



- Welcome and Introduction

## The Bible—Is it historically accurate?

### Did events recorded in the Bible really happen?

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#### 1. How do we know that narratives are intended as history...not fable or myth?

There are things that you would expect in historical accounts:

- Geographical references that match real features
- Chronological information, like “In the 15th year of Caesar Tiberius...” (Luke 3:1)
- Genealogies: the “begats”
- Unflattering features, like flawed and failing heroes

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#### 2. The Bible’s structure and purpose mean that history is important.

Over half the Bible is in a historical narrative genre.

The Bible is first the story of **what God has done for us, not what we do for God.**

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#### 3. There are writings outside the Bible that coincide with Biblical people, places, and events.

##### Old Testament examples:

The Annals of Sennacherib—the Assyrian King’s threat against Jerusalem.

The Babylonian Chronicles—Nebuchadnezzar’s defeat of Jerusalem.

The Cyrus Cylinder—The Persian King’s decree to return foreigners to their homes.

##### New Testament examples:

Ca. 55 C.E.—**Thallus**, cited by Julius Africanus writes that as Jesus is crucified, the sun is darkened, and an earthquake occurs in Judea

Ca. 73 C.E.—**Mara Bar Serapion** writes “killing their wise king...the Jews were driven from their own kingdom” and “scattered.”

Ca. 90 C.E.—**Rabbi Eliezer**, cited in **the Talmud**, writes that Jesus “was a worker of magic”. (Tosephta Shabbat XII)

Ca. 100 C.E.—**Tacitus** writes that Jesus was executed in Judea during the period when Tiberius was emperor and Pontius Pilate was “procurator of Judea” and that the “Christian” movement spread from Judea to Rome. (Annals 44:2-5)

Ca. 100 C.E.—**Josephus** writes that Jesus was condemned by Pilate and was crucified, that his brother was James, and that his disciples reported that he had risen from the dead and appeared to them. (Antiquities 18:3, 20:9)

Ca. 110 C.E.—**Pliny the Younger** writes that Jesus’ followers “sang to him as to a god”.  
(Epistles 10:96)

Ca. 200 C.E.—**The Talmud** says that Jesus “was hanged on the eve of Passover” (Sanhedrin 43a-b)

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### 3. A wealth of archaeological discoveries provide confirmatory evidence of Biblical people, places, and events.

**The Hittites**

**King David**

**Hezekiah’s Tunnel**

**The Pool of Siloam**

**Pontius Pilate**

**The Delphi Inscription**

#### **Luke as a historian**

Writer of both the gospel and Acts, Luke wrote more of the New Testament than either John or Paul.

Names 18 key political figures.

Uses proper titles with precision.

Luke’s precision impressed skeptic **Wm. Ramsay** to the extent that this knighted University of Aberdeen professor became a believer as had he led more than 20 years of study in Asian Minor. (Scott McKnight, PhD in *More Than Conquerors*, ed. John Woodbridge

“...indeed, after Luke there arose no writer who can really be called a historian of the Christian Church until Eusebius(A.D. 313).”—F.F. Bruce

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### 4. The Bible accounts themselves give internal evidence of historical intent and integrity.

- The candid accounts of the failures and flaws of it’s heroes, leaders, and disciples.
- The presence of unresolved tensions between accounts.
- The acceptance of writings by unlikely authors, like Luke and Mark.
- That women would play such key roles, particularly in the resurrection accounts.
- The stated claims of its authors. (Example 2 Peter 1:16-18)

### Conclusion and Encouragement