

NG Study Guide: “2 Tim.3:16-17 Bible: Has God Really Said ...?” Apologetics Series Pt. 2 [7.22.18]

Love God + know the Bible better:

1. Read the passage cited above, and try to answer the questions below before your group meets.
2. *Leader note: Please review the brief instructions for leaders at the bottom.*

The Study

Thesis:

Consider this: 1. Does God exist? 2. Can God be known and if so how? 3. What is man’s responsibility to God? The correct answer to question number three depends on the correct answer to #2. Is the Bible simply the work of men? Has it been changed through the years? Is it in fact what it claims to be, the Word of God? How can you know?

Manuscript evidence:

The original books were written on either papyrus which is plant or parchment which is animal skin. The sheets were glued together and wound around a dowel with an average of 20-35 feet forming a scroll. When the Old Testament was translated from Hebrew to Greek there were many more letters; and books like Samuel, Kings, and Chronicles had to be put on two scrolls (e.g. 1st and 2nd Samuel).

Consider the **Hebrew copying procedure of the Old Testament [OT]**. The Jews had a great reverence for the Scriptures. The scribes who hand copied the Scriptures counted the number of letters and words to ensure nothing was omitted, and proofreaders checked each page of the copy against the master. The OT was completed about 400 B.C. and our earliest copies were from 900 A.D. People assumed that because of the large gap (1,300 years) there must have been all kind of changes. Then in 1947 a Bedouin shepherd boy discovered a large collection of manuscripts that we know as the Dead Sea Scrolls. There was discovered a complete scroll of Isaiah that was 1,000 years earlier than the earliest copy we had, and in total more than 800 scrolls. As scholars studied the manuscripts and compared the earlier and later they confirmed the amazing accuracy of the copyists over a thousand-year period.

The New Testament [NT] is the best authenticated of all ancient writings. The number of manuscripts and the time between the events and the documents are primary tests for historical documents. The NT was completed about 95 A.D. and the earliest manuscripts are from 125 A.D. **There are 25,000 manuscripts with some as close as 30 years to the original.** There are 5,600 Greek and 10,000 Latin manuscripts and 9,300 other early versions. In contrast, we have 5 copies of Aristotle’s writings with a 1,400-year gap, and we have 643 copies of Homer’s Iliad (the most of any ancient writing) with a 400-year gap.

“In Real terms, the New Testament is easily the best attested ancient writing in terms of the sheer number of documents, the time span between the events and the documents, and the variety of documents available to sustain or contradict it. There is nothing in ancient manuscript evidence to match such textual availability and integrity” - Ravi Zacharias.

Archaeological evidence

The archaeologist’s spade is the Bible’s friend. Archaeologists have not uncovered all the Bible records, but what has been discovered confirms and does not contradict the Bible.

At Jericho, the excavations in 1930-36 some archeologists found something so startling that they signed a statement attesting what they saw. “As to the main fact, then, there remains no doubt: the walls fell outwards.” This was entirely consistent with Joshua 6:20, but contrary to siege warfare of the day.

Moses authorship was contested in regard to the first five books of the Bible, because critics claimed people couldn’t read until 1400 BC, and the sacrificial system that Moses wrote about developed much later. Then in 1975, the Elba Tablets were discovered, nearly 20,000 written records dating 1000 years before the time of Moses. When they were translated, archaeologists found that many of the laws, customs, and sacrificial systems existed long before Moses.

The Hittites are mentioned about fifty times in Scriptures, and critics claimed they never existed. Archaeological digs have found hundreds of references to the Hittite people. They lived over a 1200-year period in the Middle East.

Laban's idols: People wondered why he would chase his daughter down over a simple little idol she stole [Gen. 31]. In 1925, the Nuzi tablets were found in Mesopotamia. These tablets revealed that a person who possessed a family idol could make a legal claim to all the family property.

Prophetic evidence:

One of the things that make God, God is the fact that He knows the future. In effect, He has the ability to see the end of time from the very beginning of time. The Bible is unique in fulfilled predictive prophecy. "Other books claim divine inspiration, such as the Koran, the Book of Mormon, and parts of the [Hindu] Veda. But none of these books contain predictive prophecy" - Norman Geisler.

There are 61 major prophecies concerning the life of Jesus written many hundreds of years before His death. All related to His First Coming have been fulfilled. The chance that Jesus could have fulfilled just 8 of those prophecies are one in 10 to the 17th power (one in one hundred thousand trillion). The improbability is illustrated by picturing Texas covered with silver dollars two inches deep. One of those coins has a red "x" on it. Imagine parachuting into Texas and picking up only one coin, and it has the red "x."

Of the 667 historical prophecies to date, all but three can be verified as being fulfilled (that does not mean that the three weren't fulfilled; we just have no record) (Ralph O. Muncaster).

Here are some examples:

1. King Cyrus is called by name [Is. 44:8-45:1-7].

2. The temple would be built by the pagan king Cyrus (Is. 44:8)

note: On Oct 12th, 539 B.C. Cyrus's general captured the city of Babylon thus beginning the great Persian Empire. When Cyrus made his grand entrance, Daniel presented him with an ancient scroll of Isaiah, which contained a personal letter addressing him by name. (Josephus, Antiquities XI, 1, 2) King Cyrus was impressed and in time he released the Jewish captives to return to their homeland and rebuild their temple [Ezra 1].

3. The destruction of various kingdoms: Edom (Obadiah 1), Tyre (Ezek. 12), and Nineveh (Nahum 1-3)

4. The return of Israel to the Land: (Is 11:11) [fulfilled May 14, 1948]

5. The life of Jesus: When He would come (Dan 9:24-27), city of His birth (Micah 5:2), virgin birth (Is 7:14), the tribe He would come through (Gen 49:10, 2nd Sam 7:12-16), betrayed by a friend (Ps 41:9), betrayed for 30 pieces of silver (Zech 11:12), worshipped by shepherds and kings bringing gifts (Psalm 72:9-11,15), rejected by His own people (Ps 69:8, 118:22), the day He would ride triumphantly into Jerusalem (Dan 9:25-26), how He would enter Jerusalem on a donkey (Zech 9:9) events surrounding His death (Is 42, 53), crucified with thieves (Is 53:12), type of death (Psalm 22), and His Resurrection (Psalm 16:9-11).

Internal evidence:

As a former attorney, I've interviewed countless witnesses and discovered the challenges of reaching a general agreement over major issues, let alone the minor details. Accordingly, the internal agreement of the Bible is even more incredible.

The Bible is written over a 2,100-year time span, and contains sixty-six books written by forty different authors who came from vastly different cultures, backgrounds, locations, and circumstances. It was written in three different languages (Hebrew, Aramaic, Greek) on three different continents Asia, Europe, and Africa. Absent God's inspiration, the Bible would not be internally consistent, and would contradict itself. The Bible's internal consistency points to God inspiring and directing the human authors.

People argue, "Everyone knows that the Bible is full of contradictions." However, that is a false charge. The Bible does contain some conflicting statements, but with a little bit of explanation you discover there is no contradiction. Here are a few examples:

In Genesis 1 it says that God created Man and woman. In Gen. 2 it says He created man, and later came the woman. That is not a contradiction. Genesis 1 is an overview and chapter two provides greater detail of the Creation.

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus declared that they had heard God say, an eye for an eye a tooth for a tooth (Ex.21:14), but now Jesus was telling God's people to turn the other cheek [Mt. 5:38-39]. There is no contradiction. Jesus raised the bar of ethical conduct in the New Testament which replaced the Old Testament.

Mark and Luke say that two blind men were healed at Jericho, but Matthew observes that one blind man was healed. Matthew simply focuses on the more noteworthy subject, but does not contradict Mark and Luke. It is like a sportswriter who does a story about one player's outstanding performance. It doesn't mean there weren't other athletes present, but they were not deemed worthy of the writer's focus.

Matt. 27 says Judas hanged himself, and in Acts 1 it says that he fell forward and burst open. Judas hanged himself in the valley of Hinnom. That area is full of rocky ledges that surround the valley. It makes perfect sense that Judas hung himself on a tree and subsequently fell and burst open on the rocks below. One passage describes the method of his suicide, and the other passage describes where his body was found and the condition that it was in.

Study Guide Qs

Q1. How does confidence that the Bible is in fact the Word of God likely impact a person's relationship with the Bible?

Q2. How does the manuscript, archaeological, prophetic, and internal evidence encourage your faith in the Bible?

Does the knowledge of the abundant evidence to support the Bible make you more confident in your faith?

Q3. What did you find most interesting about this study and why?

Q4. How would you like to apply the lessons from this study in your life?

"Digging Deeper" (optional or alternative study)

Recommended apologetics books:

1. ***The New Evidence That Demands a Verdict*** by Josh McDowell; Nelson Pub.
2. ***God Wrote A Book*** by James MacDonald; Crossway Pub.
3. ***Can You Trust The Bible?*** by Ralph O. Muncaster; Harvest House Pub.
4. ***The Case For Faith*** by Lee Strobel; Zondervan Pub.
5. ***The Moody Handbook of Theology*** by Paul Enns; Moody Pub.
6. ***Love God With All Your Mind*** by J.P. Moreland; Navpress Pub.
7. ***The Reason For God*** by Timothy Keller.
8. ***On Guard*** by Wm. Lane Craig.

Love your neighbor *outside* the group better:

1. Who would like to share how they sought to befriend or build relationship with their neighbors where they live, work, study, or play this past week?
2. Are there some needs that can provide us an opportunity to love our neighbor outside the group?
3. Here is a neighboring idea(s) for us to consider for the week(s) ahead:

Ask a neighbor that you have befriended what they believe about God and the Bible, and why they believe it. Pray, listen to them well, and look for Spirit-led opportunities to share your faith with them.

Love your neighbor *inside* the group better:

1. Are there some needs in our group that can provide us an opportunity to love our neighbor within the group?
2. What might we do about that need to help?

Prayer [Loving God and Neighbors better]:

Close the NG meeting with a time of group prayer. Encourage each participant to pray, but don't force anyone to pray. Encourage the group to keep their prayers brief so that each person can pray.

Leader Notes:

- 1. Seek to involve as many group participants as possible.** A good group discussion time allows people to get to know the passage and one another better.
- 2. Feel free to pre-select the discussion questions that you want to focus on** in case there isn't enough time to answer them all.
- 3. The "Digging Deeper" section provides some optional or alternative study and discussion activities.** As a group leader, you can choose to focus on the "Digging Deeper" section, include part of that section in your group meeting, or not use it at all. Try to give the group sufficient notice so they can be prepared for the meeting.
- 4. Every time you meet consider asking:**
 - a. What about this passage is particularly exciting, challenging, or confusing?** If a leader is uncertain about a question of doctrine or theology don't hesitate to follow-up with your coach during the week. Then revisit the issue(s) when the group gathers next time.