

A Loving God or Cosmic Tyrant?
Understanding the God of the Old Testament and Trusting His Word
Dr. Peter J. Williams, Warden, Tyndale House, Cambridge
Tyndalehouse.com, Stepbible.org, Contact: phillipmevans1@gmail.com

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1. The Old Testament

1.1 Internal evidence

1.1.1 Critical perspective: ancient Near Eastern boasts vs. reports of kings in the OT

1.1.2 Subtle coincidences

1.1.2.1 Korah's rebellion and the position of the Israelite tribes (Numbers 16:1–2)

1.1.2.2 Why did Isaac marry his first cousin once removed Rebekah?

1.2 Trust vindicated

- Ussher's chronology for 728 BC: "Tiglathpileser or Ninus the younger reigned for 19 years according to Castor and died."
- Tiglath-Pileser III's current dates: 745–727 BC
- Which is more advanced: Electronic data storage or paper?
- Alphabetic writing on leather or cuneiform writing on clay?
- Discrimination against OT based on writing material
- Discrimination against OT by insisting on confirmation from other countries

1.3 Back before the 8th century

- The Moabite Stone
- Tel Dan Inscription
- Two views of chronology of the 10th century
- The fragmentary nature of earlier evidence

1.4 Names in the Old Testament

- Time of Patriarchs: Jacob, Isaac, Ishma-el, Joseph
- Time of Exodus: Zurishaddai, Pedahzur, Zuriel (Numbers 1:6, 10; 3:35); Amminadab, Ammihud, Ammishaddai (Numbers 1:7, 10, 12)
 - '... there is a striking frequency of the occurrence of name-elements (especially '-zur' and 'ammi', each three times) which now, in the light of the texts from Mari, are shown to have been current in a stratum of population which had many relationships with ancient Israel' (Martin Noth, *Numbers*, 1968, p. 18)
- Time of Jeremiah: Jaazaniah, Jeremiah, Habazziniah, Igdaliah, Maaseiah (Jeremiah 35:3–4)

1.5 OT text and canon

- The Dead Sea Scrolls
- Controlled *and* uncontrolled copying at the time of the NT
- 'Septuagint' used to be a plural word for the translators
- The seventy translators were first thought to have translated just the Pentateuch
- A text for those who think the Apocrypha should be in the Bible: (2 Maccabees 15:37–38)
- There are differing apocryphas.

2. The New Testament

2.1 Non-Christian writings

- Tacitus, *Annals* 15.44, confirms Christ died under Pontius Pilate AD 26–36 in Judaea and that Christianity had major presence in Rome by AD 64 (ca. 1430 miles = same distance as Wyoming or Dominican Republic from Bethesda, MD).
- Pliny the Younger, ca. AD 112; *Letters* 10.96, confirms that Christians were known to emperor and that they refused to worship other gods and yet worshipped Christ. They suffered greatly and yet were present in large numbers in Bithynia.
- Josephus, *Antiquities* 20.200, confirms the death on religious grounds of James the brother of Jesus in AD 62.
- Non-Christian and Christian evidence agrees about the suffering and rapid spread of early Christians

2.2 Christian writings

2.2.0 Who chose the gospels?

- The 4 gospels are attested when there's no central power

2.2.1 The test of what people are called¹

- Top 2 men's names: In Israel/Palestine In Gospels
Simon and Joseph 15.6% 18.2%
- Top 9 men's names 41.5% 40.3%
- The difference between the narrator and characters
 - Narrator refers to 'John' (Matthew 14:3, 4, 9); characters refer to 'John the Baptist' (Matthew 14:2, 8)
 - Narrators of all four gospels generally refer to 'Jesus' simply; characters refer to 'Jesus' + disambiguator with two explicable exceptions (Luke 23:42; John 9:11)

2.2.2 The test of geography

- 4 gospels: 12–14 towns each; total > 23
- Gospel of Philip: 2
- Gospels of Peter and The Saviour: 1
- 13 other 2nd–3rd century gospels: 0
- Place names / 1000 words: Matthew 5.124; Mark 5.219; Luke 5.184; John 4.989.

2.2.3 Botany: *Ficus sycomorus*

2.2.4 Patterns of speech: the gospels have greater agreement when speech is being quoted

2.2.5 Bringing tests together:

- Mark 6:39: green grass; John 6:10: much grass
- Mark 6:31: there were many coming and going
- John 6:4: it was Passover time
- John 6:5: Jesus asks Philip where to buy bread from
- John 6:7–8: Philip and Andrew reply
- Luke 9:10: Feeding was near Bethsaida
- John 1:44: Philip and Andrew were from Bethsaida
- John 6:9: barley loaves
- Grass would be green because Passover is after 5-6 months of precipitation

¹ For more detail see Richard Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006).