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THE MOVIE

GOOD'S
DEAD

A man with a brown messenger bag is standing on a blue step ladder, holding a white sign with the word "NOT" written in red. He is positioned in front of a white brick wall where the words "GOOD'S DEAD" are painted in large, black, distressed letters. The man is wearing a white t-shirt and blue jeans. The scene is viewed from behind him, looking towards the wall.

"WHAT DO YOU BELIEVE?"



God's Not Dead: Is Our Faith Blind?

Good morning!

We're halfway through our three-part series dealing with the new film, ***God's Not Dead***, which opens in theaters on March 21st. It's a movie you won't want to miss.

It deals with a real-life scenario taking place on our college campuses right now...the debate about God and His relevance in our lives and, in the case of this film, whether or not He actually exists.

Josh Wheaton, our protagonist in ***God's Not Dead***, is forced to defend God's existence in his philosophy class at the behest of his professor, Jeffrey Radisson, who considers Josh's faith blind superstition.

Here's a look at the trailer:

[God's Not Dead Trailer](#)

This movie raises some very good questions for all of us as Josh begins to defend his faith publicly, something many of us might be reticent to do if faced with the same challenge. Hopefully, after this morning you'll feel emboldened to imitate him.

So let's dive in. Our second question in our series today is this: **Is our faith blind?**

Are there truly rational supports for believing in Jesus Christ, God in the flesh? I think there are innumerable reasons to be confident in His reality, but let's examine just 5 of them.

1. The Bible

This is by far the most important support for our faith, because it is all based on this revelation, so we'll spend a majority of our time this morning on the Bible.

Let's examine the New Testament in this first section and investigate its viability as a reliable historical document and, later on, if it really is supernaturally inspired...God's living Word.

First, let's look at it as a historical document.

A Reliable Historical Document

*"For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, **not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass from the Law** until all is accomplished (Matthew 5:18 NASB)."*

There are tremendous reasons to be assured about the authenticity of the New Testament. As a matter of fact, these are true of the Bible more than any other ancient manuscript. But to fully appreciate this, we first need to understand the two primary questions that guide the linguistic scholar's textual criticisms:

- How many copies are there to examine and compare?
- How close in time are the oldest copies to the originals?

Obviously the more copies that exist and the closer in time the copies are to the original, the more accurate the results. So how many do we have to work with?

1. There are over 5,664 Greek manuscripts and over 19,000 other copies in various other languages besides Greek for a total manuscript base of over **24,600!** *

To get an inkling of how significant this number is, we need to see how other ancient manuscripts add up in comparison, works like Josephus or Thucydides that are rarely questioned as being authentic in authorship or content.

The next closest document in significant copies would be Homer's *Iliad* with 643. That's it. The New Testament trounces that by over 24,000 copies! This is very significant.

All the other major works of note from ancient history such as Plato, Caesar, Pliny, Euripides, Tacitus, and Herodotus are 20 copies or less—and usually much less! Only Sophocles (193) and Aristotle (49) have more than 20.

2. The entire New Testament was written within 70 years of Jesus' resurrection.

In other words, there were a lot of people still alive when New Testament documents were being penned, witnesses who could have easily contested their authenticity and accuracy, but never did.

The significance of this can be seen when we compare the next best ancient manuscript copies and its original, Homer's *Iliad*, as being within 500 years. Conversely, one New Testament piece of John 18 is dated to within 25 years after the original was written!

Ironically, none of these other manuscripts are ever seriously contested, despite most of them having an 800- to 2000-year gap from originals to copies.

So when someone challenges the historical veracity of the New Testament, they probably have never actually investigated their charge.

Sir Frederic Kenyon, former director of the British Museum, said, "*In no other case is the interval of time between the composition of the book and the date of the earliest manuscripts so short as in that of the New Testament. The last foundation for any doubt*

that the Scriptures have come down to us substantially as they were written has now been removed.”

3. These New Testament copies have a whopping 99.5% accuracy rate! ***

New Testament specialist Daniel Wallace notes that although there are about 300,000 individual variations of the text of the New Testament, this number is very misleading. Most of the differences are completely inconsequential—spelling errors, inverted phrases and the like. A side-by-side comparison between the two main text families (the Majority Text and the modern critical text) shows agreement a full 98% of the time.

Of the remaining differences, virtually all yield to vigorous textual criticism. This means that our New Testament is 99.5% textually pure. In the entire text of 20,000 lines, only 40 lines are in doubt (about 400 words), and none affects any significant doctrine.

Greek scholar D.A. Carson sums it up this way: *“The purity of text is of such a substantial nature that nothing we believe to be true, and nothing we are commanded to do, is in any way jeopardized by the variants.”*

So when someone says that the Bible cannot be trusted because it has been changed and translated so many times—like the Telephone Game where the original message becomes an eventual joke—you can dismiss their criticism as the real joke.

A good follow-up question to ask is if God did author the Bible, and He meant it to be His primary communication device to us, do you think He would, as the all-powerful Creator of life, supernaturally protect its contents?

As John Adams once famously said, *“Facts are stubborn things.”*

A Supernatural Document

“All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; 17 so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work (2 Timothy 3:16-17 NASB).”

• Prophecy

*“Remember the former things long past, for I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is no one like Me, **declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times things which have not been done**, saying, ‘My purpose will be established, and I will accomplish all My good pleasure...’ (Isaiah 46:9–10).”*

The main distinction between the Bible and other religious writings is in its ability to predict the future accurately, which only makes sense if the author is truly the Creator

and wanted to prove its veracity. Therefore, fulfilled prophecy makes the Bible completely unique.

According to *The Encyclopedia of Biblical Prophecy*, there are 1,239 prophecies in the Old Testament and 578 in the New Testament for a total of 1,817 future predictions.

But this claim of divine inspiration is no idle boast. We see in Deuteronomy 18:20–22 (NASB) that anyone claiming to speak for God, if not 100% accurate, would be put to death.

“But the prophet who speaks a word presumptuously in My name which I have not commanded him to speak, or which he speaks in the name of other gods, that prophet shall die.” “You may say in your heart, ‘How will we know the word which the Lord has not spoken?’ When a prophet speaks in the name of the LORD, if the thing does not come about or come true, that is the thing which the LORD has not spoken. The prophet has spoken it presumptuously; you shall not be afraid of him.”

Knowing the severity for a fake prophet not only eliminated charlatans; it also made God’s prophets uniquely qualified as His anointed messengers. Let’s consider just a few examples of the veracity of the Bible as his Word in regards to the Messiah.

- His Conception (Isaiah 7:14 NASB)

“Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, a virgin will be with child and bear a son, and she will call His name Immanuel.”

No one can determine how they will be born, especially by a virgin!

- His Birth (Micah 5:2 NASB)

“But as for you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you One will go forth for Me to be ruler in Israel. His goings forth are from long ago, from the days of eternity.”

No one can determine where they will be born.

- His Betrayal (Zechariah 11:12–13 NASB)

“I said to them, ‘If it is good in your sight, give me my wages; but if not, never mind!’ So they weighed out thirty shekels of silver as my wages. Then the LORD said to me, ‘Throw it to the potter, that magnificent price at which I was valued by them.’ So I took the thirty shekels of silver and threw them to the potter in the house of the LORD.”

No one can determine another’s betrayal of them, the coinage, or its use.

- His Death (Psalm 22:12–18 NASB)

“Many bulls have surrounded me; strong bulls of Bashan have encircled me. They open wide their mouth at me, as a ravening and a roaring lion. I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint; my heart is like wax; it is melted within me. My strength is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue cleaves to my jaws; and you lay me in the dust of death. For dogs have surrounded me; a band of evildoers has encompassed me; they pierced my hands and my feet. I can count all my bones. They look, they stare at me; they divide my garments among them, and for my clothing they cast lots.”

And no one can describe how they will be murdered so exactly.

Now let’s look at just one non-Messianic prophecy from Ezekiel, and remember there are over 1,800 other ones!

- The city of Tyre (Ezekiel 26:3-5, 7, 12, 14, 16 NASB) 590 B.C. **

“...Therefore thus says the Lord God, ‘Behold, I am against you, O Tyre, and I will bring up many nations against you, as the sea brings up its waves. They will destroy the walls of Tyre and break down her towers; and I will scrape her debris from her and make her a bare rock. She will be a place for the spreading of nets in the midst of the sea, for I have spoken,’ declares the Lord God, ‘and she will become spoil for the nations.’”

“For thus says the Lord God, ‘Behold, I will bring upon Tyre from the north Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, king of kings, with horses, chariots, cavalry and a great army.’”

“Also they will make a spoil of your riches and a prey of your merchandise, break down your walls and destroy your pleasant houses, and throw your stones and your timbers and your debris into the water.”

“I will make you a bare rock; you will be a place for the spreading of nets. You will be built no more, for I the LORD have spoken,” declares the Lord God.”

“Then all the princes of the sea will go down from their thrones, remove their robes and strip off their embroidered garments. They will clothe themselves with trembling; they will sit on the ground, tremble every moment and be appalled at you.”

Ezekiel prophesies Tyre’s destruction with these specifics:

1. Nebuchadnezzar will conquer Tyre.
2. Other nations will take part in its destruction.
3. Tyre will be flat like the top of a rock.
4. Tyre will become a place to spread nets.
5. Tyre’s stones and timber will be laid in the sea.
6. Other cities will fear because of Tyre’s destruction.
7. Tyre won’t be rebuilt.

It all came to pass when Nebuchadnezzar laid siege in 586 B.C., and then Alexander the Great finished it off 241 years later.

According to Dr Peter W. Stoner in *Science Speaks*,

“Tyre was a city on the northern coast of Palestine inhabited by the Phoenicians, a strong maritime people, greatly feared by their enemies. (The king of Tyre supplied timbers of Solomon in the building of the temple.) In 586 B.C., Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, laid siege to the city of Tyre. The siege lasted for thirteen years; and when Nebuchadnezzar took the city in 573 B.C., he found that the Phoenicians had moved everything of value to an island about one-half mile off the coast. Though the city was taken, Nebuchadnezzar profited nothing, and the Phoenicians were not conquered. Nebuchadnezzar could not pursue them to their island position, so he returned to Babylon. Thus the first item of the prophecy was fulfilled: (1) Nebuchadnezzar shall take the city of Tyre.

“For 241 years the mainland city of Tyre remained very much as Nebuchadnezzar left it. Later, Alexander city Great started his great conquest. His field of campaign lay to the east, but he feared that the fleet of Tyre might be used against his homeland, so he moved south to take the city of Tyre. In 332 B.C., Alexander reached Tyre, but he was unable to take the city at once. So he captured other coastal cities and took over their fleets, but with these combined fleets he was still unable to take Tyre. Alexander finally built a causeway from the mainland to the island. In building the causeway he used all the building materials of old Tyre, and that was not enough. He scraped up all of the soil in and around the old city and with it completed the causeway. After seven months, by a combined attack of land forces marching in over the causeway, and the fleets of conquered cities, he took Tyre. Thus items 2, 3, and 5 of the prophecy were fulfilled: (2) Other nations are to participate in the fulfillment of the prophecy. (3) The city is to be made flat like the top of a rock. (5) Its stones and timber are to be laid in the sea.

“Other neighboring cities were so frightened by the conquest of Tyre that they opened their gates to Alexander without opposition and fulfilled another item: (6) Other cities are to fear greatly at the fall of Tyre.

“Today visitors at the old city of Tyre find it is a very popular place for fisherman; they are spreading their nets on this very spot. Thus prediction 4 has been completely fulfilled: (4) It is to become a place for spreading of nets.

“The great freshwater springs of Raselain are at the site of the mainland city of Tyre, and no doubt supplied the city with an abundance of fresh water. These springs are still there and still flow, but their water runs into the sea. The flow of these springs was measured by an engineer, and found to be about 10,000,000 gallons daily. It is still an excellent site for a city and would have free water enough for a large modern city, yet it has never been rebuilt. Thus item 7 of the prophecy has stood true for more than 2,500 years: (7) The old city of Tyre shall never be rebuilt.”

The odds of this happening are 75 million to one!

2. Your Experience

“Now as they observed the confidence of Peter and John and understood that they were uneducated and untrained men, they were amazed, and began to recognize them as having been with Jesus (Acts 4:13 NASB).”

As a Christian, your own testimony is proof that God is alive because He has changed your life, your values, your habits, and your destiny. Of all the evidences of our faith being real, your experience of having the Holy Spirit literally inside your own body is the most powerful proof of all.

Your conscience is alive, God speaks to you in the depths of your heart, and you have a peace that you never knew before because you have a clean conscience that comes with the assurance of Heaven.

The effect that Scripture has upon a willing heart is evidence in and of itself, but despite over two centuries of changed hearts as possibly subjective evidence, ask yourself if the original disciples and Apostles who were eyewitnesses to Jesus’ death and resurrection would give up their lives as martyrs if they knew it was all a lie?

A man may give his life for what he believes, but no man would die for what he knew to be false. Nevertheless, there is more objective evidence than changed lives to prove this book to be the very words of God.

3. Answered Prayer

“Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need (Hebrews 4:16 NASB).”

This is something that is equally powerful to the previous point about your personal experience because God has graciously granted your prayer requests.

And as in ***God’s Not Dead***, we know that He does not always say yes right away. Sometimes the answer is to wait. Sometimes it is denied altogether, but we all have examples in our life where God came through for us...sometimes miraculously!

4. Creation

“For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse (Romans 1:20 NASB).”

According to Paul, everyone knows that God exists because of the amazing things we see all around us every day—the wings of a dragonfly, a baby’s birth, a snowflake, or the Milky Way on a clear night.

We all know that these intricate designs in creation imply that there is a Designer. Or did your iPhone just appear in your pocket overnight?

5. The Church

“I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades will not overpower it (Matthew 16:18 NASB).”

Despite the Roman’s persecution in the first century, and surviving over 2,000 years of global persecutions thereafter, the Church continues to exist...even in deadly Communist and Islamic countries right up to today.

In other words, not only has your life been changed, but millions of others also testify to this same transformation by God’s Spirit. The permanence of the body of Christ is a strong testimony to the divine protection Jesus promised to Peter.

In closing, let’s look at a scene from *God’s Not Dead* where a son evaluates his mother’s faith and concludes, after comparing it to his life, that it’s been a wasted and misplaced venture...a blind faith.

Film clip 1:29:15 to 1:31:27 (Comfortable Prison Cell)

Let’s pray.

* <http://carm.org/manuscript-evidence>

* <http://www.apologetics.org/IsIslamcorrectIstheBiblecorrupted/tabid/114/Default.aspx>

** http://sciencespeaks.dstoner.net/Prophetic_Accuracy.html

*** <http://www.str.org/articles/is-the-new-testament-text-reliable#.UukSSnknJ1E>