

PROVING THE BIBLE

Lesson Seven

Reliable Documents and the Acid Test

Comparing Manuscripts – How Do We Know the New Testament is Real and True?

Without the Bible, we can tell you Jesus lived and died, but we can't give you the full details without the New Testament. So how do we know it is real and true?

One way is to look at:

How does the New Testament compare to other ancient books?

These are the histories of different manuscripts or hand-written copies. But know this, there are no originals! For any of these or any other historical documents from these times. Copies would all be hand written. Why? These were old! All of these would be 2000 years or older. So copies would be made of the originals and what we have today are the copies.

So all the documents that you see below are all based on copies. And that is ok.

Title of Book	Date Written	Earliest Manuscript	Number of Manuscripts
<i>Homer's Iliad</i>	700 B.C.	Unknown	643
<i>History of Herodotus</i>	425 B.C.	A.D. 900	8
<i>Josephus' Jewish Wars</i>	A.D. 70	A.D. 400	9
<i>Histories of Tacitus</i>	A.D. 100	A.D. 900	20
<i>New Testament</i>	A.D. 50-100	A.D. 125	5735

Notice the famous book shown on the left, the date it was written and then, when the earliest known copy was made. Let's start with:

Homer's Iliad – written in 700BC and not known when the earliest copy was written. Yet no one denies Homer's Iliad is not a real epic poem that was really written.

History of Herodotus – written in 425BC and the earliest copy is over a thousand years later with only eight known copies.

Josephus' Jewish Wars – the first known copy was written 330 years later and Tacitus 800 years later.

The New Testament is only 25 to 75 years later from the earliest hand-written copy.

How does the copies of the other historical books compare to the New Testament?

Questions:

Look back at the chart:

Which book has the most copies? The New Testament with 5735 copies.

Which book had the first known copy written closest to the original date?

The New Testament between 25 – 50 years. This is during the time a person would be alive to check and confirm if the original matched the copy exactly.

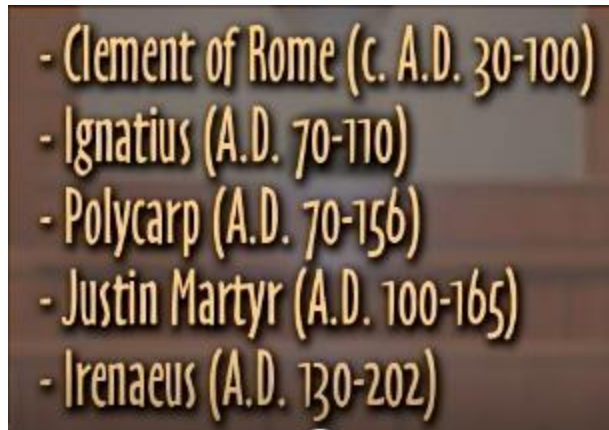
The number of manuscripts for the New Testament gets added to constantly because of the number of copies we still find today. At the time of this chart over 5000 copies exist compared with Homer's 643 and Herodotus' 8 copies, yet no one denies any of these books/stories were written or questions their authorship.

If you ask historians what is the most historically accurate, well-documented book in the world, they would say the New Testament Bible. So, if people are going to dismiss the Bible because it is made from copies – they are going to have to do the same for all these other famous books and stories. Yet no classical scholar would ever say any of these are in doubt!

Church Fathers

During the first and second century, other non-biblical writers quoted from the Bible so much that even if we lost all manuscripts from the Bible itself, we could replicate it almost perfectly with quotes provided by these first century writers.

These writers show us that those who lived during the time of Jesus and the apostles believed the things they heard and saw. They wrote them down quoting the Bible as true and accurate. Why? They trusted the evidence. Listed here are some examples of the men who quoted many things from the Bible as early as the time of Christ. This shows that the Bible was being used, shared, quoted and passed around from the time of Christ and can be trusted.



So we have seen that the Bible has more manuscripts than any other historical documents of the time and that the early church fathers quoted the Bible so much it could be rewritten almost entirely from their quotes alone.

The Bible Passes the Acid Test

What is the Acid Test? A general term for something agreed on and tested by a large number of different experts. The Bible is proven because it passes the acid test!

- The New Testament books were written **in the same generation** in which the events took place.
- They were also **shared among the very people** about whom the documents spoke, while they were still alive to deny them.



For example, they found documents from 50 AD. Jesus died in 33-34 AD. The Gospel of Mark is one such document. It has to have survived the acid test – there were enough copies to be found all around to share. The people knew Mark's gospel was special and worthy to be copied.

So if the book was fake, it would have been found out. People wouldn't have been willing to die to keep the written document of something if they thought it was false.

Mr. Louis Cassels – a famous journalist and editor wrote:

“But if Mark’s gospel were written within a dozen or so years of Jesus’ death – as it must have been if a copy had circulated so far as the Essene library by A.D. 50 – then it had to survive the acid test of all historical writing or journalism: namely, being published at a time when it could be read, criticized, and if inauthentic, denounced by people who were alive and present at the time the alleged events occurred. Let me assure you, as a reporter, nothing makes a writer more careful of his facts than the knowledge that he’ll be read by someone who can say, ‘I was there.’”



The people who shared and copied these New Testament documents were persecuted for their faith. Why would they die for something that wasn't real?

It would have been **impossible** to have made up an account of Christianity and to have successfully shown it to people of the same generation who knew better.

So today we have seen that if you deny the Bible, then you must deny all of history and the records of it. And even if you did, that doesn't change the fact that it is a historical, true and real document.

Next time we are going to look at eyewitness testimony which is a person who saw a certain event take place and then state that it did happen and is true.

Any thoughts or questions?