

***Bibliology:
All About the
Word of God***

College Life Class, FBCG

Fall 2022



- How can you be sure that the Bible is the same now as when it was written?
- Is there any proof from archaeology that the stories of the Bible happened?
- The Bible has been copied and translated so many times--hasn't this process led to errors?
- Is it true that most of the books of the Bible were not written by the people whose names are put on them as authors?
- Isn't the Bible full of contradictions and errors?
- Does not the Bible make a number of claims that are scientifically inaccurate?
- Did not the church arbitrarily decide which books should be included in the Bible and which books should be rejected?
- How can you place your faith in a book that condones genocide and slavery?
- So many people have different interpretations of the Bible--what makes you think that yours is correct?

Bart D. Erhman, Ph.D.

In any event, when I became born again it was like ratcheting my religion up a notch. I became very serious about my faith and chose to go off to a fundamentalist Bible college—Moody Bible Institute in Chicago—where I began training for ministry.

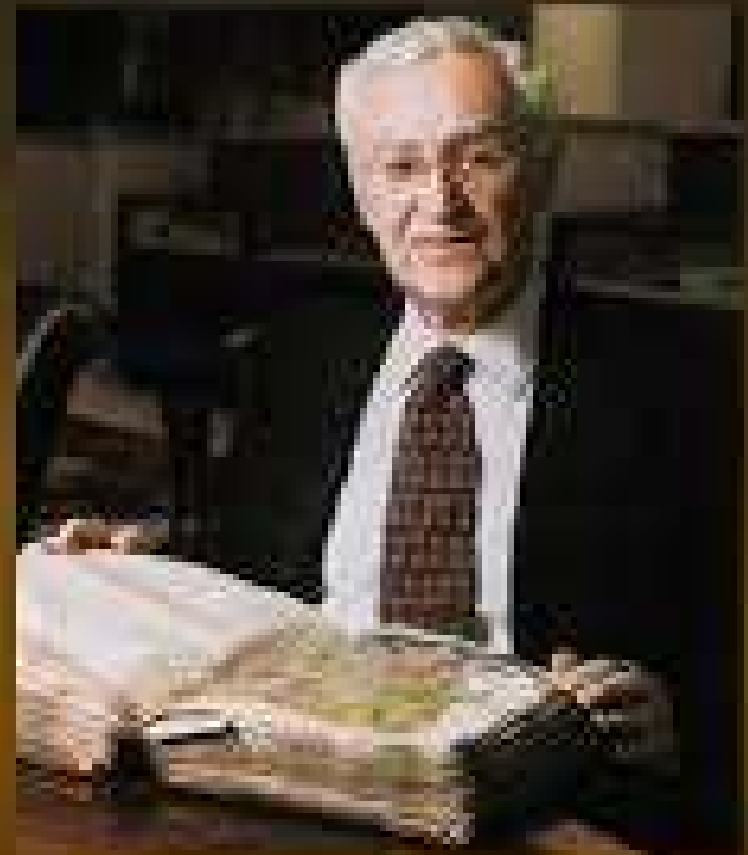
I worked hard at learning the Bible—some of it by heart. I could quote entire books of the New Testament, verse by verse, from memory. When I graduated from Moody with a diploma in Bible and Theology (at the time Moody did not offer a B.A. degree), I went off to finish my college work at Wheaton, an evangelical Christian college in Illinois (also Billy Graham's alma mater).


There I learned Greek so that I could read the New Testament in its original language. From there I decided that I wanted to commit my life to studying the Greek manuscripts of the New Testament, and chose to go to Princeton Theological Seminary, a Presbyterian school whose brilliant faculty included Bruce Metzger, the greatest textual scholar in the country. At Princeton I did both a master of divinity degree—training to be a minister—and, eventually, a Ph.D. in New Testament studies.



“Today no
competent
scholar denies
the historicity of
Jesus.”

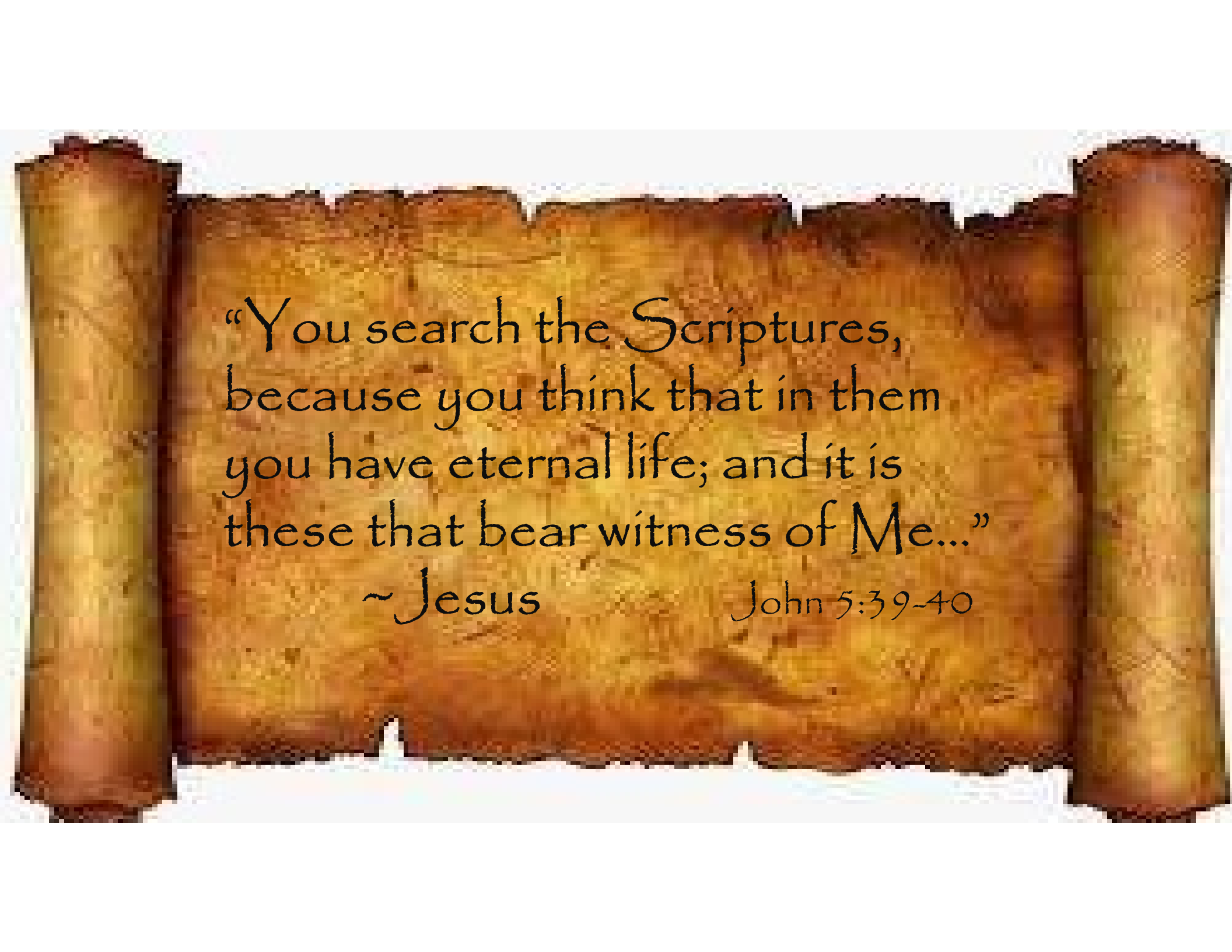
- Bruce Metzger Ph.D.



A scroll with a textured, brownish-gold surface, possibly representing parchment or leather. The scroll is unrolled, showing a central rectangular area with text. The edges of the scroll are slightly darker and have a more pronounced texture. The text is written in a black, serif font.

The grass withers,
the flower fades,
But the word of our God
stands forever.


Isaiah 40:8

A scroll with a textured, brownish-gold surface, possibly representing parchment or leather. The scroll is unrolled, showing a central rectangular area with text. The edges of the scroll are slightly darker and have a more pronounced texture. The text is written in a black, serif font.

“You search the Scriptures,
because you think that in them
you have eternal life; and it is
these that bear witness of Me...”

~ Jesus

John 5:39-40



Problem: We don't have the autographs!

Why did God not preserve the original manuscripts?

Possible Answers:

1. They may have been worshiped (cf. 2 Kings 18:4).
2. They may have been corrupted.
 - a. the custodian would have the power to alter them and control God's Word.
 - b. No one can control >5,700 copies all over the world.

The New Testament Documents Are Reliable

Summary of the Argument

The historicity of the NT is based on more solid evidence than that for any other events from the ancient world. For no other events of the ancient world are:

- based on **more manuscripts**
- that are **more accurately copied**
- that were **written by more people**
- who were **eye-witnesses or contemporaries to the events.**

Were it not for an ungrounded antisupernatural bias of the negative critics, the Gospel accounts would be unquestioned as to their historicity – which indeed they were among Bible scholars for some 1800 years after the events.

The Reliability of the New Testament Manuscripts

There are two basic lines of evidence that support the reliability of the NT manuscripts:

- 1st, they were accurately copied down through the years.
 - We have (a) more, (b) earlier, and (c) more reliably copied manuscripts than any other book from the ancient world.
- 2nd, the persons who recorded the teachings and events in them were reliable witnesses and writers.
 - This is evidenced by (a) the number of writers, (b) their proximity to the events, (c) the confirmation by other sources, and (d) the historical and archaeological confirmation of events in their writings.



The Bible's Origin in a Nut Shell!

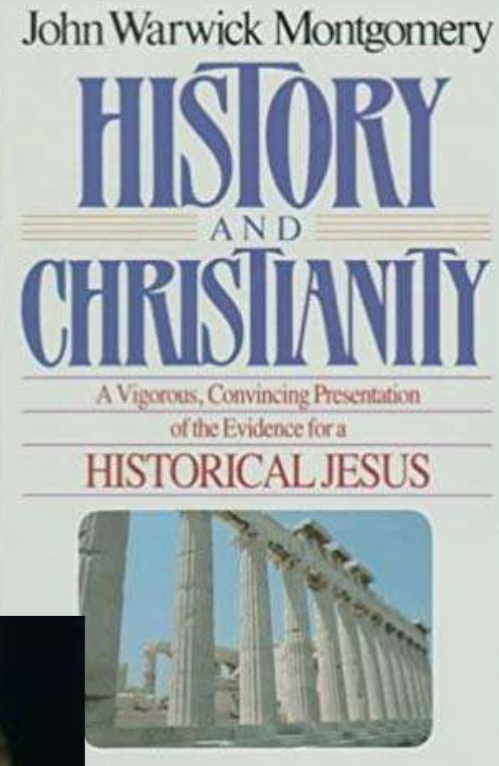
- ▶ The Bible is not one book. It is a library of 66 books all having one common theme, God's plan for man's redemption.
- ▶ The books of the Bible were written over a span of 1500 years – from about 1400 BC to 100 AD.
- ▶ It was written in 3 languages: Hebrew (OT), Aramaic (OT), and Greek (NT).
- ▶ It was written on 3 continents: Africa, Asia, and Europe.
- ▶ It was written by ~40 authors with diverse backgrounds: kings, shepherds, prophets, fishermen, a tent maker, a doctor and a tax collector.


As cited in John Warwick Montgomery's
History & Christianity, 1976

Chauncey Sanders, *Introduction to Research in English Literary History*, 1952, pp. 143 ff. (professor of military history)

Tests of reliability employed in general historiographical and literary criticism as;

bibliographical,
internal and
external.






Bibliographical refers to the analysis of the textual tradition by which a document reaches us. In the case of the NT documents, the question is: Not having the original copies (autographs), can we reconstruct them well enough to see what they say Jesus claimed?

Internal evidence means that we must listen to the claims of the document under analysis, and not assume fraud or error, *a priori*, unless the author disqualifies himself by contradictions or known factual inaccuracies. We ought to follow Aristotle's dictum that the benefit of the doubt is to be given to the document itself, not arrogated by the critic to himself.

External evidence involves asking the question: Do other independent historical materials confirm or deny the internal testimony provided by the documents themselves?



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The New Testament Documents are Historically Reliable

► The Reliability of the NT Manuscripts

► The Number of the NT Manuscripts (mss.)

Greek:	5,800+
Latin:	10,000+
Ethiopic	2,000+
Slavic	4,000+
Armenian	2,500+
Others	500+
Total	25,000 mss.

The New Testament Documents are Historically Reliable

- ▶ The Reliability of the NT Manuscripts
 - ▶ The Early Dates of the NT Manuscripts

Mss	Date
▶ John Rylands Fragment of John 18:31-33; 37-38	c. A.D. 117-138
▶ Bodmir Papyir	c. A.D. 250
▶ Chester Beatty Papyri	c. A.D. 250
▶ Codex Vaticanus	c. A.D. 325-350
▶ Codex Sinaiticus	c. A.D. 340
▶ Codex Alexandrinus	c. A.D. 450

John Rylands Fragment of
John 18:31-33; 37-38

c. A.D. 117-138 2.5 x 3.5 inches

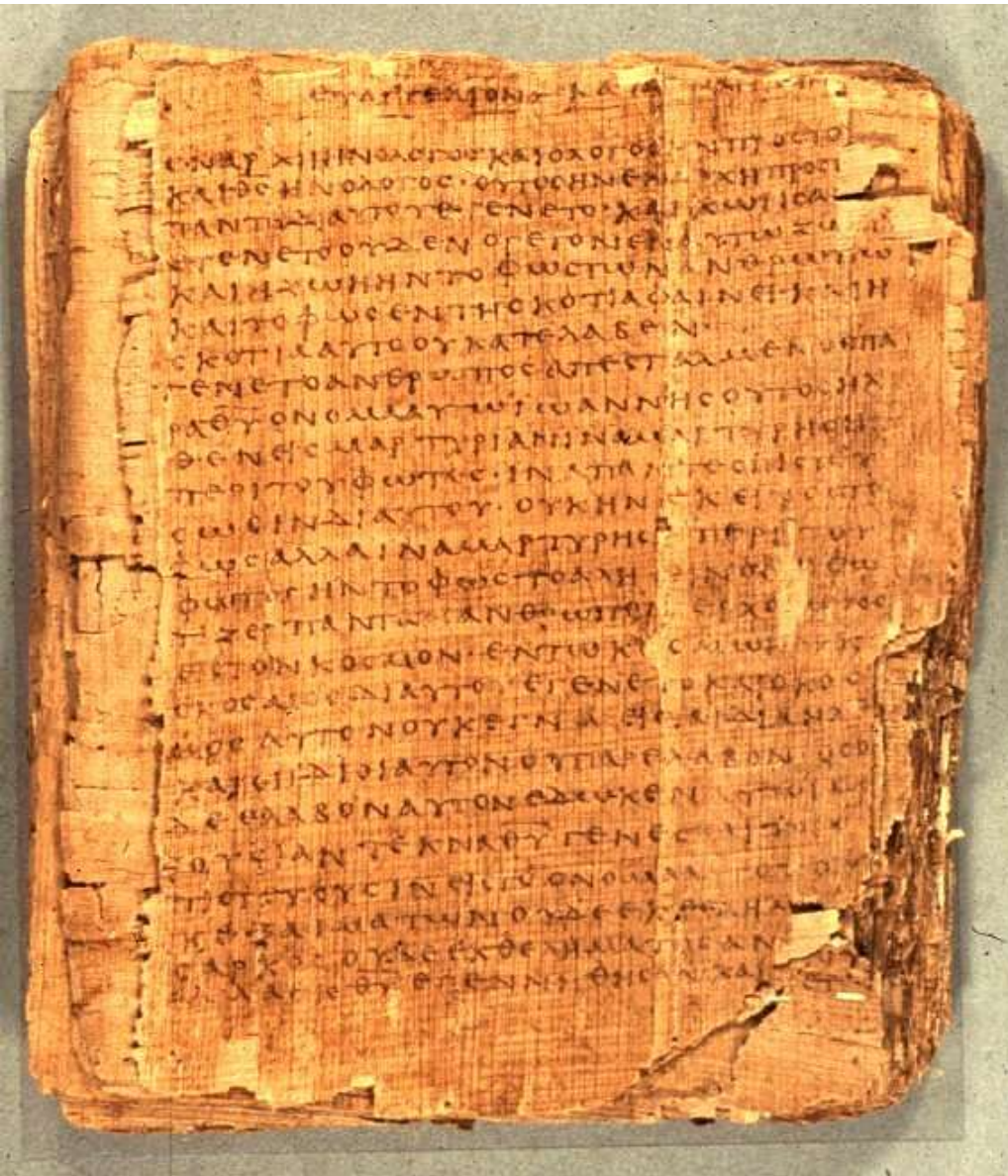


P⁵² recto

Earliest known
fragment of
the New
Testament



P⁵² verso



Bodmer Papyri

Dated: c. 200 A.D.

Housed: Geneva

Contents: Luke, John
(P⁶⁶, P⁷⁵, 1 & 2 Peter &
Jude P⁷²)

Value: Earliest copy
of an Epistle and a
Gospel (only 100+
years from the
original Gospel).

Chester Beatty Papyri

Dated: c. 250 A.D.

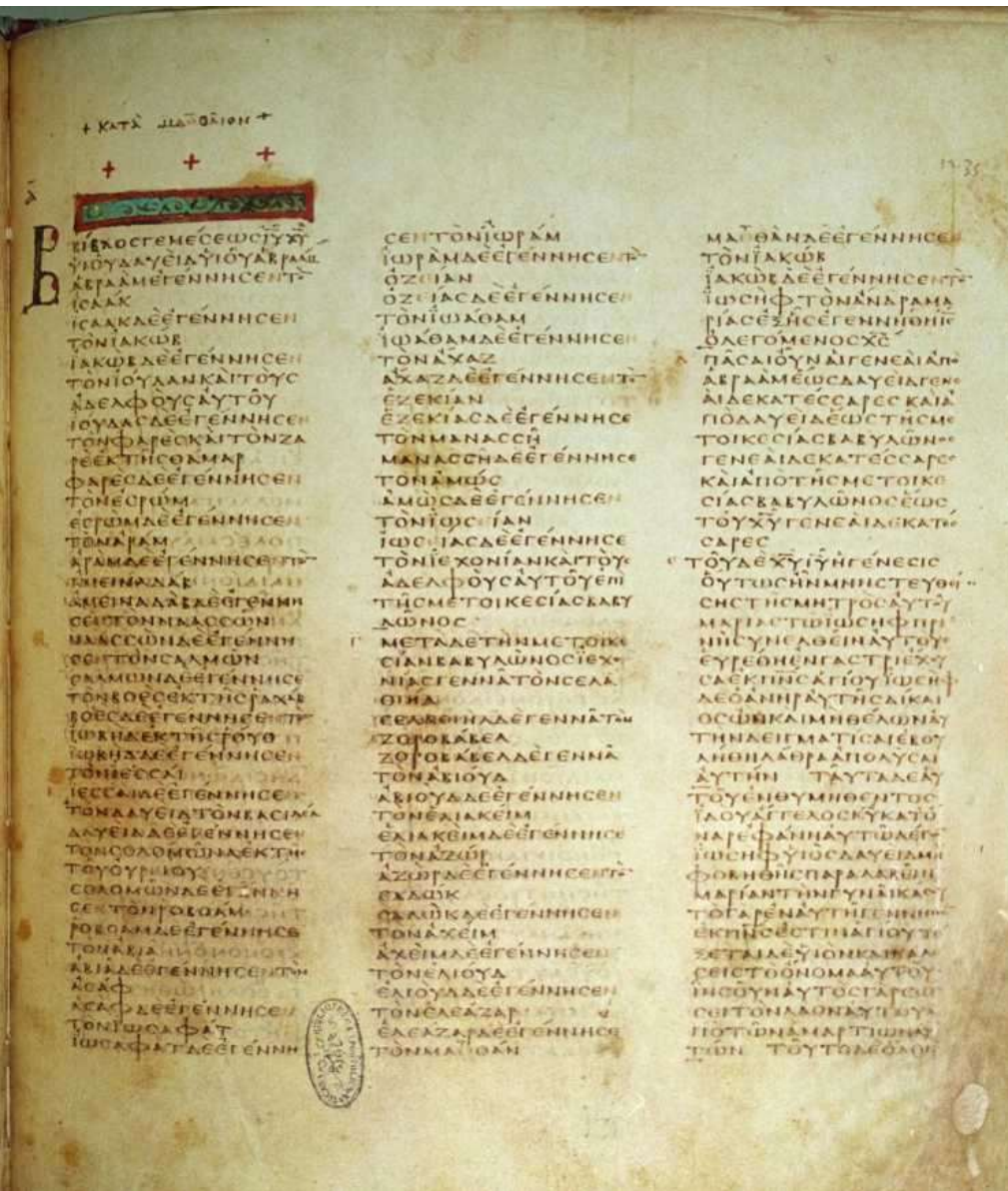
Housed: Dublin

Contents: Most of NT

Value: Earliest copy of
most of the NT

Symbols: P, ⁴⁵P, ⁴⁶P ⁴⁷





Codex Vaticanus

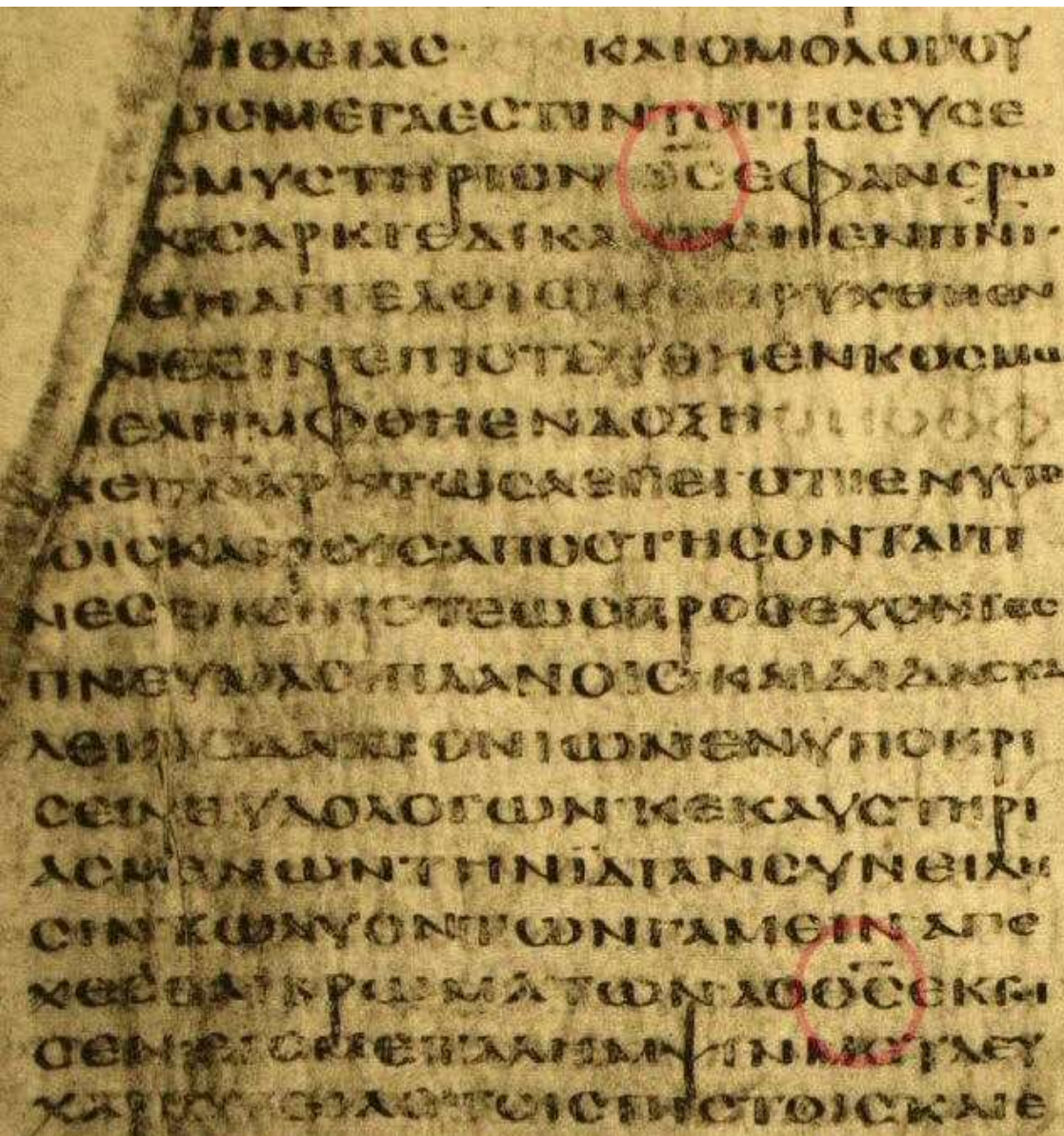
Date: A. D. 325-350

Contents: Most of the OT and most of the NT

Value: Has NT and Greek OT (LXX)

Housed: Rome

Symbol: B



Codex Sinaiticus

Date: A. D. 340

Contents: Half of
OT and almost
all of NT

Value: One of the
oldest and most
accurate mss.

Housed: Leipzig,
Germany

Symbol: Ⲱ (Aleph)



Codex Alexandrinus

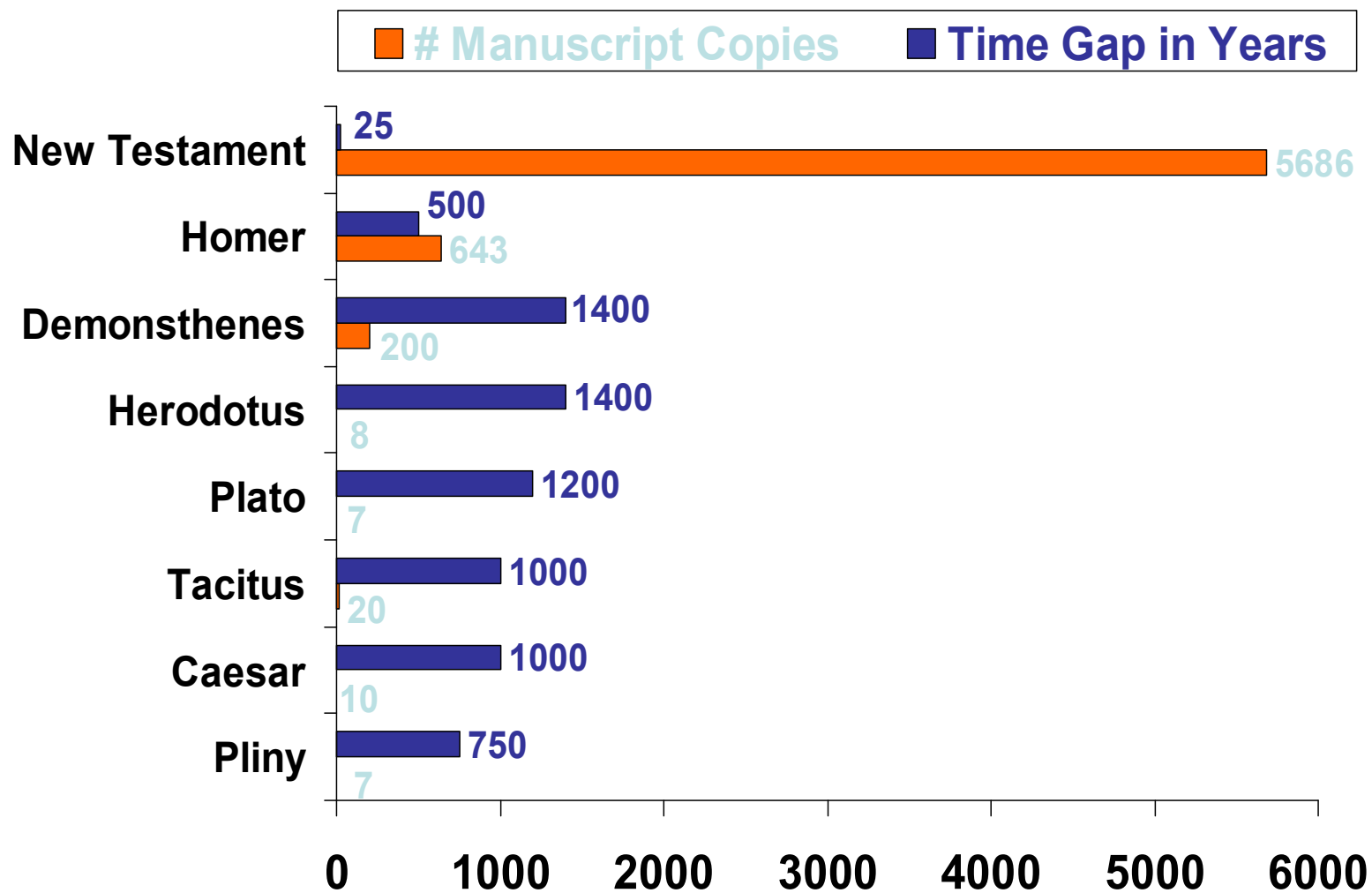
Date: A.D. 450

Contents: Almost all of OT and most of NT (plus some Apocrypha)

Housed: British Museum

Symbol: A

Reliability of NT Documents



The New Testament Documents are Historically Reliable

➤ The Reliability of the NT Manuscripts

➤ The Accuracy of the New Testament

- “Bruce M. Metzger made an excellent study of Homer’s *Iliad* and the Hindu *Mahabharata* in *Chapters in the History of New Testament Textual Criticism*. In that study he demonstrated that the textual corruption of those sacred books is much greater than the NT.

“The *Iliad* is particularly appropriate for this study because it has so much in common with the NT. Next to the NT the *Iliad* has more extant mss than any other book (453 papyri, 2 uncials, and 188 minuscule for a total of 643). Like the Bible, it was considered sacred, and experienced textual changes and criticism of its Greek mss.

While the NT has about 20,000 lines, the *Iliad* has about 15,000. Only 40 lines (400 words) of the NT are in doubt, whereas 764 lines of the *Iliad* are in question. Thus the 5% corruption of the *Iliad* stands against the <1% of the NT text.


The national epic of India, the *Mahabharata*, has suffered even more corruption. It is about 8 times as long as the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* combined, roughly 250,000 lines. Of these, some 26,000 lines are textually corrupt, or just over 10%.”

From God to Us, Geisler & Nix, p. 247.

The New Testament Documents are Historically Reliable

- ▶ The Reliability of the NT Manuscripts
 - ▶ The Accuracy of the New Testament (cont.)
- ▶ “Westcott and Hort, Ezra Abbot, Philip Schaff, and A.T. Robertson have carefully evaluated the evidence and concluded that the NT text is 99+% pure.
 - ▶ A.T. Robertson said, ‘The real concern is with a thousandth part of the entire text’ (which equals 99.9 % accuracy).
 - ▶ Philip Schaff added that only 50 variants were of real significance, and there is no ‘article of faith or a precept of duty which is not abundantly sustained by other and undoubted passages, or by the whole tenor of Scripture teaching.’
 - ▶ In light of the fact that there are over 5,800 Greek mss, some 19,000 versions and translations, the evidence for the integrity of the NT is beyond question. And none of the variants affect any of the basic doctrine of the Christian faith.”

From God to Us, Geisler & Nix, p. 247 .

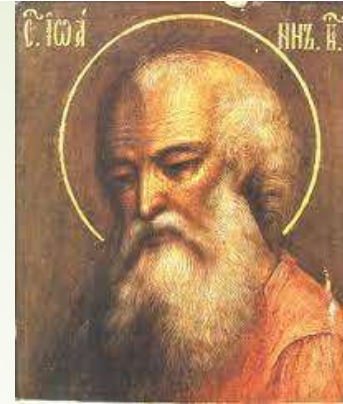


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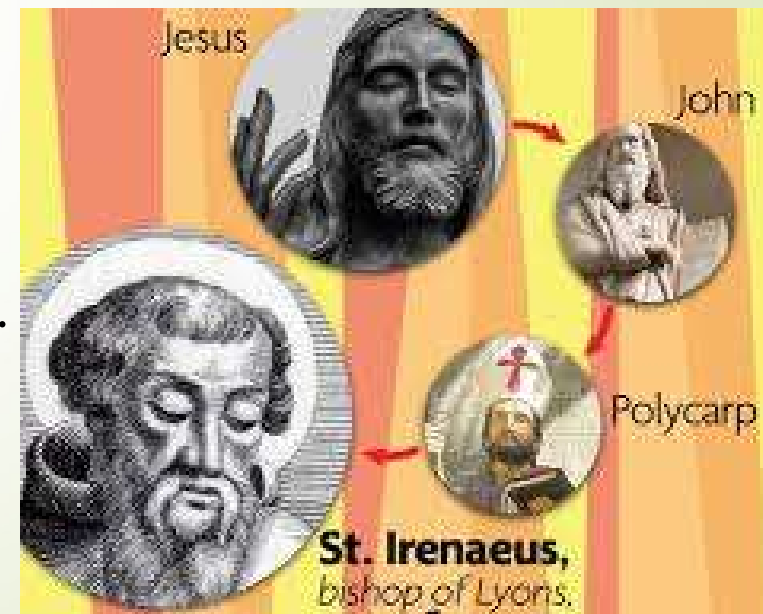
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The Apostle John (d. 110?) Disciple of Jesus



Polycarp (70-155): Smyrna; disciple of John; wrote several epistles.

Irenaeus (120-200): Lyons, France.
Pupil of Polycarp.
Wrote *Against Heresies* and
Proof of Apostolic Teaching.



The New Testament Documents are Historically Reliable

► The Reliability of the NT Manuscripts

► The Confirmation of the NT Mss by Citations of Early Church Fathers

Writer	Gospels	Acts	Pauline Epistles	General Epistles	Revelation	Totals
► Justin Martyr	268	10	43	6	3	330
► Irenaeus	1,038	194	499	23	65	1,819
► Clement Alex.	1,017	44	1,127	207	11	2,406
► Origen	9,231	349	7,778	399	165	17,922
► Tertullian	3,822	502	2,609	120	205	7,258
► Hippolytus	734	42	387	27	188	1,378
► Eusebius	3,258	211	1,592	88	27	5,176
► Grand Totals	19,368	1,352	14,035	870	664	36,289

Early Church References

- **Ignatius** (A.D. 70-115): Antioch; wrote 7 epistles; cited by Polycarp.
- **Polycarp** (70-155): Smyrna; disciple of John; wrote several epistles.
- **Clement of Rome** (92-99): Rome; wrote an *Epistle to Corinthians*.
- **Papias** (60-150): Hierapolis; wrote *Expo. On Oracles of the Lord*.
- **Marcion** (140): Gnostic heretic; rejected all but Luke and 10 of Paul's.
- **Irenaeus** (120-200): Lyons, France. Pupil of Polycarp. Wrote *Against Heresies* and *Proof of Apostolic Teaching*.
- **Justin Martyr** (100-165): Samaritan philosopher; wrote *Apology* and *Dialogue with Trypho the Jew*.
- **Tatian** (110-172): Assyrian Rhetorician; wrote *Diatessaron* (earliest harmony of the Gospels).
- **Tertullian** (160-222): African lawyer; Latin Father; wrote many books.
- **Origen** (186-253): Alexandria; great scholar; numerous books.
- **Clement of Alexandria** (155-220): Athenian theologian; many books

Early Church References

- Cyprian (200-258): Tertullian's pupil; taught rhetoric; many books.
- Eusebius (260-340): Caesarea; greatest early church historian
- *Athanasius (296-373): Alexandria; defender of orthodoxy (vs. Arius).
- Cyril of Jerusalem (315-386): Bishop; defender of orthodoxy.
- *Gregory of Nazianzen (325-390): Bishop of Constantinople; ordained by Athanasius; friend of Basil; discipled Jerome.
- *Gregory of Nyssa (336-395): Bishop at Nyssa; brother of Basil.
- *Basil the Great (336-379): Educated in Caesarea; Monk in Egypt; One of four of our great orthodox Fathers in the East*
- Ambrose (340-397): Bishop of Milan; Helped convert St. Augustine.
- Chrysostom (347-407); Bishop of Constantinople; wrote many books.
- Jerome (342-420); Lived in Bethlehem; Trans. Bible into Latin Vulgate.
- Augustine (354-430); Bishop of Hippo, Africa; great teacher and writer of *City of God*, *Confessions*, and numerous books.

The New Testament Documents are Historically Reliable

- The Internal Evidence for the Historicity of the Gospels [thus not myth]
 - Non-Christian Sources Confirm Basic Gospel Facts
- Cornelius Tacitus (ca. AD 55-120) Roman historian [Xns in Rome in 60s]
- Gaius Suetonius Tranquillas (?) Roman historian, chief secretary of Emperor Hadrian (AD 117-138) ["Chrestus"]
- Flavius Josephus (AD 37-97) Jewish historian
- Julius Africanus, writing in AD 221 cites Thallus who wrote c.AD 52 about the darkness that was over the land at the time of the crucifixion.
- Pliny the Younger (?) Roman author writing ~AD 112 [Xn influence strong]
- Talmud = The recording of Jewish oral tradition passed from generation to generation.
- Lucian, Second century Greek satirist [Xns worship a man, "misguided"]

Opposition

“And these [NT mss] copies all differ from one another, in many thousands of places....These copies differ from each other in so many places that we don't even know how many differences there are.”

“Mark did not say the same thing as Luke. John is different from Matthew—not the same. Paul is different from Acts. And James is different from Paul.” (Misquoting Jesus, pp. 10, 12)

-- Bart D. Ehrman

“Women do not get pregnant without a male—ever.”
“Dead bodies don't rise—not if one is clinically dead—as Jesus surely was after Roman crucifixion and three days in a tomb.” -- James Tabor





What are variations (variant readings)?

Consider the following variations in this message:

1. YU HAVE WON TEN MILLION DOLLARS
2. YO HAVE WON TEN MILLION DOLLARS
3. YOU HAVE WO TEN MILLION DOLLARS
4. YOU HAVE WON TEN MILLION DOLARS

DO YOU GET THE MESSAGE?!?!?!?!?



What are variations (variant readings)?

Consider the following variations in this message:

1. YOU HAVE WON TEN MILLION DOLLARS
2. THOU HAST WON 10 MILLION DOLLARS
3. Y'ALL HAVE WON \$10,000,000
4. YOUHAVEWONTENMILLIONDOLLARSSOCOMEGETIT
1. HEISNOWHERE
1. DIDYOUEVERSEEABUNDANCEONTHETABLE