

SESSION 3: Is the Bible True? (part 1)

Discovering Answers to Three Questions that Demonstrate Manuscript Integrity

Reference: *Surprised by Faith*, pages 23-37 (fourth edition); pages 33-44 (third edition)

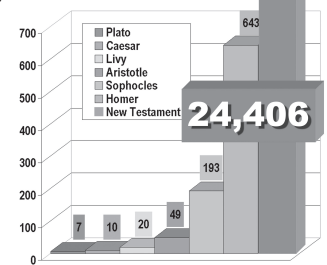
Making the Discovery

1. A _____ is a handwritten copy of a published writing. This was the means of duplication prior to the invention of the Guttenberg printing press in the fifteenth century.
2. An _____ is the first or original writing of any work. No originals have been found of *any* ancient literature.
3. To ask if a manuscript has _____ is to ask if it is genuine or true to the autograph. The New Testament Gospels claim to have originated as autographs in the eyewitness generation of Jesus (first century) and were hand copied over the centuries without major changes in content.
4. There are three questions used to determine the integrity of ancient writings like the New Testament.

Question 1. How _____ handwritten copies have been found? (More is better, making it possible to detect copyist errors so the text of the original autograph can be restored more accurately.)

Answer. The number of discovered handwritten copies of ancient writings varies from 1–1,757, with most writings having fewer than 30. In contrast, the New Testament has more than _____ handwritten copies.

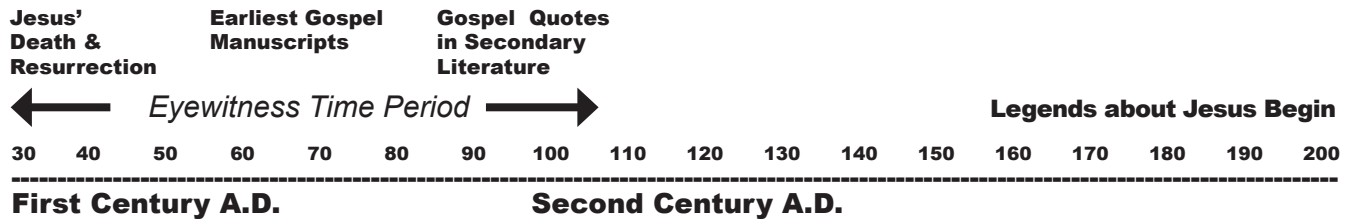
Ancient Manuscripts How Many?



Question 2. How _____ are these handwritten copies? (Closer to authorship is better since they would have fewer accumulated copyist errors.)

Answer. The interval between the date of writing and the earliest known manuscript of other ancient works varies from 300-1,500 years. In contrast, there are full Gospels within 100 years of authorship, New Testament quotes in other writings within 30-50 years, and manuscript fragments of Matthew, Mark and Luke within 15 years of authorship. These are within the _____ generation of Jesus—no other ancient writing has this.

The Origin of the New Testament



Question 3. How _____ are these handwritten copies? (A low distortion rate is desired, that is, there are few changes that affect the meaning of the text when comparing different manuscript copies.)

Answer. The New Testament we use today is reconstructed from ancient texts which have only a 0.2% distortion rate, or are _____% without distortion.

5. The New Testament has _____ integrity than all other ancient writings.

DISCOVERY #3

“Ah-ha!” The New Testament records in our Bible today are essentially unchanged from eyewitness accounts of Jesus!

Confirming the Discovery from God’s Word

In summary of God’s Word, writer Luke claimed that his Gospel is factual because it was from eyewitnesses of Jesus who were still alive when he wrote (Luke 1:1-4). Jesus taught that His Word (recorded in the Bible) is truth (John 8:31). Peter’s claim that his teaching and writing is authentic is based on the fact that he was with Jesus during His ministry, that is, he was an eyewitness (2 Peter 1:16). He also taught that those who were God’s instruments to write the Bible did not write from human ability, desire or knowledge, but were inspired to record the mind of God through the guidance and power of the Holy Spirit (2 Peter 1:20-21).

Answers to “Fill in the Blanks”: 1. manuscript; 2. autograph; 3. integrity; 4. (Q1) many, 24,400; (Q2) early, eyewitness; (Q3) accurate, 99.8; 5. greater

