

The New Testament proven historically accurate



Big picture: Archaeology has shown the New Testament to be incredibly reliable when referencing historical details, suggesting that it is trustworthy in its witness to Christ, His death and Resurrection. Luke's writings (Luke and Acts) are of particular interest due to the density and accuracy of historical references.

1. Archaeology has shown the historical accuracy of the New Testament, meaning we can trust what it says about Jesus

Many of our Muslim friends just accept that the New Testament has been corrupted without taking the time to investigate the New Testament for themselves. This is particularly true when it comes to the historical details recorded in the Gospels and the rest of the New Testament.

Of course, if the historical details recorded in the New Testament were shown to be wrong, the details of Jesus' death and resurrection could be claimed to be inaccurate. However, the New Testament has been shown to be amazingly accurate in light of archaeological findings.



2. Luke's Gospel is particularly noteworthy due to the density of historical references

Of particular note are the writings of Luke, namely his Gospel and the Acts of the Apostles, due to the density of historical references and the fact that his writings make up over a quarter of the New Testament. If we can trust his history, we can trust what he tells us about Jesus. Luke refers to 114 identifiable places and 25 political, military, social or religious events all known to history, two key events, (the famine in Judea in [Acts 11](#) and the expulsion of the Jews from Rome in [Acts 18](#), both recorded in other 1st century texts), and 117 names of people living at the time, many well-known to history.

3. William Ramsay is a prominent 20th century archaeologist who has demonstrated in particular the accuracy of Luke's writings

One prominent archaeologist who affirmed the accuracy of Luke's history is Sir Charles William Ramsay (1851–1939). Initially in his studies under Ferdinand Baur he accepted the view that the New Testament could not be relied on as an historical document. However, 'after half a century researching in the land of Paul's travels' (modern Turkey), Ramsay concluded that Luke wrote, 'with such judgement, skill, art and perception of truth as to be a model of historical statement... I set out to look for truth on the borderland where Greece and Asia meet, and found it there [in Acts] ... You may press the words of Luke in a degree beyond any other historian's and they stand the keenest scrutiny and the hardest treatment'[1](#).

4. The Criterion of Embarrassment adds further to the authenticity of the New Testament

One further consideration is the fact that Luke and the other Gospel and New Testament writers record not just details that put the disciples in a favourable light, but also in a negative light. Examples from Luke are the disciples of Jesus arguing about who would be greatest in Jesus's kingdom, recorded not just once in [Luke 9](#), but also in [Luke 22](#). Alongside this is Peter's denial of Christ, and even Paul openly sharing his weaknesses and struggles in 2 Corinthians.

This is known as the Criterion of Embarrassment.

5. In comparison the Quran contains a number of historical errors

It is worth contrasting the errors that the Quran and Hadith texts make when reporting facts of history. Examples are the mixing up of Mary the mother of Jesus and Miriam, the sister of Aaron in [Quran 19.27-28](#), and Haman from the book of Esther, living at the same time as Moses and being a servant to Pharaoh in [Quran 40.23-24](#). There are many other examples, see [Islam's Problematic History](#) for a detailed consideration of the historical issues in Muslim sources.

6. Muslims claim there are many contradictions in the Bible, but these can easily be resolved

It is common for Muslims to focus on apparent contradictions in the New Testament, with entire publications and websites given over to cataloguing what seems to Muslims to be clear inconsistencies². However, what seem to be contradictions are easily explained by noting the viewpoint or intention of the author. One example would be the differences between the genealogies in Matthew and Luke. Another example would be Luke's mention of Quirinius as the governor of Syria in [Luke 2:1-2](#) when Josephus claims that Sentius Saturninus was administrative governor. Quirinius, however, was the senior military governor in a duumvirate (dual control) with Sentius Saturninus during the two censuses. However, there are no archaeological findings that disprove the New Testament's historical record.

7. It is good to challenge our Muslim friends to test what they believe

This is a good opportunity to show your Muslim friends that the New Testament is a document that can withstand scrutiny. Our Muslim friends are actively discouraged from questioning Islam, even when things don't make sense to them. However, Luke in presenting his Gospel doesn't want us to blindly accept what he writes, but wants us to be certain of his account of Jesus' life, death and resurrection. Luke leaves us with a model to follow, to be those who "carefully investigated everything". When your Muslim friend asks difficult questions that you cannot answer, show them that it is okay to ask this type of question, but be ready to model to them how to get answers.

References

1. ¹ Sir William M. Ramsay, Archaeologist and New Testament Scholar, A Survey of His Contribution to the Study of the New Testament By W. Ward Gasque · 1966 page 27
2. ² E.g. https://www.islamawareness.net/Christianity/bible_contra_101.html and <https://www.amazon.co.uk/-/Islam-Answers-Jewish-Christian-Questions-ebook/dp/B00B6UMCBI/>