

Section One

Apologetics – Authenticity of NT

Chapter Three

AUTHENTICITY REFERS TO the genuineness and reliability of the New Testament documents. Claiming that the New Testament is authentic means that:

- The letters were written by the writers claiming to have written them (e.g. John wrote the Gospel of John, Paul wrote Romans, Luke wrote Acts, etc.).
- The letters were written at the time the author claims to have written them.
- The letters were written at the location the author claims he was at when he wrote them.
- The letters were sent to the people they were addressed to.
- The letters contain the original information that the author intended to be in the document.

The authenticity of the New Testament is important. If the information is inaccurate, or if it is a forgery, then our faith is in vain, and we are some of the most deceived and confused people in history. Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 15:17-19:

“If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile, you are still in your sins. Then those who have fallen asleep in Christ are lost. If only for this life we have hope in Christ we are to be pitied more than all men!”

Critics attack the New Testament documents by saying these things:

- The New Testament letters were written after the apostolic age.
- The New Testament contains legends.
- The events in the New Testament are not historical events.
- The books of the New Testament were written by church people to develop particular beliefs they were trying to support and spread.
- The authors who claim to have written the New Testament letters did not write them.
- The New Testament letters were not sent to the people who were to receive them.

Proving the Authenticity of the New Testament Documents

A. Effects Must Have a Cause

Something significant must have happened around 30 AD because:

- a. 2,000 years of church history resulted
- b. Christianity has had a huge impact on world history
- c. There are millions of personal testimonies of changed lives

POINT: All history, every bit that we now know of, came from written records. The effect we see today and throughout 2,000 years of history tells us that around 30 AD there was a powerful cause that began this powerful effect.

B. Quality and Quantity of Available Manuscripts

What is a Manuscript?

A manuscript (abbreviation—ms. or plural mss.) is a handwritten copy of an ancient document. Before there were printing presses or copy machines all documents were written by hand. New Testament manuscripts, or New Testament mss., are copies of the New Testament books that were first made in the first century and continued to be made until the invention of the printing press by Johannes Gutenberg in 1450 AD.

No other document from antiquity even begins to approach the number of available manuscripts for the New Testament. For example:

1. Homer's "*Illiad*".
 - a. There are 643 remaining manuscripts of Homer's "*Illiad*".
 - b. The "*Illiad*" has the second most existing manuscripts. The New Testament is first.
2. In comparison, there are a total of 48,600 manuscripts of the New Testament.
 - a. 5,686 are Greek manuscripts
 - b. 10,000 are Latin Vulgate manuscripts
 - c. 9,300 are other earlier versions
 - d. 24,000 are manuscript portions of the New Testament

Available Manuscripts of Other Writings from Antiquity

Title of Document	Number of Available Manuscripts
Tacitus "History"	5
Plato "Tetralogies"	7
Thucydides "History"	8
Herodotus "History"	8
Caesar "Gallic Wars"	10
Aristotle	49
Homer "Iliad"	643
New Testament	5,686 Greek plus 40,000
others	

C. Time Lapse

1. Time lapse is the amount of time between when something was originally written and the time of the oldest written copy, or manuscript, of the original.
2. Time lapse between original document and earliest existing New Testament manuscript is amazing when compared to the time lapse of other ancient documents.
3. For example, the time lapse for the book of John is about 30 years (85–115 AD).

Time Lapse Comparison of Some Ancient Writers				
Author	Document	Date of Writing	Oldest MS Date of Writing	Time Lapse
Caesar	<i>Gallic Wars</i>	58–50 BC	850 AD	900 years
Tacitus	<i>Histories</i>	100 AD	850 AD	750 years
Thucydides	<i>History</i>	460–400 BC	900 AD	1,300 years
Herodotus	<i>History</i>	488–428 BC	850 AD	1,300 years
Plato	<i>Tetralogies</i>	427–347 BC	900 AD	1,250 years
Aristotle		384–322	1100 AD	1,400 years

Time Lapse Comparison of Some New Testament Books				
NT Book	Date of Writing	Name of MS	MS Date of Writing	Time Lapse
John	85 AD	John Ryland's MS	115 AD	30 years
John	85 AD	Bodmer Papyrus II	150–200 AD	65–115 years
Most of NT	45–95 AD	Chester Beatty Papyri	150–200 AD	55–115 years
Bible w/ NT	45–95 AD	Codex Vaticanus	325 AD	250–280 years
Bible w/ NT	45–95 AD	Codex Sinaiticus	350 AD	275–305 years

D. Early Translations

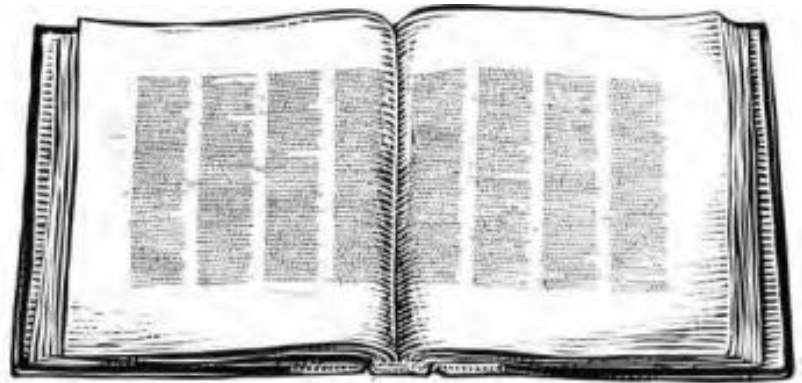
1. Ancient literature was rarely translated into other languages.
2. The Syrian and Latin translations of the New Testament were made about 150 AD.

E. Early Church Fathers

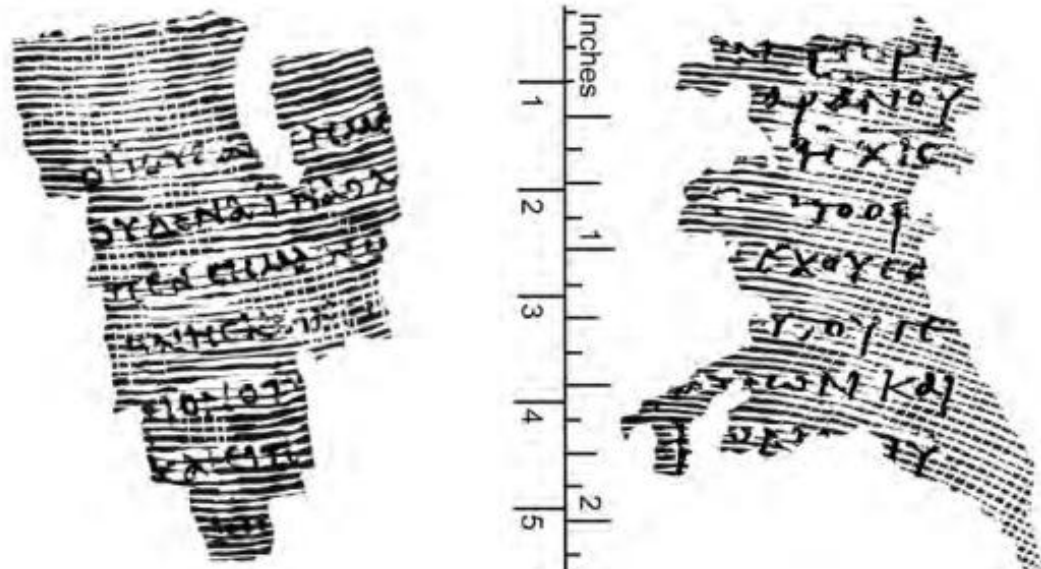
1. We have letters and writings from men who knew and heard the apostles.
2. These men quoted New Testament documents in their writings during the years 70–150 AD.
3. The quotes in their writings testify to what was in the New Testament documents in the first century.

4. These men would not have:

- a. Tolerated a change in the apostles' writings or teachings
- b. Quoted from a book that was written by an imposter who wasn't an apostle
- c. Altered or added to the teachings or the words



Codex Sinaiticus from 325 AD



John 18:31-33 and 37-38 from 115 AD / Fragment of Revelation from Oxyrhynchos

Some Important New Testament Manuscripts

- John Ryland's Manuscript
- Bodmer Papyrus
- Chester Beatty Papyri
- Diatessaron
- Codex Vaticanus
- Codex Sinaiticus
- Codex Alexandrinus
- Ephraemi Rescriptus
- Oxyrhynchos Papyri

What is Papyrus?
Papyrus is a plant that grows along the Nile Delta in Egypt. The long stems of the plant were used to make a paper-like material to write on. Many of the ancient manuscripts we have discovered were written on papyrus.
What is Parchment?
Parchment is a writing material made from the skins of animals like sheep, goats or calves. When pieces of parchment were made into pages and attached like a book, it was called a codex.

Internal Confirmation to New Testament Authenticity

1. Paul always begins his epistles with his name and claims authorship.
2. Coincidences that run throughout the New Testament books prove Paul was the author.
 - Many references to people, places, and situations in the book of Acts match with those from Paul's epistles.
3. Linguistic evidence is consistent with the authors:
 - a. Paul's style and vocabulary remains the same in all his books.
 - b. This is clearly true of John as well in his use of words like "light" and "word."
4. Archaeology and anthropology confirm the places and customs recorded in the Bible.
5. The New Testament was written in Koine Greek and not Classical Greek.
 - a. Stories, poems and legends were written in Classical Greek.

b. Letters, notes, bills, etc. were written in Koine Greek, which was the language of common life. This was discovered and proven in the 1800s.

Internal Evidence for the Early Date of Acts and for Luke's Authorship

According to those who accept the Bible as the authoritative Word of God, the book of Acts is believed to have been written by Luke during Paul's lifetime. This means it was written before 70 AD and probably around 61 AD. There is much evidence in the book of Acts that indicates it was written before 70 AD.

- 1.No mention of the fall of Jerusalem in 70 AD.
- 2.No mention of the burning of Rome in 64 AD.
- 3.No hint of the deterioration of Roman and Jewish relationships that resulted from the Jewish war with Rome beginning in 66 AD.
- 4.No hint of the deterioration of relationships between the Romans and the Christians due to Nero's persecution in 65–67 AD.
- 5.Gallio's judgment (Acts 18:14-17) set a precedent that legitimized Christianity during this time period.
- 6.No hint of James' martyrdom by Sanhedrin around 67 AD.
- 7.The Sadducees are portrayed as still having authority, reflecting a pre-70 AD date.
- 8.Acts never mentions Peter in Rome.
- 9.Peter (died 65 AD) and John (died after 96 AD) seems to be alive in Acts. No details are given about any of the disciples' deaths except James (died 44 AD).
10. There were still Gentiles in synagogues. Few would be looking into Judaism after 70 AD.
11. The temple is still standing with no hint of attack or destruction.
12. There is a confident tone of normal life continuing, unlike life after 65 and 70 AD.
13. Acts ends as if the events at the end of the book were still occurring. The ending leaves Paul alive with no hint of his martyrdom.
14. Nowhere in the book does the author try to predict any of these key events or give Paul credit as a prophet of these events.

