

The Word@ZPC

# The Case for God in an Anti-God World

## The Bible

*Can We Trust Our Own Handbook?*

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### There's No Getting Around the Bible

The Christian case for God rises and falls on Jesus, and the case for Jesus rises and falls on the validity of the Bible.

No book has been so celebrated and so assaulted in human history.

The Bible may or may not *inspire* a particular reader, but its own words are themselves said to be *inspired*:

Theopneustos: The Bible is "God-\_\_\_\_\_." (2 Timothy 3:16)

The Bible is both a \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ work.  
(2 Peter 1:20, 21)

Tough questions about the Bible's authority, accuracy, relationship to science, cultural relevancy, contents, preservation, and interpretation abound.

*Video: The Case for Christ* (Lee Strobel)

### How Do We Know the Right Books Made the Cut?

*Canon*: Standard or correct index (from the English word "cane")

The 39 Old Testament books were judged by the ancient Jews to be inspired because of their own claims and their frequent \_\_\_\_\_ usage.

The 27 New Testament books were judged by the Christian community to be inspired because of:

- Firsthand or secondhand \_\_\_\_\_ authority
- Doctrinal consistency
- Widespread public usage

What about the Apocrypha, pseudipigrapha (“false writings”) and the claims that numerous other gospels were excluded by the early Church?

Most of these books were written centuries after the historical events.

They contradict the basic doctrines in the canonical books.

Their \_\_\_\_\_ and “flavor” is out of keeping with God’s Word.

*It’s accurate to say that the earliest Christians didn’t choose the canon but gradually came to \_\_\_\_\_ it.*

### How Can We be Sure the Bible’s Texts Haven’t Been Doctored?

There is astonishing power in the oral tradition of human communities.

“How many roads must a man walk down, before you \_\_\_\_\_?”

How many seas must a white dove sail, before she \_\_\_\_\_?”

They said, ‘How many times must the cannon balls fly, before they’re \_\_\_\_\_?’

The answer my friend, is blowin’ in the wind; the answer is blowin’ in the wind.”

**Bob Dylan**

We must not overlook the presence of multiple witnesses to NT events (note especially I Corinthians 15:3-8).

Rabbinical schools trained their scribes to *count* each letter of biblical text.

The Dead Sea Scrolls (ca. 100 B.C.) narrowed the gap between OT origins and existing OT copies from \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_ years.

The Rylands Fragment of John 18 (ca. A.D. 125) demonstrates that John was written far closer to the time of Jesus than originally suspected.

### Isn’t the Bible Full of Contradictions, Errors, and Cultural Embarrassments?

Never be afraid to ask for specific examples!

- How did Judas die? (compare Matthew 27:1-5 with Acts 1:18, 19)
- Why do Jesus’ genealogies differ? (compare Matthew 1 with Luke 3)
- Why are there differing details concerning Jesus’ resurrection in the four gospels?

The Jesus Seminar conducted their own discussions about the authenticity of Jesus' sayings in the gospels. They concluded:

- \_\_\_\_\_ % are authentic
- \_\_\_\_\_ % are somewhat doubtful
- \_\_\_\_\_ % were never spoken by Jesus

Significantly, the Bible does not "put into Jesus' mouth" sayings that would have settled the great doctrinal debates of the early Church.

The Bible is remarkable for portraying the flaws of its greatest heroes.

There is a difference between what the Bible \_\_\_\_\_, and what the Bible \_\_\_\_\_.

Bible narratives brim with \_\_\_\_\_ details, and archeological discoveries continue to affirm the basic picture of ancient life presented in Scripture.

The Bible's "phenomenological" language (i.e., *the sun rose today*) is not to be mistaken as a scientific pronouncement.

We must be careful not to filter the Bible through our own cultural lenses.

### **Isn't it Possible for Anyone to Make the Bible Say Whatever They Want?**

Each text has multiple \_\_\_\_\_, but only one \_\_\_\_\_.

Do we take the Bible literally? Absolutely...if by that we mean what the original human author \_\_\_\_\_.

In the end, God's Word has astonishing coherence, considering:

- 66 individual books
- 40-plus authors
- 1400-year time span of authorship
- Diversity of authors (kings, farmers, fishermen, historians)
- Diversity of settings (palaces, fields, prisons, villages, cities)
- Rigorous tackling of life's greatest and toughest questions
- 3 continents (Asia, Africa, Europe)
- 3 languages (Hebrew, Greek, Aramaic)

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