



# THE BIBLE ON TRIAL

Beyond A Reasonable Doubt

**BIBLE STUDY DISCUSSION GUIDE**

# THE BIBLE ON TRIAL: BEYOND A REASONABLE DOUBT

The Bible has been under furious attack for more than 100 years. Some call it a “myth” or “legend”; others claim it is full of contradictions. Its authenticity has been denied along with its historicity. Still, others challenge the accuracy of the copies that have come down to us from the original writings.

In *The Bible On Trial: Beyond A Reasonable Doubt* we examine these challenges in light of new findings and discoveries in archaeology, ancient history and other fields. Join us as we search the evidence and reach your own verdict concerning the Bible.

## For The Leader:

This **Men’s NetWork** Bible study video was produced for television broadcast and has been divided into four sessions for this study. As you work through each session, please do not feel obligated to answer every question. If time is limited, feel free to look through the questions as a group and decide which you would like to discuss.

## Host Craig Parton Biography:

Craig Parton is a Christian apologist; he is also a trial lawyer and partner at Price, Postel & Parma LLP, a law firm based in Santa Barbara, California. He completed his doctorate in law at the University of California Hastings College of the Law in San Francisco. He also completed a master’s degree in Christian Apologetics under Dr. John Warwick Montgomery at the Simon Greenleaf School of Law (now Trinity Law School) in Santa Ana, California. As a seven-year staff member with Campus Crusade for Christ, he traveled to more than 100 colleges and universities defending the Christian faith through lectures and debates.

Parton has published articles and reviews in various theological journals and festschrifts. He has also written three books. These include *The Defense Never Rests: A Lawyer’s Quest for the Gospel* and *Religion on Trial*. Parton is also the United States Director of the International Academy of Apologetics, Evangelism and Human Rights in Strasbourg, France.

# CONTENTS

<b>SESSION ONE</b>	Answering The Bible’s Critics .....	pg 3
<b>SESSION TWO</b>	Hard Evidence From The Ancient World .....	pg 7
<b>SESSION THREE</b>	Archaeology’s Contribution .....	pg 11
<b>SESSION FOUR</b>	Eyewitness Testimony .....	pg 14

## GETTING THE MOST FROM THIS DISCUSSION GUIDE

**Group Discussion:** Feel free to move at your own pace through this study and take as much time as you need for each lesson. You are welcome to dig in as deep as you want, but you might find it helpful to skip over these boxes and use just the Bible passages and discussion questions. We have designed our questions to be open ended. This allows the men in your group to share their experiences and unique perspectives.

This is an interactive study guide. We designed it to be flexible so it will fit both your group and personal use. It includes boxes (like the one below), which provide extra information and links to Internet sites where you can browse and dig as deep as you want.

### Digging Deeper: Dead Sea Scrolls

This [article](#) describes the process used to piece together the fragments of the Dead Sea Scrolls.

**Suggested Links:** [www...](#)

### Having Difficulty Making The Web Links Work?

On the final pages of this study is a full list of web addresses for each site.

If you don't want to have to type them in, you can download the electronic copy of the discussion guide and simply click on the blue hyperlink. Here is a step-by-step guide to find the electronic copy with the working links:

- 1) Log on to [www.lhmmen.com/studies.asp](http://www.lhmmen.com/studies.asp).
- 2) Choose this study from the page by clicking the underlined title (located to the right of the study's graphic).
- 3) On the bottom of this page, click "download videos & materials."
- 4) Enter your e-mail address and password (and register, if necessary).
- 5) Find this study guide, then click the "download now" button.
- 6) In the File Download box, click the "save" button.
- 7) Save it to your desktop.
- 8) Click on the file to open it.

Now you can click the hyperlinks (underlined words or phrases) that interest you and start digging.

**To This Discussion Guide User:** Because of the changing nature of the Internet, occasionally a web link included in a **Men's NetWork** Bible study may change or be deleted altogether by the agency or individual posting it. When you notice an Internet link has been modified or has become inoperable, please report this to the **Men's NetWork** so we can adjust future editions of this discussion guide. Thank you.

Please send changes to [mensnetwork@lhm.org](mailto:mensnetwork@lhm.org).

# SESSION 1: ANSWERING THE BIBLE'S CRITICS

**Opening Prayer:** Lord God, we have come together to discuss the Bible. Guide us as we examine its claims and the challenges scholars have raised against it so we may know Your truth. In Jesus' Name we pray. Amen.

## Opening Questions:

- What challenges have you heard people raise against the Bible?
- What do you think about the Bible's reliability?

## Watch The Video: Session 1

### Absolute Truth

Our time calls for tolerance—tolerance of other people's views, other beliefs and other religions. Many people in our world reject absolute truth and believe everything is relative. They conclude each individual must decide what is true for him or her. But did Jesus think that way?

### Read John 14:1-7.

- 1 "Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in Me.
- 2 In My Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you?
- 3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to Myself, that where I am you may be also.
- 4 And you know the way to where I am going."
- 5 Thomas said to Him, "Lord, we do not know where You are going. How can we know the way?"
- 6 Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.
- 7 If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also. From now on you do know Him and have seen Him."

Jesus makes a very strong, absolute claim about Himself in verse six. There is one way to heaven and only one way. It requires faith in Him as God's Son, our only Savior.

- Discuss some areas in life where it's typical for people to have diverse points of view.
- Many believe that other than law and medicine, everything is open to interpretation. Why do you agree or disagree?

The video listed many challenges raised against the Bible:

- "The Bible is full of myths because ancient people believed in supernatural things that are scientifically impossible."
  - "The Bible contradicts itself repeatedly."
  - "Errors by the copyists have badly corrupted the text. We have no idea what was originally written."
- Which of these charges do you find most compelling?
  - How important is it to be able to find answers to these challenges?

### Digging Deeper: Opinions On The Bible

Many significant individuals have discredited the Bible for various reasons: Voltaire, Thomas Paine, Mark Twain, and others. Below are a few quotes from some influential people who considered the Bible a sacred and God-inspired book:

- **Salmon P. Chase**  
"There came a time in my life when I doubted the divinity of the Scriptures, and I resolved as a lawyer and a judge I would try the Book as I would try anything in the courtroom, taking evidence for and against. It was a long, serious and profound study and using the same principles of evidence in this religious matter as I always do in secular matters, I have come to the decision that the BIBLE is a supernatural Book, that it has come from God, and that the only safety for the human race is to follow its teachings."
- **E. Paul Hovey**  
"Men do not reject the BIBLE because it contradicts itself but because it contradicts them."
- **Victor Hugo**  
"I have found in the BIBLE words for my inmost thought; songs for my joy, utterance for my hidden griefs and pleadings for my shame and feebleness."
- **Sir Isaac Newton**  
"There are more sure marks of authenticity in the BIBLE than in any profane history. ... I have a fundamental belief in the BIBLE as the Word of God, written by men who were inspired. I study the BIBLE daily."

### How Far Are We From The Original?

- Why does it matter if the Bible we have today is different from what was originally written?

We don't have the original writings of the Bible. The materials on which they were written quickly wore out. We have copies of copies of copies. And when we start comparing the copies there are some minor variations among them (alternate spellings of names, e.g. Matthew 1:2; numbers that differ, Luke 10:1, etc.). These differences, however, do not impact the main teachings of the Bible. But is there any way we can work back through the copies to find what was originally written?

Several tools help us here. The first is **Textual Criticism**. This branch of literary criticism examines the differences between manuscript copies, identifying transmission errors and using various strategies to determine which wording was most likely the original. We have included a "Digging Deeper" box below to illustrate this tool.

A second tool is the **Internal Test**. This involves looking at the reliability of the writers themselves. How close were they to the events they describe?

After Jesus' death and resurrection, right before He left earth to return to heaven, He told His disciples, "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, and you will be My witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth" (Acts 1:8).

- Describe an unbelievable or out-of-the-ordinary event to which you were an eyewitness.
- What would it take for you to believe the unbelievable testimony from another person?

A third tool to establish the integrity of the Bible is the **External Test**. This involves ancient writings and the findings of archaeology.

- What nagging questions or doubts do you have about the Bible's accuracy?
- Which items or information could archaeology uncover to help answer those doubts and questions?
- Where does simple faith and trust come in?

**CLOSING PRAYER:** Lord God, thank You for providing us eyewitness testimony of the things You have said and done for us through Your Son Jesus Christ. Continue to defend Your Word and destroy the arguments of those who try to shake our confidence in Your Bible. In Jesus' Name we pray. Amen.

### Digging Deeper: Oldest New Testament Manuscripts

The oldest New Testament manuscripts we have are from the 4<sup>th</sup> Century A.D.:

- Codex Sinaiticus ([click here](#)).
- Codex Vaticanus - Catholic Encyclopedia Article ([click here](#)).
- Codex Alexandrinus ([click here](#)).
  - Catholic Encyclopedia Article ([click here](#)).
- Partial New Testament papyri which predate the three codices above: ([click here](#)).
- The history of Modern Greek editions ([click here](#)).

A history of human writing - ([click here](#)).

A thorough discussion of the evolution of uncial text in Greek - ([click here](#)).

## Digging Deeper: Dating The Gospels

Consider this appeal to an earlier date for the Gospels from [William R. Bragstad](#).

## Digging Deeper: Textual Criticism

Part of the process of textual criticism involves placing manuscript copies side by side to evaluate text differences in order to work backwards to the actual text of the original autographs.

- This website describes how there came to be differences and variations between the hand-copied manuscripts: [click here](#).
- A simple description of [textual criticism](#).
- Dr. Raymond F. Surburg describes good textual criticism: ([The Historical-Grammatical Method](#)).
- Using textual criticism to evaluate the end of the Gospel of Mark: [click here](#).
- Using textual criticism to evaluate the account of the adulterous woman in John 8: [click here](#).

What do you think of the study so far? Please post your thoughts on the **Men's NetWork** Forum. (Look for this study under "Men's NetWork Stuff" at [www.lhmmen.com/forum/login.asp](http://www.lhmmen.com/forum/login.asp).)

## SESSION 2: HARD EVIDENCE FROM THE ANCIENT WORLD

**Opening Prayer:** Heavenly Father, You have given us the knowledge of Your love in Your Son Jesus Christ, our Savior. Give us confidence in the witness You have given us in Your Holy Bible. In Jesus' Name. Amen.

### Opening Question:

- What do you know about the Dead Sea Scrolls?

### Watch The Video: Session 2

### External Evidence

When the people of Judah returned to Jerusalem after their captivity in Babylon, they crossed the Euphrates River and returned to the Promised Land, where they started building a new temple. The Persian governors of the land "Beyond the River" (the Euphrates) wrote to King Darius of Persia to learn whether he wished the work to continue or be stopped. The king consulted some external documents before he made his decision. (To see a map of the land Beyond the River, go [here](#).)

### Read Ezra 5:6-13, 17; 6:1-8.

- 6 This is a copy of the letter that Tattenai the governor of the province Beyond the River and Shethar-bozenai and his associates, the governors who were in the province Beyond the River, sent to Darius the king.
- 7 They sent him a report, in which was written as follows: "To Darius the king, all peace.
- 8 Be it known to the king that we went to the province of Judah, to the house of the great God. It is being built with huge stones, and timber is laid in the walls. This work goes on diligently and prospers in their hands.
- 9 Then we asked those elders and spoke to them thus: 'Who gave you a decree to build this house and to finish this structure?'
- 10 We also asked them their names, for your information, that we might write down the names of their leaders.
- 11 And this was their reply to us: 'We are the servants of the God of heaven and earth, and we are rebuilding the house that was built many years ago, which a great king of Israel built and finished.
- 12 But because our fathers angered the God of heaven, He gave them into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, the Chaldeans, who destroyed this house and carried away the people to Babylonia.
- 13 However, in the first year of Cyrus king of Babylon, Cyrus the king made a decree that this house of God should be rebuilt.' ...
- 17 Therefore, if it seems good to the king, let search be made in the royal archives there in Babylon, to see whether a decree was issued by Cyrus the king for the rebuilding of this house of God in Jerusalem. And let the king send us his pleasure in this matter."

### Chapter 6

- 1 Then Darius the king made a decree, and search was made in Babylonia, in the house of the archives where the documents were stored.
- 2 And in Ecbatana, the capital that is in the province of Media, a scroll was found on which this was written: "A record.
- 3 In the first year of Cyrus the king, Cyrus the king issued a decree: Concerning the house of God at Jerusalem, let the house be rebuilt, the place where sacrifices were offered, and let its foundations be retained. Its height shall be sixty cubits and its breadth sixty cubits,
- 4 With three layers of great stones and one layer of timber. Let the cost be paid from the royal treasury.
- 5 And also let the gold and silver vessels of the house of God, which Nebuchadnezzar took out of the temple that is in Jerusalem and brought to Babylon, be restored and brought back to the temple that is in Jerusalem, each to its place. You shall put them in the house of God."
- 6 Now therefore, Tattenai, governor of the province Beyond the River, Shethar-bozenai, and your associates the governors who are in the province Beyond the River, keep away.

- 7 Let the work on this house of God alone. Let the governor of the Jews and the elders of the Jews rebuild this house of God on its site.
- 8 Moreover, I make a decree regarding what you shall do for these elders of the Jews for the rebuilding of this house of God. The cost is to be paid to these men in full and without delay from the royal revenue, the tribute of the province from Beyond the River.”

The Jewish elders did not need external evidence to build the temple. They had a command from God. But King Darius would not accept their word for it. He had to read the original command from his predecessor, King Cyrus.

- Would external evidence backing up Scriptural claims hold more weight for a believer or an unbeliever? Explain.
- What effect does such external evidence have on your estimate of the Bible’s reliability?
- Why would testimony from a hostile witness hold more weight than from a friend of the Bible?

### **The Sopherim**

One of the keys for determining the reliability of the Bible is evaluating how carefully the manuscripts were copied and transmitted through the centuries before they were finally copied onto the earliest manuscripts we have found. Specially trained copyists did this work. They checked, double-checked and triple-checked their efforts through an intricate system of counting.

- How can letter, word and paragraph counting help catch errors that proof-reading doesn’t?
- What does the Sopherim’s extreme care and counting show you about their attitude toward God’s Word?
- What things do you use extreme care with? Why are you so careful?

### **The Dead Sea Scrolls**

Many scholars doubted the accuracy of the Masoretic text, the oldest known manuscript (hand-written) copy of the Old Testament because it was written in 1006 A.D.—some 1,400 years after the last Old Testament books were written. They thought they would be proven right when the much older Dead Sea Scrolls were discovered in 1947. But once the fragments of the Dead Sea Scrolls were pieced together and compared to the Masoretic text they were surprised by how little the biblical text actually changed over the centuries.

- How do you account for the fact that so few textual differences showed up in the Masoretic text after 1,000 years of handwritten copying?
- How do the Dead Sea Scrolls affect your confidence in the accuracy of our Bible?
- How do the Dead Sea Scrolls answer those who believe the Bible has been corrupted by copying errors (Muslims, Mormons, etc.)?

**CLOSING PRAYER:** Heavenly Father, thank You for the sopherim who had such a deep reverence for Your Scriptures that they counted each letter. Give me a deep reverence and respect for Your Word too. In Jesus’ Name. Amen.

## Digging Deeper: External Evidence - Historians

The video mentions ancient historians hostile to Christianity who left us external information about the beliefs of the early Christians. Here are links to three of those writings:

Tacitus records two events from 64 A.D.: [The Burning of Rome](#) and [Nero's Persecution of the Christians](#).

Pliny the Younger wrote to Emperor Trajan to ask [What To Do with the Christians](#).

## Digging Deeper: The Original Autographs

The earliest books of the Bible, including the Pentateuch (Genesis through Deuteronomy), were written on papyrus made from plants growing along the Nile River. Papyrus could be formed into long sheets and rolled up onto scrolls. Writing could only be done on one side of the papyrus.

- Video Demonstration: [How papyrus is made](#).

Later books, including many in the New Testament, were written on animal skins known as "parchment" or "vellum" ([2 Timothy 4:13](#)). Writers could use both sides of parchment and vellum. These sheets were folded into a small booklet called a "codex." When the New Testament was written, the largest codex could hold the four Gospels: Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.

- Video Demonstration: Dirty Jobs: [Making Vellum & Parchment](#).

Other information:

- [The Difference between Paper, Parchment & Vellum](#).
- [How the Sumerians started writing](#).
- [Writing before the alphabet](#).
- [Was the alphabet invented on Mt. Sinai?](#)
- [How the Christian church kept literacy alive in the Middle Ages](#).
- Where were the copies made? [Scriptoria](#).

## Digging Deeper: The Writing Of Jeremiah

As Dr. Randall Price mentioned in the video, in [Jeremiah 36](#) we get a glimpse into how the Bible was recorded.

### Digging Deeper: The Sopherim

How were scribes able to safeguard their copying from typical transmission errors? The Sopherim ("counters of letters") were scribes who numbered the words and letters in each Old Testament book. They left lists with these statistics at the end of each book to insure the accuracy of future copies. The Sopherim began with Ezra the priest (fifth century B.C.) and completed their counting of letters in the first century B.C. [Click here.](#)

### Digging Deeper: The Dead Sea Scrolls

- An examination of the Essenes who are believed to have written the Dead Sea Scrolls: [click here.](#)
- A fragment of John's Gospel found in the John Rylands' collection: [click here.](#)
- Evidence for Daniel being written before 155 B.C.: [click here.](#)
- A convincing argument that Daniel is prophetic and not historic: [click here.](#)
- Using DNA to ensure the proper placement of scroll fragments: [click here.](#)

### Digging Deeper: Religions That Depend On A Corrupt Bible

#### Islam:

This website (<http://www.answering-christianity.com/contra.htm>) presents a Muslim view of how the Bible has been corrupted.

This website (<http://www.givingananswer.org/articles/muslimviewofbible.html>) uses Muslim texts to argue the Bible was not corrupted.

**Mormonism:** Initially, founder Joseph Smith believed the Bible was authentic as originally written. Later, he became convinced it suffered corruption by copyists, translators and transcribers. See <http://wri.leaderu.com/mormonism/bible.html>.

What do you think of the study so far? Please post your thoughts on the **Men's NetWork** Forum. (Look for this study under "Men's NetWork Stuff" at [www.lhmmen.com/forum/login.asp](http://www.lhmmen.com/forum/login.asp).)

## SESSION 3: ARCHAEOLOGY'S CONTRIBUTION

**Opening Prayer:** Almighty God, we can know nothing about You unless You first reveal it to us. Teach us to firmly trust Your revelation in the Bible so we may know You and Jesus Christ whom You have sent. In Jesus' Name. Amen.

### Opening Questions:

- Name one thing you find unbelievable.
- What would it take to convince you it was true?
- How would you prove your identity to a government official who refused to accept your word for it?

### Watch The Video: Session 3

#### The Governor And The High Priest

Imagine that Pontius Pilate and Joseph Caiaphas never existed. After all, for centuries the only evidence of their lives was in the Bible. For many scholars, the whole question about how Jesus ended up crucified—or if He even was crucified—was up for debate.

But the discoveries of Pilate's inscription and Caiaphas' bone box place the trial of Jesus firmly in history.

#### Read John 18:28-19:16.

- 28 Then they led Jesus from the house of Caiaphas to the governor's headquarters. It was early morning. They themselves did not enter the governor's headquarters, so that they would not be defiled but could eat the Passover.
- 29 So Pilate went outside to them and said, "What accusation do you bring against this man?"
- 30 They answered him, "If this man were not doing evil, we would not have handed Him over to you."
- 31 Pilate said to them, "Take Him yourselves and judge Him by your own law." The Jews said to him, "It is not lawful for us to put anyone to death."
- 32 This was to fulfill the word that Jesus had spoken to show by what kind of death He was going to die.
- 33 So Pilate entered his headquarters again and called Jesus and said to Him, "Are You the King of the Jews?"
- 34 Jesus answered, "Do you say this of your own accord, or did others say it to you about Me?"
- 35 Pilate answered, "Am I a Jew? Your own nation and the chief priests have delivered You over to me. What have You done?"
- 36 Jesus answered, "My Kingdom is not of this world. If My Kingdom were of this world, My servants would have been fighting, that I might not be delivered over to the Jews. But My Kingdom is not from the world."
- 37 Then Pilate said to Him, "So You are a king?" Jesus answered, "You say that I am a king. For this purpose I was born and for this purpose I have come into the world—to bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth listens to My voice."
- 38 Pilate said to Him, "What is truth?" After he had said this, he went back outside to the Jews and told them, "I find no guilt in Him.
- 39 But you have a custom that I should release one man for you at the Passover. So do you want me to release to you the King of the Jews?"
- 40 They cried out again, "Not this man, but Barabbas!" Now Barabbas was a robber.

#### Chapter 19

- 1 Then Pilate took Jesus and flogged Him.
- 2 And the soldiers twisted together a crown of thorns and put it on His head and arrayed Him in a purple robe.
- 3 They came up to Him, saying, "Hail, King of the Jews!" and struck Him with their hands.
- 4 Pilate went out again and said to them, "See, I am bringing Him out to you that you may know that I find no guilt in Him."

- 5 So Jesus came out, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe. Pilate said to them, "Behold the man!"
- 6 When the chief priests and the officers saw Him, they cried out, "Crucify Him, crucify Him!" Pilate said to them, "Take Him yourselves and crucify Him, for I find not guilt in Him."
- 7 The Jews answered him, "We have a law, and according to that law He ought to die because He has made Himself the Son of God."
- 8 When Pilate heard this statement, he was even more afraid.
- 9 He entered his headquarters again and said to Jesus, "Where are You from? But Jesus gave him no answer.
- 10 So Pilate said to Him, "You will not speak to me? Do You not know that I have authority to release You and authority to crucify You?"
- 11 Jesus answered him, "You would have no authority over Me at all unless it had been give you from above. Therefore he who delivered Me over to you has the greater sin."
- 12 From then on Pilate sought to release Him, but the Jews cried out, "If you release this man, you are not Caesar's friend. Everyone who makes Himself a king opposes Caesar."
- 13 So when Pilate heard these words, he brought Jesus out and sat down on the judgment seat at a place called the Stone Pavement, and in Aramaic Gabbatha.
- 14 Now it was the day of Preparation of the Passover. It was about the sixth hour. He said to the Jews, "Behold your King!"
- 15 They cried out, "Away with Him, away with Him, crucify Him!" Pilate said to them, "Shall I crucify your King?" The chief priests answered, "We have no king but Caesar."
- 16 So he delivered Him over to them to be crucified.

- What affect does it have on your reading of this text to know we have archaeological evidence connecting Pilate with Judea, as well as some material remains associated with a Jewish high priest named Caiaphas?
- How do these archaeological discoveries help move the accounts in the Bible from the category of religious fable or wishful thinking to historical reality?

On the Sunday after Jesus' crucifixion and death, Thomas, one of the 12 apostles heard his fellow apostles claim they had seen the risen Jesus. But not having seen Jesus Himself, he refused to believe them. (Read his account in John 20:24-29.)

- Describe the evidence Jesus gave Thomas to prove He had truly risen from the dead.
- Why did Jesus give so many different kinds of proofs that He was alive (walking with His disciples, talking to them, eating with them, showing the wounds in His hands and side, having them touch Him, etc.)?
- Why is it significant that Jesus kept appearing to them over a period of 40 days after His resurrection?

**CLOSING PRAYER:** Heavenly Father, You have given us a remarkable revelation of Your love in the Bible. Give us confidence in its trustworthiness that we may firmly trust in Jesus our Savior. In Jesus' Name. Amen.

## Digging Deeper: Contributions Of Biblical Archaeology

Top Ten Biblical Archaeological Finds

Archaeology and the Bible

Dr. Randall Price searches Mt. Ararat for Noah's Ark.

Dr. Randall Price asks the question, "What if We Find Noah's Ark?"

What do you think of the study so far? Please post your thoughts on the **Men's NetWork** Forum. (Look for this study under "Men's NetWork Stuff" at [www.lhmmen.com/forum/login.asp](http://www.lhmmen.com/forum/login.asp).)

## NOTES

## SESSION 4: EYEWITNESS TESTIMONY

**Opening Prayer:** Heavenly Father, as we prepare to look at the men You chose to be witnesses to record the life of Your Son Jesus Christ, give us confidence in their writings that we may know the truth about our Savior and His great salvation. In Jesus' Name. Amen.

### Opening Questions:

- What is the primary job of an eyewitness?
- What is appropriate for his testimony to include? What is not appropriate?

### Watch The Video: Session 4

#### Eyewitnesses

In most court cases, neither the judge nor the jury would be present at the scene of the crime. So to reach their verdict they must weigh the testimony of those eyewitnesses who were. Since none of us were present during Jesus' earthly life, we, too, must weigh the testimony of His eyewitnesses. This involves determining how faithfully Matthew, Mark, Luke and John report the things they actually saw—or learned from other eyewitnesses. Did they tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth? Or did they exaggerate and add their own interpretations and embellishments?

Consider the credentials of the four men who wrote the first four books of the New Testament:

- Matthew** - was written by an eyewitness named Matthew or Levi. He was a tax collector, and Jesus called him to be one of His twelve disciples (Matthew 9:9). He accompanied Jesus, heard His teachings and witnessed His miracles. Though he was in hiding during Jesus' trial and crucifixion, he was a witness to the risen Lord.
- Mark** - was written by a near-eyewitness named John Mark (Acts 12:12). He accompanied Paul on his first missionary journey (Acts 13:5, 13), then later became a close associate with the eyewitness Peter (1 Peter 5:1b), who was one of Jesus' twelve disciples (Matthew 4:18-20). Peter was one of three disciples Jesus chose to witness the rising of the daughter of Jairus, the synagogue ruler (Mark 5:35-43), Jesus' transfiguration (Mark 9:1-13) and His prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane (Mark 14:32-42).
- Luke** - was written by a near-eyewitness named Luke. Luke was a physician who accompanied Paul on his missionary journeys (Acts 21:1; Colossians 4:14; 2 Timothy 4:11; Philemon 1:24). He carefully investigated the events of Jesus' life, interviewing eyewitnesses to those events (Luke 1:1-3).
- John** - was written by an eyewitness named John. John was a fisherman whom Jesus called to be one of His twelve disciples (Matthew 4:21-22). With Peter and his brother James, John was in the *inner circle* of disciples who witnessed the three events mentioned above in connection with Mark's Gospel.

- These four writers come from diverse backgrounds. Does that strengthen or weaken their testimony to you? Why?
- The first near-eyewitness Mark used Peter as his source. How much weight does that add to the testimony of his Gospel?

In the Gospels, we are given the eyewitness account of two of the three *inner-circle* disciples. The testimony of the third, John's brother, James, was cut short when he became the first of the apostles to be executed for his testimony by Herod the king (Acts 12:1-2). In fact, the word "martyr" comes from the Greek verb which means "to witness," and an apostle was a witness of Jesus' life, death and resurrection (Acts 1:15-26).

- How does it affect your evaluation of the apostles' testimony when you consider their willingness to be exiled and executed rather than change their testimony about the things they saw Jesus say and do?

In his second letter, the apostle Peter describes how he and his fellow apostles testified about Jesus. He also reveals that God Himself guided their testimony.

### Read 2 Peter 1:16-21.

- <sup>16</sup> For we did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of His majesty.
- <sup>17</sup> For when He received honor and glory from God the Father, and the voice was borne to Him by the Majestic Glory, "This is My beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased,"
- <sup>18</sup> we ourselves heard this very voice born from heaven, for we were with Him on the holy mountain.
- <sup>19</sup> And we have something more sure, the prophetic word, to which you will do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts,
- <sup>20</sup> knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation.
- <sup>21</sup> For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

Although Luke was educated as a physician, he clearly restricts himself to eyewitness testimony and adds no interpretation of his own to their testimony. The other Gospel writers and their eyewitnesses were simple, untrained men who had been with Jesus (Acts 4:13).

- How does their lack of training impact or influence the reliability of their eyewitness testimony?
- How does the Holy Spirit strengthen the reliability of their testimony?
- What is Peter saying to us when we are tempted to pick and choose what parts of the Bible's testimony we want to accept and which we want to reject?

### Blind Faith Or Faith Anchored In History?

God did not give us the Bible to create a blind faith that drifts around like a boat without an anchor. God stepped into human history through His Son Jesus Christ and touched people's lives through His life, death and resurrection. The events of His life provide the anchor that gives shape to His message of faith, and provides meaning for the events in our lives.

- How important is it to you for faith to be reasonable?
- Does your faith need to be grounded in historical events, people and places? Explain why or why not.

**CLOSING PRAYER:** Heavenly Father, remove the doubts that enter my mind when I think of the Bible. Give me confidence in Jesus my Savior, until the day I see You face to face when He returns. In Jesus' Name. Amen.

### Digging Deeper: Bible Images

This site (<http://www.bibles-online.net/>) includes scanned images of old Bibles for you to peruse.

What do you think of the study so far? Please post your thoughts on the **Men's NetWork** Forum. (Look for this study under "Men's NetWork Stuff" at [www.lhmmen.com/forum/login.asp](http://www.lhmmen.com/forum/login.asp).)



# FULL LIST OF LINKS USED IN DIGGING DEEPER BOXES THROUGHOUT THIS STUDY:

## SESSION 1: ANSWERING THE BIBLE'S CRITICS

### Oldest New Testament Manuscripts:

- Codex Sinaiticus: <http://www.codexsinaiticus.org/en/codex/default.aspx>
- Codex Vaticanus: <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/04086a.htm>
- Codex Alexandrinus: <http://www.bible-researcher.com/codex-a.html>
  - Catholic Encyclopedia Article: <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/04080c.htm>
- Partial New Testament papyri: <http://www.biblefacts.org/history/oldtext.html>
- The history of Modern Greek editions: <http://www.gotquestions.org/Textus-Receptus.html>
- A History of Human Writing: <http://www.safde.org/hwhistory.pdf>
- Evolution of Uncial Text in Greek: <http://www.skypoint.com/members/waltzmn/UncialScript.html>

### Dating the Gospels

- William R. Bragstad: <http://www.ctsfw.net/media/pdfs/bragstadoriginofthegospels.pdf>

### Textual Criticism

- Differences and Variations between manuscripts: <http://www.bible-researcher.com/causes.html>
- Textual Criticism: <http://www.irr.org/Bible-Reliable.html>
- Historical-Grammatical Method: <http://www.ctsfw.net/media/pdfs/surburghistoricalgrammaticalmethod.pdf>
- Gospel of Mark: <http://www.bible-researcher.com/endmark.html>
- John 8: <http://www.bible-researcher.com/adult.html>

## SESSION 2: HARD EVIDENCE FROM THE ANCIENT WORLD

### External Evidence: Historians

- The Burning of Rome: <http://www.eyewitnesstohistory.com/rome.htm>
- Nero's Persecution: <http://www.eyewitnesstohistory.com/christians.htm>
- What To Do with the Christians: <http://www.eyewitnesstohistory.com/christianproblem.htm>

### The Original Autographs

- How papyrus is made: [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=\\_FNtqAkzpuU](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_FNtqAkzpuU)
- 2 Timothy 4:13: <http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2%20Timothy%204:13;&version=NIV;>
- Dirty Jobs: Making Vellum & Parchment: <http://video.yahoo.com/watch/3965726/10762482>
- Difference between Paper, Parchment & Vellum: <http://www.archives.gov/preservation/formats/paper-vellum.html>
- How Sumerians started writing: [http://www.nationalgeographic.com/history/video/ancient\\_sumerians.html](http://www.nationalgeographic.com/history/video/ancient_sumerians.html)
- Writing before the alphabet: [http://www.pbs.org/opb/historydetectives/video/3\\_history\\_writing.html](http://www.pbs.org/opb/historydetectives/video/3_history_writing.html)
- Was the alphabet invented on Mt. Sinai? <http://www.childrenofthecode.org/Tour/c5/bigbang.htm>
- How the Christian church kept literacy alive in the Middle Ages: <http://www.childrenofthecode.org/Tour/c5/viral.htm>
- Scriptoria: [http://christdesert.org/Monastic\\_Studies/Scriptoria/index.html](http://christdesert.org/Monastic_Studies/Scriptoria/index.html)

## The Writing of Jeremiah

- Jeremiah 36: <http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Jeremiah%2036:1-2,%204-6,%2014-26&version=ESV>

## The Sopherim

- Sopherim: [http://www.grmi.org/renewal/Richard\\_Riss/evidences/16trans.html](http://www.grmi.org/renewal/Richard_Riss/evidences/16trans.html)

## The Dead Sea Scrolls

- Essenes: <http://www.ahafhandwriting.org/deadseascrolls>
- Rylands' collection: <http://www.kchanson.com/ANCDOCS/greek/johnpap.html>
- Daniel predates 155 BC: [http://www.harvardhouse.com/Daniel\\_date-written.htm](http://www.harvardhouse.com/Daniel_date-written.htm)
- Daniel prophetic—not historic: <http://christianthinktank.com/qwhendan3x.html>
- DNA on scroll fragments: <http://www.jpost.com/HealthAndSci-Tech/ScienceAndEnvironment/Article.aspx?id=61490>

## Religions That Depend on a Corrupt Bible

- Muslim View: <http://www.answering-christianity.com/contra.htm>
- Muslim Text: <http://www.givingananswer.org/articles/muslimviewofbible.html>
- Joseph Smith: <http://wri.leaderu.com/mormonism/bible.html>

## SESSION 3: ARCHAEOLOGY'S CONTRIBUTION

### Contributions Of Biblical Archaeology

- Top Ten Biblical Archaeological Finds: <http://biblicalstudies.info/top10/schoville.htm>
- Archaeology and the Bible: <http://www.christiananswers.net/archaeology/>
- Dr. Randall Price searches Mt. Ararat for Noah's Ark. <http://www.worldofthebible.com/news.htm>
- Dr. Randall Price asks the question, "What if We Find Noah's Ark?" [http://www.worldofthebible.com/Arch\\_update.html](http://www.worldofthebible.com/Arch_update.html)

## SESSION 4: EYEWITNESS TESTIMONY

### Bible Images

- Old Bible images: <http://www.bibles-online.net/>

## HOST DEDICATION:

"In celebration of the 15th anniversary of the International Academy of Apologetics, Evangelism and Human Rights in Strasbourg, France ([www.apologeticsacademy.eu](http://www.apologeticsacademy.eu)) and in honor of its Director, Dr. John Warwick Montgomery, whose defense of Christ Our Advocate has never rested."

- Craig Parton



The **Men's NetWork** is a Christ-centered, Scripture-guided, service-oriented fellowship committed to equipping and motivating men to greater levels of leadership and service as they become stronger disciples of Jesus Christ. At our website, [www.lhmmen.com](http://www.lhmmen.com), we offer video Bible studies, ministry tools to deepen men's faith, practical and easy-to-use resources for hands-on service projects, and other useful information for men's groups.

Copyright © 2011, Int'l LLL, all rights reserved.

Lutheran Hour Ministries (LHM) is a Christian outreach ministry supporting churches worldwide. Scripture taken from the Holy Bible, English Standard Version, copyright © 2001 by Crossway Bibles, a division of Good News Publishers. All rights reserved. Capitalization of pronouns referring to the Deity has been added and is not part of the original English Standard Version text.



**LUTHERAN HOUR MINISTRIES**  
*People Of Christ With The Message Of Hope*

660 Mason Ridge Center Drive • St. Louis, MO 63141-8557  
1-800-944-3450 • [www.lhm.org](http://www.lhm.org)