

How can I know the Bible is an accurate source of information about Jesus?

Written by Bob Stone

Here is a typical conversation between two people about the Bible:

The Bible is a lot of made-up stories. Everyone knows it was made up hundreds of years after Jesus lived... if He ever actually lived at all. Besides, it has been altered through the ages with each new translation.

Do you honestly believe what you just said?

Of course I do.

Well, then, you should take a trip to the library and spend some time in the reference section discovering how the Bible was written and the pain that was taken to assure its accuracy.

The manner of copying the Scripture is historically unparalleled for its careful attention to detail and accuracy. No secular text has received such careful and detailed attention. The ancient copyists (sometimes called "scribes") carried out their responsibility with extreme discipline and care. They thought of their duty to copy the documents flawlessly as a ministry before God. They apparently had such a dread of failure that they took extraordinary precautions to assure the accuracy of their work. They numbered the letters, words, and sentences so that they could check and recheck their work. When they got to the end of the page, if all the numbers were not identical to the page they were copying from, they would throw the page away and start again.

The account of the transmission of Scripture is most remarkable.

Josh McDowell, in his book, *Evidence that Demands A Verdict*, tells of the evidence of this accuracy through the discovery of the Dead Sea scrolls. In 1948, what came to be known as the Dead Sea scrolls were found. One is the Isaiah scroll, e.g., the Book of Isaiah. The oldest manuscripts up to that time were from 900 A.D., and these are dated at 100 B.C.! How can we be sure of an accurate transmission since the time of Christ in 32 A.D.? We pick the time of Christ because we accept as inspired the copy of Scripture in his day, and these scrolls predate Jesus' earthly life by 100 years. How accurate was the transmission from 100 B.C. to 900 A.D.?

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Of the 163 words used in Isaiah 53, there are only 17 letters in question. Ten are simply a matter of spelling, which does not affect the sense. Four more are letters of minor stylistic changes, such as conjunctions. The remaining three letters comprise the word "light," which is added in verse 11, and does not affect the meaning greatly. Thus, in one chapter of 166 words, there is only one word (three letters) in question after 1,000 years of transmission—and this word does not significantly change the meaning of the passage!

Gleason Archer made the observation that the Isaiah scrolls "proved to be word-for-word identical with our standard Hebrew Bible in more than 95% of the text. The 5% of variation consisted chiefly of obvious slips of the pen and variations in spelling."