

# Reliability of the Bible

What is the Bible?

# The Bible is a Historical Document

Reliability should be tested in the same way as other historical documents

- Historically
- Geographically
- Archaeologically
- Differences
- Transmission

# Reliability Matrix – (TADPOLE)

## Type

Primary – product of actual events – e.g. diary, oral sources  
Secondary – based on primary sources

## Author

Close to events or far from them

## Date

How far from the events

# Reliability Matrix – (TADPOLE)

Purpose

Why was the person writings - motives

Opinion

Opinion or facts

Language

Emotive

Evidence

Other texts, Archaeology

## Evidence -Ancient Non Christian Sources

### *Cornelius Tacitus (AD55-120)*

Roman historian best known works *Annals* (AD 115) and *Histories*  
Mentioned Christianity twice in his books

In *Annals* – recounted Nero's great fire – mentions Christus – suffered the extreme penalty during reign of Tiberius (AD 14-37) at hands of one our procurators Pontius Pilatus

In *Histories* mentioned also although we don't have the original volume only a reference to it by Sulpicus Severus

## Evidence Ancient Non Christian Sources

*Suetonius* – Gaius Suetonius Tranquillas – Emperor Hadrian secretary (Hadrian finally threw the Jews out of Jerusalem AD 135 ) – 2 references

Because the Jews at Rome caused continuous disturbances at the instigation of Chrestus, he {Claudius} expelled them from the city

After the great fire at Rome...punishments were also inflicted on the Christians a sect professing a new and mischievous religious belief

## Evidence Ancient Non Christian Sources

*Josephus (AD 37- 97) –Antiquities 2 references*

First – Antiquities 20.200 – not disputed

Festus was now dead, and Albinus was but upon the road; so he assembled the sanhedrin of judges, and brought before them the brother of Jesus, who was called Christ, whose name was James, and some others ... he delivered them to be stoned

Antiquities 18.63 Second a dispute passaged ....perhaps only with confidence the following (taken from the Arabic text)

At this time there was a wise man who was called Jesus .....Pilate condemned him to be crucified and to die...

## Evidence Ancient Non Christian Sources

### **Roman Government Officials**

Pliny the Younger – governor of Bithynia in Asia Minor

Tenth Book – written AD 112 tells about his dealings with Christians and his inquiry to Trajan

Describes Christian worship in accordance with NT

## Evidence Ancient Non Christian Sources

### **Jewish**

Talmud - Sanhedrin 43a

Yeshu was hanged on the eve of the Passover...he practiced sorcery and enticed Israel to apostasy

Other – Thallus

Africanus records Thallus who records the occurrence of an eclipse in the middle east and parts of Europe on the day Jesus died.

What makes History?

History no uniform definition – consensus

Actual events – what happened?

Recording of these events – how theory were annotated and interpreted

Is History objective?

No – subjectivity influences the selection of material based on the historian's biases and beliefs – the good news the very fact that they can be recognised means they can be allowed for!

Is history certain?

Not always – it is what the evidence points to [at that time] until new evidence comes along...but there can be certainty of well established historical findings

How to determine History?

You investigate & critically examine relevant data sources – 2 types

- TEXTS
- ARCHAEOLOGY

## TEXTS

- Written Texts - documents, paintings, inscriptions
- Critically analyse sources – Source Criticism – external and internal
- Biggest issue texts seldom immune from ambiguity [hence myriad of Biblical commentaries] – even eyewitness accounts

## ARCHAEOLOGY

Generally reflects unintentional material the by- product of human behaviour => this type unbiased and non agenda driven (other than the archaeologists) – not true of inscriptions necessarily

Artefacts, architecture, graves, monuments, burial chambers, coins, tools, artwork, clothes, inscriptions

Criticism – dating, chemical analysis for composition

COMPLEMENTARY INDEPENDENT VERIFICATION OR ANTAGONISTIC

Lets become Historians....

Yonatan Adler recently discovered that the *more expensive chalkstone vessels or jars* that were found at Jewish sites all over Israel were conspicuously absent from non Jewish settlements in area.

He also discovered that they almost completely disappeared from areas close to Jerusalem after AD 135.

Lets do history..

- Materials
  - Expensive
  - Chalkstone not earthenware
- Why only in Jewish settlements
- Jewish Practices
- Israelite history
- Any NT Bible passages

Joshua 4.6 What do these stones mean?

### **Hittites**

No archaeological evidence until 19<sup>th</sup> Century

Inscriptions found in Turkey, Syria and Egypt – undisputed

### **Black Obelisk of Shalmaneser III**

Inscription ‘tribute of Jehu Son of Omri ..’ (the Assyrian King) and depiction of the Jewish King

1945 at Nimrud -2 Kings 9-10/2 Chron 22

### **Pontius Pilate**

Stone Inscription in Caesarea Maritime

Coins minted to honour him discovered

Tacitus and Josephus

### **Titus victory Arch in Rome**

Sacking of Temple AD 70

Joshua 4.6 What do these stones mean?

## **Jerusalem**

*Pools of Bethesda* – John 5 – five covered colonnades discovered

*Pool of Siloam* – John 9

*Hezekiah's tunnel*

## **Yohanan Ben Ha'galgol**

– crucified Jew found in 1968

Nailed through ankles and evidence of nails through wrists

Joshua 4.6 What do these stones mean?

### **Dead Sea Scrolls**

Qumran 150 BC – 68AD

Scrolls – Isaiah scroll

Descriptions of the Pharisees, Community life

### **Jewish Micvah outside the Temple**

Where in Jerusalem was there enough water to baptise 3,000

Capernaum

Synagogue over 1 century synagogue

Peter's house

### **The Merneptah Stele**

Mentions the nation of Israel 1290BC

1896 at Thebes

## Ancient Texts

### **Passover Pardons**

Josephus Antiquities 17.204

Pliny the Younger

Mishna m.Pesahim 8.6 bring out of prison on eve of  
Passover

### **King of the Jews**

A roman expression originally applied to Herod the Great by the  
Jews

Antiquities 15.409

Mt 27.11,37; Mk 15.2

### Dead Sea Scrolls

Descriptions of corrupt priests and Pharisees Smooth talking

## Ancient Texts

### **Crucifixion Practices**

Jewish Wars

Tanakh – Dt 21

Digesta Roman Law books flogging, titulus

### **Burial Practices**

m.Sanhedrin 6.6; Semahot 12.9 c/f Semahot 3.2

Tanakh – Dt 21

Antiquities - perfuming

Semahot (3<sup>rd</sup> Century Rabbinic Text) Mourning

# What is Science?

Definition of science – Oxford English dictionary

“the intellectual and practical activity encompassing the systematic study of the structure and behaviour of the physical and natural world through observation and experiment:”

Fundamental problem buried within this definition

# Do you need to be a scientist?

LEARN HOW TO TALK PEOPLE –talk the talk



KEY CONFIDENCE

CONFIDENCE COMES FROM KNOWLEDGE

A LITTLE KNOWLEDGE GOES A LONG WAY

Can science prove  
miracles?

No – Impossible by definition

History proves miracles

Don't try and explain miracles scientifically

Non Christians do that – e.g. Thallus recording of the darkness on the day Jesus died as an eclipse.

## QUIZ

1. The planet Vulcan is
  - a. The invented home of Dr Spock
  - b. The planet invented to explain problems in Newtonian Physics?
  
2. Gluons are particles that glue quarks together – True or False?
  
  
3. The Hippocratic oath
  - a. is named after a famous scientist (ancient greek Dr)
  - b. is etymological linked to the Gk word for hypocrisy?

4. Which is the odd one out?

a. Fermions

b. Leptons

c. Bosons

d. Lepricorns

5. The five second rule – true or false?

6. Light is a wavicle – true or false

Fundamental Matters    Which theory is right?

Fundamental constituents of nuclear matter

protons and neutrons [1970's]

quarks and gluons

Final Theory?

Fundamental Matters      Which theory is right?

Classical mechanicals v quantum mechanics

Mass – intrinsic and invariable (Newtonian)

to

variable and motion dependent (Einstein)

Science is full of inexplicable paradigm shift

## Fundamental Matters Creation Issues?

Gen 2 Literal or figurative

Problem is with science not the Bible

Bible hasn't changed but science has changed

Einstein would be confused by quarks in Genesis

Who Created God

A Meaningless question ?

The Real God – God by definition cannot be created

# The Moral Dilemma

**Fundamental reductionism** - an approach to understanding the nature of complex things by reducing them to the interactions of their parts, or to simpler or more fundamental things.

It means our moral choices are not real but only the result of the neurochemistry hardwired into us .

You cannot hold people accountable if their emotions are only the result of complex chemical reactions beyond their control i.e. our thoughts are the results of chemical processes determined by laws of chemistry not by our control/our selves

END OF LOGIC

Logic falls over because it means our opinions/thoughts are the results of chemical processes determined by laws of chemistry not by laws of logic

But computers do it ...they have a programmer....

PROBLEM NO GOD NO MORALS - NO OBJECTIVE RIGHT AND WRONG

## Clues for God “RIB”

Regularity – universe is Linear, Isotropic, Homogenous and Regular

Impossible Coincidence – Fine Tuning

Begins with a Bang

My experience many many scientists believe in God