

II TIMOTHY 3:16-17
NEW TESTAMENT TEXT!
PART 3

Please turn in your Bibles this morning to II Timothy chapter 3 as we continue our in-depth study of Paul's second letter to his son in the faith, Timothy!

We are currently in part 3 of our series on the Bible and why we can trust it from Genesis through the book of Revelation.

I realize that some may not see this as important, but we need to know how to defend what we believe and again, the attack against the Bible is growing among those who call themselves Christians.

In our last study we looked at the – ***OLD TESTAMENT TEXT!***

The attacks against it go like this. ***“It has been handed down, written and rewritten time after time and thus, over the thousands of years, there must be many, many mistakes. Thus, we can't trust it!”***

And when you listen to that it does seem to make sense. Of course there are going to be many mistakes.

But, as we saw last time when we looked at the two scrolls of Isaiah with a thousand years between them, they are accurate in their transmission, and thus, we can trust them.

As we come to the New Testament, that same logic is going forth. Again, the attacks go like this, ***“The New Testament was written long after the events took place and it has been written and rewritten, thus, we can't trust what it says to be true! Yes, there are some parts that are true, but we must decide what is true and what isn't!”***

As we are going to see, the New Testament was not written hundreds of years after the events that took place, but within the timeframe of those events these books were written.

And think about this. We see this attack on the authenticity of the Scriptures and what the Scriptures really mean, what they are really saying.

Because of that many have developed their own theology in what they believe. They think they know better than God and can give us a clearer insight into what God meant than God Himself.

As foolish as that is, and many will not look at it like that, but that is what many are doing and have done.

Let me share this with you and listen carefully to what he is saying because he is getting you to not trust the Bible, that it is not that important.

Andy Stanley, who is the pastor of North Point Community Church in Atlanta tells us that if you really believe in the inerrancy of the Scriptures, you are like the Judaizers that insist on circumcision!

I am not sure where he got that comparison but listen closely to what he says about the Bible. We are told,

(In) every generation, new and novel ideas (like biblical inerrancy) get woven into certain expressions of the Christian faith and into certain traditions, new and novel ideas. Some are harmless, some, we've discovered, are a little bit harmful. And oftentimes, these new and novel ideas get elevated to the status of doctrine, or dogma, or 'these are essentials, you got to believe this'. (Of course there are essentials to our faith!)

And if you reject some of these new and novel ideas, you're not even considered a Christian anymore. You can't even be a part of that faith tradition, you can't be a part of that church. (These are not new ideas but what has been given to us by the Lord in His Word!)

And they elevate these new and novel ideas to the point where they're at the same level with the deity of Christ and you know, some of the things that we all know are essential.

And when this happens, when non-essentials begin to characterize or define a group of churches or church or denomination, thoughtful, honest people of faith, thoughtful, honest people sometimes feel like 'you know what, I gotta I gotta step back from my church, I've got to step back from my faith tradition, I've got to step away from my denomination, I still believe in God. And I, I still believe in Jesus. But I'm not sure that approach is the approach.'

His goal is to draw people back by giving them a pass to not believe the parts of the bible they don't agree with. . . .

Stanley explains . . .

The bottom line in terms of what a person must believe about the bible in order to be a follower of Jesus, it's really this simple: you just have to believe that Matthew, Mark, Luke, or John are reliable accounts of actual events. That's it. . . . because if you do, then you will also believe that Jesus, who claimed to be the son of God and our king, and everything we've stated in this series follows from that one idea." . . .

There is no single modern view of inspiration that is essential to following Jesus, and when the church elevates a specific definition of inspiration in order to make it the litmus test for who is or isn't a Christian, that's a problem. . . .

If the Bible is the foundation of our faith, it's all or nothing. Christianity becomes a 'fragile house of cards' religion. Christianity becomes a fragile house of cards that comes tumbling down when we discover that perhaps the walls of Jericho didn't. . . . What your students have discovered, and if you read broadly, you've discovered, it is next to impossible to defend the entire bible.

But if your Christianity hangs by the thread of proving that everything in the bible is true, you may be able to hang onto it, but your kids and your grandkids and the next generation will not.

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Now, in reading that, some may feel, *“What’s the big deal? He still believes in Jesus. He still believes in the Gospel writings. Isn’t that what is important? Why do we need to believe everything in the Bible?”*

Let me ask you this. If the Bible, not just the New Testament, but from Genesis through Revelation was not important, all of it, not just the Gospels, then why did God give it to us?

Not only that, but why would Jesus say, **“Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth.”** John 17:17.

Now some may argue that Jesus is just speaking of the Old Testament here, which is true. But don’t you think that Almighty God, when He spoke about the Word being truth, also understand that the New Testament is the Word of God as well? Of course He would and when you read here in II Timothy 3:16-17, you see that played out.

But, if you negate what is said outside of the Gospel’s, then you don’t have these verses to show you how important the Word of God is, all of it!

Can you imagine not believing the book of Romans, or Ephesians, or Revelation or any of the other New Testament books was not inspired by God and is profitable to us! They are important or they would not be part of the Scriptures!

And here's the thing. Look at how God sees His Written Word. In Psalm 138:2 we are told, **"I will worship toward Your holy temple, and praise Your name for Your lovingkindness and Your truth; For You have magnified Your word above all Your name."**

David is saying that God places His Word above His name.

What that means is this.

God's name speaks of His character, the sum-total of all that He is.

You see, you can tell a person's character by how faithful they are to their word.

In other words, God's Word is as good as He is.

There is an old saying that a man is as good as his word. Well, God is as good as His Word. His character is behind what He has said.

Now, when people negate God's Word, when they say we can't trust it, when they ignore it, what they are saying is that God is worthless. If you can't trust His Word, then you can't trust Him.

I am sure most people would not put it that way but that does not matter, because God did put it that way.

Thus, if you negate God's Word, then why are you worshiping a worthless God?

I am sorry, God's Word is living, and it is powerful, and it changes lives and I trust it from Genesis through Revelation because I worship Almighty God!

Remember, it is the Word of God that leads us to the giver of life, Jesus Christ. It strengthens us, gives us hope, it corrects us, and so on.

Please understand that the reason we are spending so much time on this is because of what Paul deals with next, in II Timothy. He speaks of people who don't want to hear God's Word any longer, but want their ears tickled and they end up believing in fairy tales!

So with that as our introduction, let's begin reading in II Timothy chapter 3, beginning in verse 16 and let's see what the Lord has for us as we study His Word and look at this topic –

NEW TESTAMENT TEXT!

II TIMOTHY 3

VERSES 16-17

Notice what Paul is saying here. He is telling Timothy, and the Holy Spirit is telling us that the Bible was breathed from the mouth of God to man. Because of that it is profitable to us, it helps us to grow, to mature, to stay on track to be able to be the men and women that God wants us to be.

When we speak of the authority of the Bible, you may hear it spoken of as this, the –
VERBAL PLENARY INSPIRATION!

What does that mean?

First of all, when we speak of the ***VERBAL INSPIRATION***, we mean that every word of Scripture is God-given. It was not written by man, but man wrote down these words through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

That means that every single word that we find in the Bible is there because God wanted it there. That should just make sense because if you don't believe that then you will pick and choose what God said and what He didn't say, and you are not the author of the Bible, which means you don't have the authority to do that, to pick and choose what you like and don't like!

Next, when we speak that the Bible is **PLENARY**, it means that "*all parts*" of the Bible are divinely authoritative.

Yes, even the genealogies as we saw last week in the Old Testament study!

Let me summarize it like this in regard to the **VERBAL, PLENARY INSPIRATION** of the Scriptures.

We believe that every word – **VERBAL!**

In the entire Bible – **PLENARY!**

Is Holy Scripture – **INSPIRATION!**

That is the confidence we have in the Bible!

Now some wonder what evidence do we have to believe that?

What proof is there regarding the accuracy of the text being transmitted over all these years?

Those are great questions; the problem comes when people may ask them, but they are not interested in the truth because they can't handle the truth!

But I will present it and you will see for yourself we can trust the New Testament just as we saw how we can trust the text of the Old Testament!

Let me share this statement with you, and please understand that this is not from some secular source. This statement is from *The Interpreters Bible* and is concerning the Gospel of Mark.

Listen to what they are trying to tell us. It reads, ***“To all intents and purposes we must study the Gospel as if it were anonymous like most of the books of the Bible, not a product of personal literary authorship. The book, Mark, cannot have been written by an eyewitness. It is a compendium (a complete listing of subject matter) of church tradition, not the personal observations of a participant.”***

Where is your evidence for that? The reality is, they don't have any and yet, by saying this they are causing people to doubt God's Word or as the Devil said to Eve, **“Has God indeed said!”** (Genesis 3:1)

And think about this. Why put together a study Bible and then say that what you are reading is not accurate, it is not true, it is just a bunch of tradition and none of it is written by eyewitnesses!

How sad and yet, notice what Peter tells us in II Peter 1:16, **“For we did not follow cunningly devised fables when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of His majesty.”**

Did you hear that?

It is the opposite of what we just read from *The Interpreters Bible!*

Peter is telling us that he did not seek after some fairy tale, some fable and then wrote about them.

These were things that he saw with his eyes. He was an eyewitness to the events and then he wrote them down for all to read. He walked with Jesus, He saw Jesus in all His glory on the Mount of Transfiguration, He saw the resurrected Lord, and Peter is sharing those things which he witnessed.

Not only that, but the Gospel of Mark was written through what Peter told Mark!

We also see the apostle John and he too tells us that he is writing about the things that he saw.

John puts it this way in I John 1:1-4 as he said, **“That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, concerning the Word of life; the life was manifested, and we have seen, and bear witness, and declare to you that eternal life which was with the Father and was manifested to us; that which we have seen and heard we declare to you, that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. And these things we write to you that your joy may be full.”**

John wants his readers, and us, to understand that what he is writing from, and what the other writers are writing from, are from firsthand experience.

They heard Jesus speak.

They saw Jesus with their eyes.

They gazed steadfastly upon Him.

They touched Jesus.

And what they saw and heard they are declaring to us so we too can enjoy that fellowship with the Father, and our joy will be full!

But again, we have not answered the question, ***“How reliable is the New Testament since we don’t have any of the original manuscripts?”***

The first thing we are going to look at to determine whether the New Testament text is accurate, we can trust what the Scriptures are saying is - ***THE NUMBER OF MANUSCRIPTS WE HAVE OF THE NEW TESTAMENT!***

When people say that the New Testament is not accurate it is because that is what they have been told and not what the evidence shows.

I am sure if you were to ask someone “*How many New Testament manuscripts do we have?*” they would not be able to give you an answer. They may make up a number, but that is a guess, and we need to look at the evidence.

Did you know that we have over 24,000 manuscript copies of the New Testament in existence today.

We have 5,300 known Greek manuscripts.

There are over 10,000 Latin Vulgate manuscripts.

We have over 9,300 other early versions of manuscripts of the New Testament.

Now that may not mean much to you but let me put it into perspective for you.

There is no other document of antiquity that even comes close.

Caesar, who lived 100-44 B. C, we have only 10 manuscripts of his writings with the earliest copy from 900 A. D.

Do you see that there is a time span of 1,000 years from when he wrote it to the earliest copy we have!

Then there is *The Iliad*, by Homer, which is the closest in number of manuscripts to the New Testament in regard to documents of antiquity. The Iliad was written around 900 B. C., and we have 643 manuscripts in which the earliest copy is from 400 B. C. or a 500-year time difference.

Again, compare that to the New Testament manuscripts and we have over 24,000 copies, The Iliad manuscripts are not even close! And yet, we don't see people doubting the writings of Homer, but they sure do doubt what the New Testament has to say in regard to its accuracy!

Let me put this into perspective for you to show you that we can trust the New Testament text.

The New Testament has about 20,000 lines of text. And of that only 40 lines (or 400 words) of the New Testament are in doubt.

Of that, only about one-sixtieth can be called “*substantial variations.*”

Think about that for a minute. That would give us a text that is approximately 98% perfect, pure!

Not only that, but keep in mind that the New Testament is not based upon one Scripture, but the totality of the Scriptures.

Thus, if something is in question, we can check in other Scriptures to see if it is right or not! Again, only 40 lines or 400 words of the New Testament’s 20,000 lines of text are in doubt!

In the 1830s German scholars of the Tübingen school tried to date the books of the New Testament as late as the 3rd century, but the discovery of some New Testament manuscripts and fragments from the 2nd and 3rd centuries, one of which dates as early as 125 A. D. (Papyrus 52), disproves a 3rd-century date of composition for any book now in the New Testament.

Additionally, we see that a letter to the church at Corinth in the name of Clement of Rome in 95 A. D. quotes from 10 of the 27 books of the New Testament, and a letter to the church at Philippi in the name of Polycarp has 120 quotes from 16 New Testament books.

But again, there are many out there who try to tell us that the New Testament documents are not reliable.

We see it in movies like Dan Brown’s *The DaVinci Code* as well as scholars who say the same thing, like Bart Ehrman. (*The Orthodox Corruption of Scripture*)

When was the New Testament put together?

Broadly speaking, the New Testament is believed to have been written during the First Century, between 50-100 A. D.

Let me share this with you and then I will share what the truth really is on this subject.

Many of you may have heard this before because this is what is taught.

In fact, in *The DaVinci Code*, this is one of the conversations in that movie and it plays out in the real world, even though it is not true. This is what was said,

“Who chose which gospels to include?” Sophie asked. “Aha!” Teabing burst in with enthusiasm. “The fundamental irony of Christianity! The Bible, as we know it today, was collated by the pagan Roman emperor Constantine the Great.”

Not true, but many believe that!

Also, we are told, not from a movie but from the Internet, which is just as reliable as that movie, ***“The ‘original’ stories were put together from ancient texts in both Hebrew and Greek. The New Testament was first put together at the Council of Nicaea in 325 A.D. There were later major modifications towards the end of the 4th century, namely in 393 and 400–402.”***

And yet, here is the reality of when the New Testament was put together. Listen to what Dockery, Mathews and Sloan wrote regarding the Scriptures and why we can trust them.

They wrote, “It must be said that the amount of time between the original composition and the next surviving manuscript is far less for the New Testament than for any other work in Greek literature. . . . Although there are certainly differences in many of the New Testament manuscripts, not one fundamental doctrine of the Christian faith rests on a disputed reading.”

(Dockery, Mathews, Sloan; Foundations for Biblical Interpretation, p. 182)

How many of you have been taught that or have heard that before?

I am sure not many because that is information that does not come out especially when people are trying to negate the Word of God.

But, as you can see, the evidence speaks for itself!

You see, there are plenty of manuscripts that testify of the authenticity of the Scriptures.

Listen carefully to what J. Harold Greenlee said as he was speaking on the early church writers in regard to their quoting of Scripture. He wrote that they *“Are so extensive that the New Testament could virtually be reconstructed from them without the use of New Testament manuscripts.”*

You see, you could destroy every Bible, every manuscript, and you could still reconstruct all but 11 verses of the New Testament because the early church quoted the Scriptures that much!

Again, how many of you knew that?

I am sure not many and yet that is the evidence that is out there and is not being taught!

We have over 36,000 quotations from the early church writers. No other writing of antiquity even comes close to the documentation of the New Testament.

In fact, there is more evidence for the reliability of the New Testament than any 10 pieces of classical literature put together.

If anyone would like to say that the New Testament is not reliable, then we might as well toss out *ALL* literature of antiquity!

And no one is going to do that and yet they have no problem in tossing aside the New Testament as well as the whole Bible!

Before we move on, let me share with you some of the oldest New Testament manuscripts we have. Some you may recognize, some you may not.

JOHN RYLANDS - Fragment p⁵² dates to 100-140 A. D., and contains John 18:31-33, and John 18:37-38.

BODMER PAPYRUS - p⁶⁶ dates to 150 A. D. and contains a large portion of the Gospel of John.

CHESTER BEATTY PAPYRI - p⁴⁵ dates to the early 3rd century and contains 1/7 of the Gospels and the book of Acts.

CODEX SINAITICUS - This Greek manuscript dates to the 4th century, found on Mount Sinai and contains most of the New Testament, except for Mark 16:9-20 and John 7:53-8:11, and over half of the Old Testament.

CODEX ALEXANDRINUS - This manuscript dates to the 5th century and contains most of both Old and New Testaments. The New Testament is missing most of Matthew, II Corinthians, and part of the Gospel of John.

I think that is pretty clear – ***THE NUMBER OF NEW TESTAMENT MANUSCRIPTS*** is sufficient to show that the New Testament is something we can trust!

The second point we will be looking at is - ***THE VARIATION BETWEEN THE DIFFERENT MANUSCRIPTS!***

Now please keep in mind that we need to take into consideration that up to almost 600 years ago or so, (The printing press was invented in 1436) all documents were printed by hand.

And yet, when you look at the minor variations between all the texts of the New Testament, they do not change the meaning or substance of our faith. They are accurate!

We did touch on this in the last point, but I want you to clearly see we can trust the New Testament text.

New Testament scholar F. F. Bruce put it this way. He said, ***“The variant readings about which any doubt remains . . . affect no material question of historical fact or of Christian faith and practice.”***

Again, did you know that?

I doubt if most of you have heard that before and the reason being is people want to negate the Word of God, but the evidence speaks for itself!

Not only that, but listen to what Sir Frederic Kenyon, one of the great authorities in the field of New Testament textual criticism, had to say regarding the New Testament manuscripts, and he does have the credentials to speak with this authority!

He said, *“One warning already referred to, must be emphasized in conclusion. No fundamental doctrine of the Christian faith rests on a disputed reading. . . . It cannot be too strongly asserted that in substance the text of the Bible is certain: especially in the case with the New Testament. The number of manuscripts of the New Testament, of early translations from it, and of quotations from it in the oldest writing of the church, is so large that it is practically certain that the true reading of every doubtful passage is preserved in some one or other of these ancient authorities. This can be said of no other ancient book.”*

“Dan Wallace said once, who is an expert in this area, there probably hasn’t been a manuscript difference that’s come up in the last 50, or 60, or 70 years that’s made any difference to our understanding of the theology of the New Testament. And that’s the thing to keep in mind when you think about the claims about the massive number of manuscript variants. There is a massive number, and the reason there’s a massive number is because we have a massive number of manuscripts to compare. But the massive number of manuscripts which causes the massive number of variants also allows us to solve the problems.”

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And please understand that most of the variants are related to spelling, so again, it does not change the intent of the passage, not at all.

Let me close this section on the variation between the New Testament manuscripts with these words from Ravi Zacharias. He wrote, ***“In real terms, the New Testament is easily the best attested ancient writing in terms of the sheer number of documents, the time span between the events and the document, and the variety of documents available to sustain or contradict it. There is nothing in ancient manuscript evidence to match such textual availability and integrity.”*** (Ravi Zacharias, Can Man Live Without God? p. 162).

The third point we are going to look at is - ***THE SHORT TIME SPAN FROM THE ORIGINAL AND THE MANUSCRIPT COPIES!***

Now this is important because the longer the timeframe from the events to the original writings and the manuscript copies, the more there is for there to be errors.

Again, that is from a worldly view, a view that does not believe in the inspiration of the Bible.

But let’s just look at what we have and see if what some believe is true. Is the timeframe from the event to the writings so far down the line that it could have been remembered wrong?

Now we did discuss this last week when we looked at the Dead Sea Scrolls, and this morning I want to talk about a fragment of manuscript that was found in cave number 7, fragment number 5.

This is important because it shows us how close from the event to the writing occurred.

On this fragment were the Greek letters ***“nu, nu, eta, sigma”***, and it was thought that this was the common Greek version of the form ***“egennesen,”*** which means to ***“beget”*** or ***“be father of.”***

The root of this word appears in our English word ***“generate”*** or ***“generation.”***

There was a scholar by the name of Jose O’Callaghan who tried to match these words with a Biblical passage from the Old Testament, but nothing seemed to fit.

As he pondered this over and over in his mind, over a period of time, he thought of a word that may fit, *Gennesaret*.

But the only problem was that this was a New Testament word.

How could fragment number 5 be from the New Testament when this was supposed to be a Jewish separatist sect that lived in the area of Qumran, by the Dead Sea?

Why was this such a big deal, this word?

The word “*Gennesaret*” is an Aramaic place name brought into the vocabulary of the early Greek-speaking Christians because of its role in the ministry of Christ.

So O’Callaghan opened his Bible to Mark 6:53, which reads, “**When they had crossed over, they came to the land of Gennesaret and anchored there.**”

To his shock, fragment 5 fit perfectly into the text!

On March 18, 1972, as the news media heard what he discovered, that fragment number 5 was part of the Gospel of Mark, and was part of the Dead Sea Scrolls, newspapers begin to print this remarkable story.

The New York Times reported, “*If O’Callaghan’s theory is accepted, it would prove that at least one of the Gospels, that of St. Mark, was written only a few years after the death of Jesus.*”

Well, it didn’t take long for the critics of the Bible to rise up and try to refute O’Callaghan’s claims.

The problem with their complaining is that this document was dated before his revelation, and it was not dated by him.

And we do know one thing for certain, that the people living in the Qumran community were destroyed before the fall of Jerusalem in A. D. 70.

That means if the crucifixion of Christ occurred in A. D. 32, the Gospel of Mark was not written long after that.

Thus, within a 20–30-year time frame, we have a document from Mark’s Gospel!

It was not written 100’s of years after the events, like some would have you believe.

Not only that but we also see that the Gospel of Matthew has an early date to it.

On December 24, 1994, the *Times* of London ran a front-page story entitled “*Oxford papyrus is ‘eyewitness record of the life of Christ.’*”

The article reported the claim that three papyrus fragments of Matthew’s Gospel in Magdalen College, Oxford, date to the mid-first century A. D.

Instead of having been written a generation or more after Jesus’ death, as is - or was - the scholarly consensus, Matthew’s Gospel was written within a decade or so of the crucifixion by someone who was there at the time, so the article said.

This, of course, would indeed be astounding and worthy of the treatment the *Times* gave it.

Now they don’t want to say that it was Matthew, why?

Because then it would be an eyewitness account of what took place!

Not only were the Gospel’s of Matthew and Mark written early, but the book of Acts was written before the death of Paul, for the book of Acts ends with Paul still alive.

And good evidence shows that Paul died in the Neronian persecution about 67 A. D.

Thus, since Acts was the second half of a treatise written by Luke to Theophilus, Luke must have been written around 60 A. D.

Also, all of Paul's letters would have to be written before his death, obviously, and he died around 67 A. D.

Thus, we see only a 30-year time span from the death and resurrection of Christ to all of Paul's letters being completed.

Here's the thing. Don't trust Biblical history if you don't want to. You want to listen to someone who is not a Christian, not from the Bible. Well then, listen to the testimony of this unbeliever, for it speaks volumes.

Speaking of Ceisus, a man living in the second century who hated Christianity, Bishop Fallows writes, *“This unbeliever, although he caused great annoyance to the believers in Christ living in his day, and seemed to be disturbing the foundations of the Christian faith, rendered more real service to Christianity than any father of undisputed orthodoxy in the Church. He admits all the grand facts and doctrines of the gospel, as they were preached by the Apostles, and contained in the acknowledged writings, for the sake of opposing. He makes in his attacks eighty quotations from the New Testament, and appeals to it as containing the sacred writings of Christians, universally received by them as credible and Divine. He is, therefore, the very best witness we can summon to prove that the New Testament was not written hundreds of years after the Apostles were dust; but in less than a century and a half had been received by the Christian Church all over the world.”*

Again, this was from the second century and the words from the New Testament were already written down and copied!

The eminent archaeologist, William F. Albright, concluded in an interview with Christianity Today, from January 18, 1963, ***“In my opinion, every book of the New Testament was written by a baptized Jew between the forties and the eighties of the first century A. D.”***

I agree, except for the book of Revelation which I believe was written 90 to 100 A. D.

Let me put this in perspective for you regarding the Scriptures and how they were written and how long the original texts lasted.

We are told,

Copyists in the first several centuries of the Church were not rank amateurs, as some suggest. For the most part, they were professional scribes who took their work as seriously as their reputations.

Scribes were paid by the line, and they were not necessarily Christians.

And as Evans points out, when we look at the nearly 5,800 surviving Greek manuscripts of the New Testament, we are hard-pressed to find any manuscripts in which a scribe changed the text with any consistency at all – whether in an orthodox direction or an unorthodox direction.

Mistakes in early papyrus copies are mostly misspellings, which are fixed in the next generation of copies. And because there are so many copies to compare – some 2.5 million manuscript pages – it would have been virtually impossible for any person, or any group or collaborators, to tamper with one manuscript without rewriting all of the copies in circulation across the known world at the time.

Second, textual variants in these copies do not change their meaning or message.

Third, the originals may have survived 150 years or more.

Originals, or autographs, typically were penned by a scribe and signed by the author – thus the word “autograph.”

But there wasn’t just one original. Normally there were two or more, one for circulation and another for safe keeping. This means we very likely had two, or perhaps more, originals of the New Testament texts, helping ensure their survival.

Evans noted that archaeology and manuscript discoveries reveal that ancient manuscripts were in use for 150 years or longer before being discarded.

For example, at Oxyrhynchus, Egypt, half a million ancient manuscripts, including portions of the Old and New Testaments, were unearthed in the late 1800s and early 1900s. In stratigraphic tests of the ground at the dig site, researchers found that literature was in use 150-200 years, sometimes 300-400 years, before being discarded.

The implications for the New Testament are profound. If the Gospels and other New Testament books were written in the mid-to-late first century, and if they survived at least 150 years, then there is continuity between the autographs and the earliest manuscript copies, which date to the second and third centuries.

In support of this view, Evans cites the writing of church father Tertullian in AD 190 as he responds to heretics who changed Paul’s letters. Tertullian notes that Paul’s originals still exist and may be consulted.

Evans further notes that Peter, Bishop of Alexandria, in defending the Gospel of John early in the fourth century, writes, “The copy itself that was written by the hand of the Evangelist ... has been preserved in the most holy church of Ephesus.”

Evans concludes: “The burden of proof has shifted away from those who say the text is stable. The burden now rests heavily on those who say we shouldn’t trust the texts.”

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Lastly, in this section, we read in the *Bible and Archaeology*, Sir Frederic G. Kenyon who makes these very interesting comments.

He states, *“The interval then between the dates of original composition and the earliest extant [existing] evidence becomes so small as to be in fact negligible, and the last foundation for any doubt that the Scriptures have come down to us substantially as they were written has now been removed. Both the authenticity and the general integrity of the books of the New Testament may be regarded as finally established.”*

May we not lose sight of what we hold in our hands, it is the Word of God breathed from the mouth of God to us!

And the fourth and last point is - ***THE HISTORICAL ACCURACY OF THE NEW TESTAMENT!***

What about the historical accuracy of the New Testament, do we find it to be historically accurate?

When you look at the book of Mormon, for example, it is not historically accurate.

“Relevant archaeological, historical, and scientific facts are not consistent with the Book of Mormon being an ancient record of actual historical events. Mormon apologists have proposed multiple explanations for apparent inconsistencies with the archaeological, genetic, linguistic and other records.”

So, no, it is not historically accurate.

But what about the Bible, is it historically accurate?

You bet it is. It is not like any other religious book, not even close.

Back in the Nineteenth Century it was widely believed that the New Testament was an invention of the Second Century church, but as we have discussed, they were in error with this kind of thinking.

Sir William Ramsay, who began his historical research toward the end of the Nineteenth Century, was taught that the New Testament was not historically reliable.

As a young historian, Ramsay was determined to develop an independent historical/geographical study of First-Century Asia Minor.

To his dismay, there was little usable information regarding this area and that period of time.

So, reluctantly, he consulted the book of Acts for help.

What he discovered was remarkably accurate and true to First-Century history and topography.

Isn't that interesting. He went to the Bible to see what was taking place during that period of time, historically speaking.

Don Stewart, in speaking of Ramsay, stated, ***“Since many historical details, national boundaries, and government structures in Asia Minor were different in the second century from what they had been in the first, it is reasonable to conclude that the actual author of Luke and Acts was a first-century author, not a second-century one.”***

“Acts 14:1-6, for example, was in historical dispute for many years. The passage implies that Lystra and Derbe were cities in the district of Lycaonia but Iconium was in a different district. Later Roman writers such as Cicero contradicted the passage, asserting that Iconium was also in Lycaonia. For years this was used to show the historical unreliability of Acts.”

“In 1910, however, Sir William Ramsay discovered an inscription declaring that the first century Iconium was under the authority of Phrygia from A. D. 37 to A. D. 72. It was only during these years that Iconium was not under the authority of Lycaonia. Not only did this discovery confirm the accuracy of the statement in Acts 14, it showed that whoever wrote this passage knew what district Iconium was in at that time. That places the author as an eyewitness to the events.”

Not only that but think about this for a minute.

One of the richest men at one time in America, John D. Rockefeller was believed to have seen that the Bible spoke of where oil in the Middle East was located, such as the presence of tar pits (Gen 14:10) – which made him an oil magnate.

Not bad for someone who does not trust the Word of God and yet became a millionaire by taking what the Bible had to say and he struck oil!

Let me share this with you because it is amazing how critics will come against the historic accuracy of the Bible and yet, when the Bible is proven correct, they are silent.

We are told,

Archeology has helped to identify the accuracy of detail in Luke’s writing of Acts. It’s impressive! Thanks to archeological finds, most of the ancient cities mentioned in the book of Acts have been identified.

The journeys of Paul can now be accurately traced as a result of these finds. In all, Luke names 32 countries, 54 cities, and nine islands without error!

In some cases, Luke's usages of certain words were criticized by skeptics. For example, Luke refers to Philippi as a "**district**" of Macedonia, by using the Greek word *meris*. Some argued that *meris* referred to a "*portion,*" not a "*district.*"

Archaeological excavations, however, have shown that this very word was used to describe the divisions of the district.

Still another case is Luke's usage of *politarchs* to denote the civil authorities of Thessalonica. Since *politarch* is not found in the classic literature, Luke was again assumed to be wrong. (Poor Luke!)

However, some nineteen inscriptions that make use of the title have been found.

Interestingly enough, five of these are in reference to the city of Thessalonica. One of the inscriptions was discovered in a Roman arch at Thessalonica, and in it are found the names of six of that city's politarchs.

- <https://bit.ly/3TJFcOg>

I pray that you have seen that as we look at the New Testament, we find we have manuscript copies that support the text.

Yes, there are minor variations in the various New Testament texts, but they do not change any foundational doctrines of the Christian faith and practice.

We have seen that the time span from the actual events to the original writings was some 10 to 50 years, and the copies of the originals were made shortly after.

And lastly, the historical record of the New Testament is so accurate that it shows the writer had to be around during the time frame he was speaking of.

Yes, we don't have any of the original writings of the New Testament or of the Old Testament, but what we do have is an accurate record of both the Old and New Testament from the various manuscripts that have been discovered.

Don't let these so-called higher critics have you doubt God's Word, for it gives us life by pointing us to the giver of life, Jesus Christ.

It gives us hope by pointing us to the giver of hope, Jesus Christ.

We are strengthened by the Word, encouraged by the Word, see the character of God through the Word, our heart is revealed to us through the Word, and so on.

It is as the Psalmist said, "**How sweet are Your words to my taste, Sweeter than honey to my mouth! . . . Therefore I love Your commandments More than gold, yes, than fine gold!**" Psalm 119:103, 127.

Listen to these words, not from a Christian publication, nor from Christian writers, but from Time magazine, dated December 30, 1974.

We read, "*After more than two centuries of facing the heaviest scientific guns that could be brought to bear, the Bible has survived - and is perhaps better for the siege. Even on the critics' own terms - historical fact - Scriptures seem more acceptable now than they did when the rationalists began the attack.*"

Is the Word of God important to us?

You bet it is and that is why Satan is using all his schemes to get us to not trust it, he will even use the church to promote this lie!

The sad thing is, many fall prey to this and their lives are a mess because of it.

There is no hope, no real direction for their life and they do as they please and that just does not work.

Let me show you how important the Word of God, the Bible was to one group.

Many of you have heard of the Pony Express, a fascinating part of the history of the American West. The Pony Express was a private express company that carried mail by an organized relay of horseback riders. The eastern end was St. Joseph, Missouri, and the western terminal was in Sacramento, California.

The cost of sending a letter by Pony Express was \$2.50 an ounce. If the weather and horses held out and the Indians held off, that letter would complete the entire two-thousand-mile journey in a speedy ten days, as did the report of Lincoln's Inaugural Address.

It may surprise you that the Pony Express was only in operation from April 3, 1860, until November 18, 1861 – just seventeen months. When the telegraph line was completed between two cities, the service was no longer needed.

Being a rider for the Pony Express was a tough job. You were expected to ride seventy-five to one hundred miles a day, changing horses every fifteen to twenty-five miles.

Other than mail, the only baggage you carried contained a few provisions, including a kit of flour, cornmeal, and bacon. In case of danger, you also had a medical pack of turpentine, borax, and cream of tartar.

In order to travel light and to increase speed of mobility during Indian attacks, the men weighed around 100 to 125 pounds. Their clothes were very light, even during the fierce winter weather.

Now here is what is fascinating to me about the Pony Express.

The managers of the Pony Express believed that the Bible was so important that they presented a special full size *Pony Express Bible* to each rider when they signed up to join this very unusual company.

Now keep in mind their overwhelming concern for reducing weight and yet every rider carried a full-size *Pony Express Bible* as part of his regular gear.

Was it important to them? They would not leave home without it! They trusted it or why bring it along with them, it was that important to them. May God's Word be that important to us!

As I close this morning let me leave you with these words from Paul in Hebrews 4:12-13, **“For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account.”**

May we never forget that the Word of God is living, and it is not only living but it is powerful in our lives if we allow it to be!

It will get right to the heart of the matter and with the help of the Holy Spirit, as we surrender our lives to Him; He will transform us and renew our minds, making us more like Christ.

Is the Word of God important?

You bet it is and we can trust it because it is *TRUTH*, and it is by this *TRUTH* that we are *SAVED* and *SANCTIFIED!*

May you not leave home without it!

Dates for NT Books in Canonical Order

Book	Date	Comments
Matthew	AD 60s	Eusebius comments that Matthew wrote his Gospel while Peter and Paul were in Rome
Mark	AD 40s–60s	N/A
Luke	AD 55–62	Acts was written just after AD 62; 2 Timothy and Clement both reference Paul being set free and on trial again after the two-year imprisonment in Acts 28
John	AD 90s	The “ P52 Fragment ” of John dates to AD 95–125
Acts of the Apostles	AD 60s–70s	Acts was written just after AD 62; 2 Timothy and Clement both reference Paul being set free and on trial again after the two-year stint in Acts 28
Romans	AD 55–59	N. T. Wright, <i>Romans</i> in <i>The New Interpreter’s Bible Commentary</i> , vol. 9 (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2015), 396.
1 Corinthians	AD 55	Correlated to Paul’s missionary trips
2 Corinthians	AD 56	Correlated to Paul’s missionary trips
Galatians	AD 48–49	Possibly AD 49, depends on when the Jerusalem council happened (Acts 15)
Ephesians	AD 60–61	During Paul’s first Roman imprisonment (Act 28:16–31)
Philippians	AD 57–59	Written from Caesarea
Colossians	AD 60–61	During Paul’s first Roman imprisonment (Act 28:16–31)
1 Thessalonians	AD 51	During Paul’s second missionary journey while at Corinth
2 Thessalonians	AD 51	During Paul’s second missionary journey while at Corinth; six months after 1 Thessalonians was written; Silas and Timothy probably rejoined Paul at Corinth and related further questions that they had about the sequence of eschatological events
1 Timothy	AD 63–67	In AD 62 after Paul’s release from two-year imprisonment (Acts 28:16–31)
2 Timothy	AD 63–67	After Titus was written, while Paul awaited his trial in Rome (2 Timothy 4:6, 9–18)
Titus	AD 63–67	After 1 Timothy was written
Philemon	AD 60–61	During Paul’s first Roman imprisonment (Act 28:16–31)
Hebrews	AD 40s–60s	The Jerusalem temple appears to still be standing due to present tense verbs in Hebrews 7–9
James	AD 48	
1 Peter	AD 63 or earlier	Before Peter was martyred in AD 64–66 (2 Peter 1:14)
2 Peter	AD 63 or earlier	Before Peter was martyred in AD 64–66 (2 Peter 1:14)
1 John	AD 70s–90s	N/A
2 John	AD 70s–90s	N/A
3 John	AD 70s–90s	N/A
Jude	AD 50s–60s	Eusebius cites Hegesippus, who refers to the grandsons of Jude, who lived during the reign of Emperor Domitian (AD 81–96) in Eusebius <i>Hist. Eccl.</i> 3.19.1–3.20.7. So Jude himself may have already died by this time
Revelation	AD 68–95	Depending on whether after Nero’s death or toward the end of Domitian’s reign