- The war was supposedly fought over a 10 year period in 1194–1184 BC.
- The writer of the Iliad – “Homer”, was thought to have been born around 850BC.
 - o That means that the poem entitled “The Iliad” was written around 350 years after the Trojan war took place.
- “Homer” died at the age of 100 in 750BC

Why do I tell you all this? – **Well firstly, we need to be confident in our beliefs.**

And I'm sure it's going to become clear shortly...

Have you ever **heard** these questions thrown around...or even worse...have you ever had them thrown **at you**?

- "I'm glad your faith works for you, but can you really know, whether or not the Bible is reliable? What people really mean when they say this is you're a fool believing the Bible...it's just penned by men like you and me.
- Wasn't the Bible written thousands of years ago? It can't be that reliable any longer.
- How do you know with it being translated and re-translated so much that it's still accurate?"

It those types of questions I want us to look at tonight...**Is the Bible really as reliable as good Christian men and women say?**

I want us to know how to answer those questions but more importantly, it's these little questions that can stop us moving forward in our faith and if were not careful, they plug away at us in the background and can undermine our core values if we leave them unaddressed...if that happens, we limit what God can do in us.

Let's just say for a moment...you think **the Bible is totally true**, it **hasn't lost any of its meaning through translation** and it is the **actual inspired Words of God**...listen to what it says:

Hebrews 4:12

¹²For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.

Matthew 5:17-18

The Fulfilment of the Law – Jesus Himself says:

¹⁷Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them, but to fulfill them. ¹⁸For I tell you truly, until heaven and earth pass away, not a single jot, not a stroke of a pen, will disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished.

Matthew 4:4

During Jesus's tempting

⁴Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word, that comes from the mouth of God.'"

2 Timothy 3:16 - 17

¹⁶All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for instruction, for conviction, for correction, and for training in righteousness, ¹⁷so that the man of God may be complete, fully equipped for every good work.

These verses can come alive when you think this way...

So how can we be sure the bible **hasn't lost any of its meaning through translation** and it is the **actual inspired Words of God...because when I read Scripture, I want to believe like I just did as we read those Scriptures out.**

So...Let's go back to the Iliad for a moment.

POINT 1

As I said earlier...The Iliad is the **second greatest collected list of manuscripts** of any surviving ancient writings to date.

- In fact, get this, they have **643** manuscripts to be able to work from.
- Historians say that is more than enough to get a very accurate account of the Trojan War and if you hear any teaching on the war, you know the information has come from those 643 manuscripts.

If that excited Historians and they can form the information into fact from those 643 manuscripts...**how then does the Iliad stack up against the Bible?**

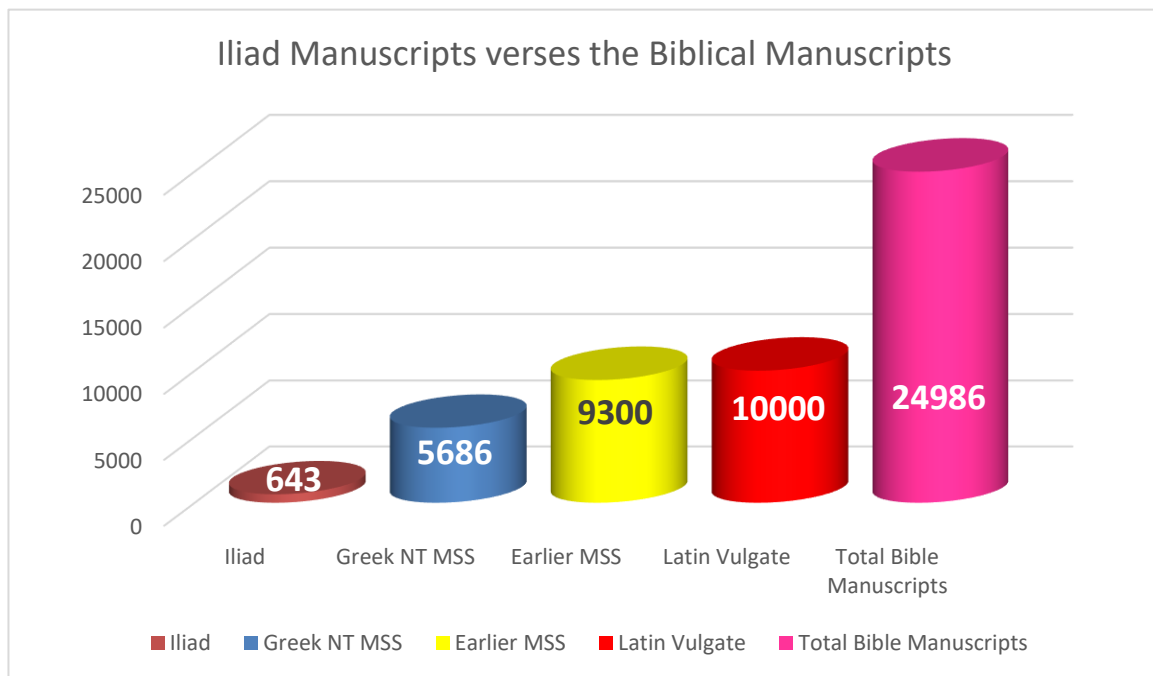
I said that the Iliad is the **second greatest collection of manuscripts**...which do you think is the first?

If you said the Bible, you would be correct.

The Bible, since the time it has been written - they too have found some manuscripts to back up its authenticity...would any one like to guess how many manuscripts they have on the Books of the Bible...

Well relating to the New Testament Greek manuscripts alone...**they have 5686**...now add in those found earlier that relate to the Old Testament as well...that's in excess of another 9,300 and then add in the Latin Vulgate manuscripts tally and that's another 10,000...that's **24.986 manuscripts**.

Do you want to see that in a graph?



Historians believe they have enough to tell us the events of the Trojan war but they are not willing to say the Bible is as accurate even though we have 39 times more manuscripts available than the Iliad.

I leave you to work out what you think about that one.

Point 2

But the second thing that you need to understand is that the Iliad manuscripts were written 350 years after the event and authored by one man... they have found no other author of those manuscripts apart from the Poet Homer...*this guy*



Let's look at some of the facts we know about the Bible to date...

It was written **by more than 40 authors** from **every walk of life**.

There were Kings, Military Leaders, Peasants, Philosophers, Fisherman, Tax Collectors, Poets, Musicians, Stateman, Scholars, even Shepherds...to name but a few.

Moses wrote from within the Wilderness, Jeremiah from within a dungeon, Daniel on a hillside and in a Palace, Paul from within prison walls, Luke was out travelling John was in exile...

Some wrote from the heights of Joy, others from the pit of despair and sorrow. Some during times of certainty and conviction while others wrote in days of confusion and doubt.

All these people and all the situations they wrote from only add to the Bible's credibility, as so many people, from so many walks of life authored its content, whereas, if it had just been one person...it could always have been seen as a book of control that was written only to control us because of the content of what's contained in the Bible.

Because there are so many authors and so many types of people - as in a court of law...it adds to the authenticity of it. If one person claims you did something in a court of law, that's one on one but if 40 witnesses saw you and testified against you with the same info...your cooked.

2) Then people say they are worried about the accounts losing their validity over time have a look at this.

We know Homer wrote The Iliad and the time gap between the Trojan war and the events being recorded in the Iliad, was is 350 years...but what else do we have?

A) There are the known facts from the manuscripts about Julius Caesar...

- Caesar lived between 100BC – 44BC – The earliest copies of manuscripts about him were from **900AD**. That's around 1000 years later and the major facts came from just 10 manuscripts.
- If you study Caesar then you will know History has been formed from these scripts and after 1000 years had elapsed...
- ...and on a side note, I've never heard Historians doubt the info they have on him.

B) What about Plato...have you heard of this dude?

- Plato was born around **428BC**
- What we know about him comes from **7 Manuscripts** and those manuscripts date back to 900AD so they were written over **1300 yrs later** - yet what we know about him is seen as fact.

C) What about Jesus?

- It is actually believed by many that Jesus wasn't born in year 0 as most think (to start with...there wasn't a year 0) but it's thought he was actually born in 5BC.
- What we know about Him from His birth comes from 5366 Manuscripts. Those manuscripts were written between 50AD – 100AD...that's just between 55 to 105 years later...in other words...a lot of those manuscripts were written by people who were around the same time as Jesus.

What astounds me is that we can believe the history books about people like Caesar and people like Plato...but we say the we struggle with the reliability of the Bible when it comes to Jesus.

Ravi Zacharias puts it this way:

“In real terms, the New Testament is easily the best attested ancient writing in terms of sheer numbers of documents, the time frames between the events and the documents to sustain or contradict it. There is nothing in ancient manuscript evidence to match such textual availability and integrity”

POINT 3

So what about after all the translation of The Bible from language to language then...surely its lost some of its original meaning, if historically it's been so accurate...

That's a common misconception.

Some people think that the Bible was written in one language, translated to another language, then translated into yet another and so on until it was finally translated into the English. The complaint is that since it was rewritten so many times in different languages throughout history, it must have become corrupted and fair enough too...The "Chinese Whispers" analogy springs to mind.

One person tells another person a sentence who then tells another person, who tells yet another, and so on and so on until the last person hears a sentence that has little or nothing to do with the original one. The only problem with this analogy is that it doesn't fit the Bible at all.

Let me tell you why...

Firstly

When they translate the Bible, they do not translate from a translation of a translation of a translation. They translate from the original manuscripts into the language they are focussing on. It is a one-step process and not a series of steps that can lead to corruption. It is one translation step from the original to the English or to whatever language in which a people group needs to read. This is how it is done for each and every language into which the Bible is translated.

Therefore, the translations are very accurate and trustworthy regarding what the Bible originally said.

The New Testament

The New Testament was written mainly in Greek; and though we do not have the original documents, we do have 5,686 copies of the Greek manuscripts that were made very close to the time of the originals. These various manuscripts, or copies, agree with each other to almost 100 percent accuracy. Statistically, the New Testament is 99.5% textually pure. That means that there is only 1/2 of 1% of all the copies that do not agree with each other perfectly. But, if you take that 1/2 of 1% and examine it, you find that the majority of the "problems" are nothing more than spelling errors and very minor word alterations. For example, instead of saying Jesus, a variation might be "Jesus Christ." So, the actual amount of textual variation of any concern is extremely low. Therefore, it is said that we have a remarkably accurate compilation of the original documents.

What about the Old Testament?

There is much on the translation processes of Hebrew and Aramaic on the internet. When people say that the meaning has been lost - then that is normally an indicator that the person has never taken the time to research what they are saying and they are talking from a basis of ignorance...listen to why I say this:

- To start with, the Scribes who translated these manuscripts sold their entire lives out to ensure the accuracy of the translation.
- In the Hebrew and Aramaic writing, every letter had a value, that added up to a line value, which added up to a paragraph value, which added up to page value which in the end, added up to the entire manuscript value.
- During translation, these values were checked to ensure the accuracy was intact.
- If they got to the end of a paragraph of translation and that paragraph had, had its value compromised, then they had to start the entire translation from the beginning again. This could mean years of work had to be started again.
- This is a process that we have called today, a "literal translation" of the Bible.
- There is another translation that is less accurate and that's one we have termed a "paraphrased version"

- When you study the Bible, ensure you study from the “Literal translated Bible”...and you can find that in the Forward section of the Bible.

I could talk about other things like the graphic imagery within these two languages which made it possible to recount specifics incredibly accurately and the fact the back in early times they relied heavily on tools of memorization due to not having the mediums of storage like we have today but time does not allow me to go there tonight. If you get time look into it yourselves as it’s fascinating.

My desired outcome tonight is for each one of us to understand just how reliable the Bible is, and how accurate the translation process is and to arm you with information that we can use when people make crazy accusations against its reliability.

CONCLUSION

The final thing I want to leave with you is something that happened in 1947 just 70 years ago.

Until 1948, the oldest manuscripts of the Old Testament dated back to 895 A.D. In 1947, a shepherd boy discovered some scrolls inside a cave West of the Dead Sea. These manuscripts dated between 100 B.C. and 100 A.D. Over the next decade, more scrolls were found in caves and the discovery became known as the Dead Sea Scrolls.

Every book in the Old Testament was represented in this discovery except Esther. Numerous copies of each book were discovered (*For example, 25 copies of Deuteronomy alone*).

While there are other items found among the Dead Sea Scrolls not currently in the Old Testament, the OT items that were found have few discrepancies to the versions from the Tenth Century. While not perfect, this is our best measuring stick to how accurate the Jewish scribes were throughout the centuries.

In short, the entire Bible, both Old and New Testaments are historically accurate and for anyone else to say otherwise then in my opinion, they either haven’t taken the time to study it or they are deceived in some way.

To say the Bible is inaccurate and unreliable, is to say the all we know from history, on every other person throughout the ages, is wrong too.