

Do we have accurate translations of the Bible?

The answer from the Mormons is NO!

The answer from the Catholics is “yes, but we don’t follow that verse.” When asked if Mary is the Mediatrix of our salvation, the answer is “yes” but when compared to the Bible the answer is “no”. Vatican Council II ... the titles of Mary as Advocate, Helper, Benefactress, and Mediatrix

1Ti 2:5 For there is one God, and one mediator also between God and men the man Christ Jesus,

# What do outside sources say about Christianity?

Tacitus, a Roman historian of the time, says Jesus was put to death while Tiberius was emperor – AD 14 to AD 37.

Tacitus also says this happened while Pontius Pilate was in charge of Judea – AD 26 to AD 36.

Tacitus tells us that at the time of the great fire in Rome, AD 64, there was a “vast multitude” of Christians present. That’s 1430 miles from Jerusalem.

Christianity had spread in the face of great opposition – by the Jews and by pagans.

Act 8:1 And Saul approved of their killing him. On that day a great persecution broke out against the church in Jerusalem, and all except the apostles were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria.

Tacitus says of Christians, “Mockery of every sort was added to their deaths. Covered with the skins of beasts, they were torn by dogs and perished, or were nailed to crosses, or were doomed to the flames and burnt, to serve as a nightly illumination, when daylight had expired.”

Pliny, governor of Bithynia, AD 109-111, says that they meet on a certain day before light where they gather and sing hymns to Christ as to a god. They all bind themselves by oath, "not to some crimes", says Pliny, as though that is what he would have expected; rather, they pledge not to commit any crimes such as fraud, theft, or adultery, and subsequently share a meal of "ordinary and innocent food".

Papyrus 45 created around 250 in Egypt. It contains the texts of Matthew 20-21 and 25-26; Mark 4-9 and 11-12; Luke 6-7 and 9-14; John 4-5 and 10-11; and Acts 4-17. The papyrus was bound in a codex, which may have consisted of 220 pages, however only 30 survive. The original pages were roughly 10 inches by 8 inches.

Pages from  
Luke



In earlier lessons, I indicated the NT itself would require dating the time of the writing of the gospels as:

Matthew – before AD39

Mark – AD 62-66

Luke/Acts – AD 60-62

John – before AD 39

Matthew	prior to 39 AD	2Tim 3.14-15; Rom 9.30-10.3; 1Pet 1.18-19; Col 2.13-14; Jn 1.17; Heb 9.22; 1Pet 3.21 Acts 16.1; Lk 1.1-2
Mark	62-66 AD	Acts 15.38-39; 2Tim 4.11
Luke/Acts	60-62 AD	Acts 28.30
John	prior to 39 AD	Jn 17.20; 20.30-31; 2Tim 3.14-15
Acts	62 AD	Acts 28.30 Herod died at AD 44 Acts 12 Claudius began to reign in AD 41, following Caligula who reigned 37-41 Claudius died AD 54 mentioned at Acts 18.2, meaning Paul arrives in Jerusalem AD 58

Why do the English translations vary so much?

For example, why does the NIV go from Acts 8.36 to Acts 8.38? – it skips v. 37?

Those verses are missing in some of the oldest manuscripts – the Vaticanus (AD 300) and the Sinaiticus (AD 330)!

Interestingly, all 5 of the oldest manuscripts, which do not include Acts 8.37, are Egyptian.

Two early church writers show that it is there.

Irenaeus (180 AD): [Philip declared] that this was Jesus, and that the Scripture was fulfilled in Him; as did also the believing eunuch himself: and, immediately requesting to be baptized, he said, "I believe Jesus Christ to be the Son of God." (Against Heresies, 3.12.8)

Cyprian (250 AD): In the Acts of the Apostles: "Lo, here is water; what is there which hinders me from being baptized? Then said Philip, If you believe with all your heart, you may." (The Treatises of Cyprian, Treatise 12, Book 3.43)

“critics of the inclusion of 8:37 propose that the verse was a pious addition. Inversely, proponents of the inclusion of 8:37 propose that the verse was omitted by scribes who disliked the message of the verse.”

“The fact that 8:37 remained in the Latin stream despite the Latin church's deeply held devotion to infant baptism demonstrates the resilience of 8:37, which is best explained by the theory that 8:37 was supported by sufficient external evidence”

So there are differences in the manuscripts used to translate the Scriptures and differences in the background of those who translate them.

We want to examine the gospels today to see if they accurately represent were actually written by those claimed to have written them and transmit what the original authors intended.

“Did the gospel writers know their stuff?”

Matthew names 16 towns in Israel

Mark names 15 towns in Israel

Luke names 16 towns in Israel

John names 13 towns in Israel

All together they speak of 26 different towns.

Where would an author other than those named  
find a map with Cana or Nain or Sychar or  
Zarephath?

The authors of the four gospels display a knowledge of towns and places, some obscure and some not.

Each writer names a unique group of towns and places, so they didn't copy from one another.

Especially in John, minor villages are named – Aenon, Cana, Ephraim, Salim and Sychar.

Papias, AD 60-163, wrote, “Mark, in his capacity as Peter’s interpreter, wrote down accurately as many things as he recalled from memory—though not in an ordered form—of the things either said or done by the Lord. For he neither heard the Lord nor accompanied him, but later, as I said, Peter, who used to give his teachings in the form of chreiai, but had no intention of providing an ordered arrangement of the words of the Lord.

Consequently Mark did nothing wrong when he wrote down some individual items just as he related them from memory. For he made it his one concern not to omit anything he had heard or to falsify anything.”

Note how carefully the geography of Israel was indicated by the writers of these gospels.

Luk 10:30 Jesus replied and said, "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among robbers, and they stripped him and beat him, and went away leaving him half dead. 31 "And by chance a priest was going down on that road, and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side.

Jerusalem is 2450 ft above sea level while Jericho is 800 ft below sea level.

Matthew, Mark, Luke and John all know you go up  
to Jerusalem and Mark and Luke know you go  
down when leaving.

Mar 3:22 The scribes who came down from  
Jerusalem

Luk 2:4 Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the  
city of Nazareth (elev. 1,138 ft), to ... Bethlehem  
(elev 2543 ft)

Luk 2:51 And He went down with them and came  
to Nazareth,

Recently a visitor told me they had to go back up to Annapolis and I told him I think of that as going down – it's south of here.

Do you always use the direction of elevation?

The gospels were written by men who “knew their stuff.”

*Gethsemane* means  
“oil press” – the Mt  
of Olives is the  
location but no  
gospel writer  
comments on this  
connection -- they  
just knew.



Geographical features: *Golgotha* is said to mean “skull” Mt 27.33; Mk 15.22, Jn 19.17 -- an Aramaic term.



Traditional site of Golgotha, within the Church of the Holy Sepulchre (left) or General Gordon's site over the Arab bus station near the Garden Tomb

There are other “gospels” written 50-150 years after the “Four”.

The Gospel of Thomas mentions Judea once and no other places.

The Gospel of Phillip (made famous by the “DaVinci Code”) mentions Jerusalem 4 times, Nazara once and the Jordan once.

Note the difference in the “Four” and those written later – by uninspired men.

Consider the differences in the women coming to the tomb. However, the accounts merge –  
Mat 28:9-10 And behold, Jesus met them and greeted them. And they came up and took hold of His feet and worshiped Him. (10) Then Jesus said to them, "Do not be afraid; go and take word to My brethren to leave for Galilee, and there they will see Me."

Joh 20:17 Jesus said to her, "Stop clinging to Me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father; but go to My brethren and say to them, 'I ascend to My Father and your Father, and My God and your God.'"

These are only a few of the proofs that the gospels we have are those written in the first century by the authors indicated.

Greek Manuscript total: 5,856

Non-Greek Manuscripts (Armenian, Latin, etc.):  
18,130+

Joh 20:30 Many other signs therefore did Jesus in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book: 31 but these are written, that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye may have life in his name. (ASV 1901)

If you believe that Jesus is the Christ, do as the Ethiopian Eunuch did, Act 8:36 As they went along the road they came to some water; and the eunuch said, "Look! Water! What prevents me from being baptized?" 37 [And Philip said, "If you believe with all your heart, you may." And he answered and said, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God."] 38 And he ordered the chariot to stop; and they both went down into the water, Philip as well as the eunuch, and he baptized him.