

Is The New Testament Reliable?



What I Am Not Trying to Prove:

- We have the Originals
- The Bible doesn't have hard things to understand.
- Panthers are going to win the SuperBowl

Can We Know History

- This is important because of . . .
- Relativism
- This is a common objection



Objections Raised Against History

- History is unobservable
- History comes in fragments
- Historian is selective in his materials
- Worldview leads to bias



Answers to Objections About History

- It is self-defeating
- We are only looking for accurate and adequate explanation, not absolute
- Historian only needs relevant and crucial materials
- Bias does not always rule out objectivity



How did the New Testament begin?

- Jesus taught the disciples
- Jesus ascended and gave the great commission
- Persecution
- Problems within the body
- Pass the letter along (Col. 4:16)
- Now we have . . . Copies of manuscripts
- Wrote on Papyrus (front and back)

Can You Hear Me Now? Good!



Author	Date Written	Earliest Copy	Approximate Time Span between original & copy	Number of Copies	Accuracy of Copies
Lucretius	died 55 or 53 B.C.		1100 yrs	2	----
Pliny	A.D. 61-113	A.D. 850	750 yrs	7	----
Plato	427-347 B.C.	A.D. 900	1200 yrs	7	----
Demosthenes	4th Cent. B.C.	A.D. 1100	800 yrs	8	----
Herodotus	480-425 B.C.	A.D. 900	1300 yrs	8	----
Suetonius	A.D. 75-160	A.D. 950	800 yrs	8	----
Thucydides	460-400 B.C.	A.D. 900	1300 yrs	8	----
Euripides	480-406 B.C.	A.D. 1100	1300 yrs	9	----
Aristophanes	450-385 B.C.	A.D. 900	1200	10	----
Caesar	100-44 B.C.	A.D. 900	1000	10	----
Livy	59 BC-AD 17	----	???	20	----
Tacitus	circa A.D. 100	A.D. 1100	1000 yrs	20	----
Aristotle	384-322 B.C.	A.D. 1100	1400	49	----
Sophocles	496-406 B.C.	A.D. 1000	1400 yrs	193	----
Homer (Iliad)	900 B.C.	400 B.C.	500 yrs	643	95%
New Testament	1st Cent. A.D. (A.D. 50-100)	2nd Cent. A.D. (c. A.D. 130 f.)	less than 100 years	5600	99.5%

Comments on Manuscripts

- “Many of the 5600 are fragmentary, especially the older ones, the average nt greek manuscript is 450 pages long altogether there are nearly 2.5 million pages of text. Leaving hundreds of witnesses for each book.” –Dan Wallace
- “The intention of the early church was not a controlled, undistributed manuscript, but to get the word out fast. Perfection of transmission is not the goal, preservation was.” – James White

What Is The Assertion?



MISTAKES!!!!

Textual Criticism



What Kind of Mistakes

Textual Variances

- Misspell a word
- Skip a phrase or whole line
- Homoeoteleuton
- Hearing incorrectly (from an amanuensis)
- Harmonization (Ephesians 1:2)

“Grace to you and Peace from God our Father . . . and the Lord Jesus Christ.”

How Many Variants?

- 400,000 (Four Hundred Thousand)
- 140,000 words in the New Testament
- Nearly 3 variants per word

Sports

- I plaid basketball today and made the winning shoot
- I playd basktbll today made the winning shot
- Played I basketbal tooday and mad the wining shot.
- I played bsktbll today and made te winning shot.
- I played basketball today and made the winning shot

Philippians 4:13

- I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me
- I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.
- I can do all things through Christ who gives me strength.
- I can do all things through Christ who gives me strength.

How Many of These Variants Matter?

- There are about 1500-2000 viable, meaningful textual variants that must be examined, comprising about, at most, 1% of the entire NT. Of these, most scholars have believed the vast majority are scribal errors of sight or hearing –James White
- Essential Christian beliefs are not affected by textual variants in the manuscript tradition of the NT. –Bart Ehrman
- Bruce Metzger states that “The N.T. has not only survived in more manuscripts than any other book from antiquity, but it has survived in a purer form than any other great book – a form that is 99.5% pure.”

Notes cont'd

- “Most of these differences are completely immaterial and insignificant . . . In fact, most of the changes found in our early Christian manuscripts have nothing to do with theology or ideology. Far and away the most changes are the result of mistakes, pure and simple – slips of the pen, accidental omissions, inadvertent additions, misspelled words, blunders of one sort or another. When scribes made intentional changes, sometimes their motives were as pure as the driven snow . . . And so we must rest content knowing that getting back to the earliest attainable version is the best we can do, whether or not we have reached back to the ‘original’ text. This oldest form of the text is no doubt closely (very closely) related to what the author originally wrote, and so it is the basis for our interpretation of his teaching”
–Bart Ehrman

Uncial form

ΠΑΥΛΟΣ ΔΕΣΜΙΟΣ Χ̄Ῡ ῙῩ ΚΑΙ ΤΙΜΟΘΕΟΣ Ο
ΦΙΛΗΜΟΝΙ ΤΩ ΑΓΑΠΗΤΩ ΚΑΙ ΣΥΝΕΡΓΩ ΗΜ
ΑΔΕΛΦΗ ΚΑΙ ΑΡΧΙΠΠΩ ΤΩ ΣΥΣΤΡΑΤΙΩΤΗ
ΟΙΚΟΝ ΣΟΥ ΕΚΚΛΗΣΙΑ ΧΑΡΙΣ ΥΜΙΝ ΚΑΙ ΕΙΡΗΗ
ΗΜΩΝ ΚΑΙ Κ̄Ῡ ῙῩ Χ̄Ῡ ΕΥΧΑΡΙΣΤΩ ΤΩ Θ̄Ω ΜΕ
ΜΝΕΙΑΝ ΣΟΥ ΠΟΙΟΥΜΕΝΟΣ ΕΠΙ ΤΩΝ ΠΡΟΣ
ΑΚΟΥΩΝ ΣΟΥ ΤΗΝ ΑΓΑΠΗΝ ΚΑΙ ΤΗΝ ΠΙΣΤΙΝ

Major Manuscripts of The N.T.

Codex Vaticanus

- 325-350 A.D.
- Perhaps the oldest uncial . . . And one of the most important witnesses to the text of the N.T.
- Contains most of the Old Testament (LXX) and the New Testament in Greek
- Unknown to Biblical Scholars until 1475

Major Manuscripts of The N.T. Cont'd

Codex Sinaiticus (Aleph)

- Greek manuscript generally considered to be the most important witness to the text because of its antiquity, accuracy, and lack of omissions.
- Contains more than half of the Old Testament (LXX) and all of the N.T.

Church Fathers

- Polycarp, Clement and Papias
 - Bishops
 - Knew one or more of the Apostles, especially John.
- Church Fathers quoted all of the New Testament except 11 verses

Did These Guys Tell The Truth?

7 Historical Tests

- Do we have early testimony?
- Do we have eyewitness testimony?
- Do we have testimony from multiple, independent, eyewitness sources?
- Are the eyewitnesses trustworthy?
- Do we have corroborating evidence from archeology or other writers?
- Do we have any enemy attestation?
- Do the testimonies contain events that are embarrassing to the authors?

Do We Have Early Testimony?

- All N.T. books were written before 100 A.D.
 - 3 church fathers – Clement, Ignatius, and Polycarp – quoted 25 out of 27 books.
- Most if not all were written before 70 A.D.
 - The temple
- Some books were penned in 40's to 50's from sources from the 30's
 - 1 Corinthians 15:3-8 (55-56 A.D.)

Cont'd

- For I delivered to you as of first importance **what I also received**, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that He appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. After that He appeared to more than five hundred brethren at one time, most of whom remain until now, but some have fallen asleep; then He appeared to James, then to all the apostles; and last of all, as to one untimely born, He appeared to me also.
- “In my opinion, every book of the N.T. was written by a baptized Jew between the 40’s and 80’s of the 1st century” William Albright

Do We Have Eyewitness Testimony: Luke

- Classical Scholar Colin Hemer Chronicles Luke's Account
- Hemer says there are 84 facts in the last 16 chapters of Acts confirmed by historical and archeological research
 - The proper form of the name Troas(16:8)
 - An alter to the unknown god (17:23)
 - The danger of the coastal trip in this location (20:13)
 - The right route to sail, in view of the winds (27:7)

Eyewitness Testimony Cont'd: John

- Craig Blomberg has done a study of the gospel of John
- He found 56 facts that have been corroborated historically.
 - Stone water jars (2:6)
 - Pool of Siloam (9:7)
 - Fifteen stadia is precisely the distance from Bethany to Jerusalem (11:18)
 - The obscure and tiny village of Ephraim(11:54) near Jerusalem is mention by Josephus

Non-Biblical Sources

- Cornelius Tacitus (115 A.D: A Roman Historian
 - Wrote about the great fire of Rome under Nero's reign
 - Nero blamed the fire on a group called the Christians
 - Christians named after their founder "Christus".
 - Christus was executed under Pontius Pilate
- Suetonius: chief secretary of Emperor Hadrian
 - Refers to the riots that occurred in the Jewish community in Rome in 49 A.D. due to the instigation of Chrestus
 - Jews expelled from the city
 - Jewish religion was "new and mischevious"

Non-Biblical Sources

- Pliny the Younger (112 A.D.)
 - Christians assembled on a set day, sang hymns to Christ as “a god”
 - Vowed not to take in wicked deeds and partook in common food.
- Lucian: a greek satirist
 - Christians worshipped a wise man who had been crucified, lived his laws, and believed themselves to be immortal.
- Josephus
 - “About this time there lived Jesus, a wise man [if indeed one ought to call him a man.] For he was one who wrought surprising feats and was a teacher of such people as accept the truth gladly. He won over many Jews and many of the Greeks. [He was the Christ.] When Pilate, upon hearing him accused by men of the highest standing amongst us, had condemned him to be crucified, those who had in the first place come to love him did not give up their affection for him. [On the third day he appeared to them restored to life, for the prophets of God had prophesied these and countless other marvelous things about him.] And the tribe of the Christians, so called after him, has still to this day not disappeared.”

A Few Reasons to Believe: Embarrassing Facts

- They are dim-witted- numerous times they fail to understand what Jesus is saying(Luke 18:34)
- They are rebuked- Peter is called satan (Mark 8:33)
- They are cowards – they all run when Jesus is caught and Peter denies him 3 times (Matt. 26:33-35)
- They are doubters- they doubted the resurrection.

A Few Reasons to Believe: Embarrassing Details About Jesus

- Jesus is considered “out of his mind” by his family (Mark 3:21)
- Jesus is thought to be a deceiver (John 7:12)
- Jesus is deserted by his followers (John 6:66)
- Jesus is called demon-possessed (Mark 3:22)
- Jesus is crucified even though anyone who hung on a cross is considered cursed by God (Deut. 21:23)

A Few Reasons to Believe: Hard Sayings of Jesus

- Matthew 5:28 – looking at a woman lustfully
- Matthew: 5:39-42 – turn the other cheek
- Matthew 5:44-45 – love your enemies
- Matthew 5:48 – be perfect as our Father in Heaven is perfect

A Few Reasons to Believe: Post-Resurrection Events

- Women discovered the tomb
- The burial of Jesus was by a Jew, Joseph of Arimathea
- The explanation of the Jews: Disciples stole the body
- Jewish priests became followers (Acts 6:7)

A Few Reasons to Believe

- Divergent details
 - No collusion of the events
- They told others to verify their accounts (Luke 1:1-4; 1 Cor. 15)
- Disciples claims of Miracles
 - They don't embellish
- Abandoned long-held sacred beliefs and practices and died under persecution or threat of death.

Does This Prove Inspiration?

Not yet . . .

Let's look at . . .

Prophecies!!!

Old Testament Prophecies

- Isaiah 53 (150-100 B.C.E)
 - He was pierced
 - He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth
 - Grave with the wicked
 - Rich man in his death
- Psalms 22
 - Pierced hands and feet
 - Divide his garments and gamble for his clothing

Old Testament Prophecies

- Descendent of David (2nd Samuel 7:12)
- Born of a virgin (Isaiah 7:14)
- A Nazarene (Isaiah 11:1)
- Called out of Egypt (Hosea 11:1)
- Born in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2)
- Betrayed by 30 pieces of silver (Zechariah 11:12-13)

Did Jesus Rise From the Dead?

- Died by Roman crucifixion
- He was buried in a tomb
- Tomb was found empty
- Skeptics became believers
- Disciples were willing to die for their faith

What Did Jesus Say About The O.T?

- John 10:35
 - “Scripture cannot be broken.”
- Matthew 5:18
 - For truly I say to you, ‘til heaven and earth pass away, not one jot or one tittle will pass from the law until all is accomplished
- Creation of man
 - “Have you not read that he who created them from the beginning made them male and female . . .” (Matt. 19:4)
- Historical existence of Jonah (Matt. 12:40), Noah (24:37), and Adam and Eve (Matt. 19:4-6)
- Affirming the prophets from Abel to Zechariah (Matt. 23:35)