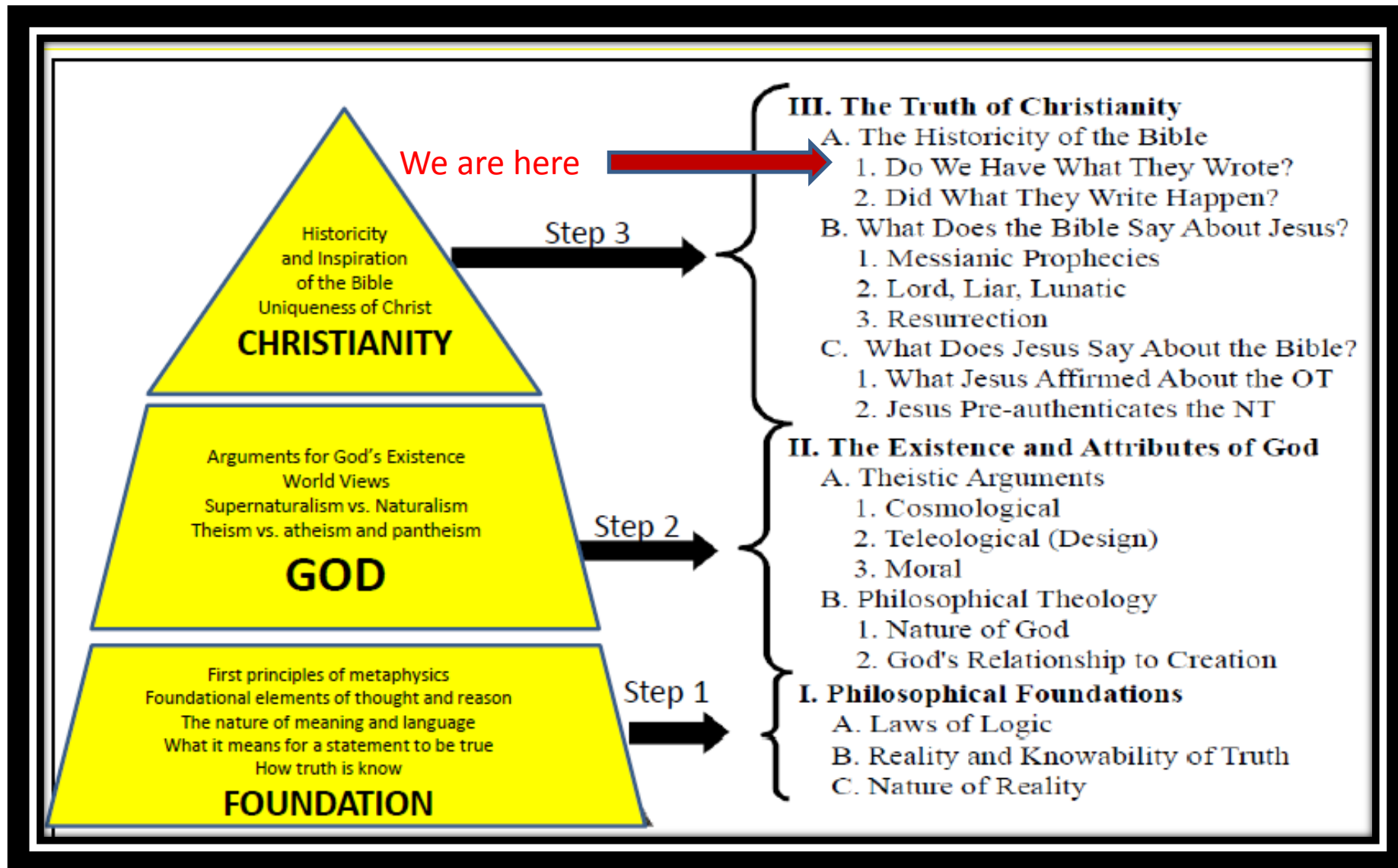


APOLOGETICS 59

Do We Have What They Wrote? The Overwhelming Manuscript Evidence (DDR #608)



Do We Have What They Wrote?

The materials on which the New Testament documents were written

- papyrus (pl. papyri) – a plant material
- vellum (or parchment) – made from animal skin

The manner in which the New Testament writings were bound together

- scroll – sheets of papyrus were glued together and rolled up on a stick
- codex – sheets of papyrus or parchment were folded and sewn together similar to a book

Do We Have What They Wrote?



Codex

Do We Have What They Wrote?



Papyrus

Do We Have What They Wrote?



Scroll

Do We Have What They Wrote?

The Importance of the Time-Gap

- No original manuscripts of the New Testament exist since they were made of material that easily disintegrated.

This is actually a strength in that no original can be sabotaged. Copies of the originally were quickly and widely dispersed.

Do We Have What They Wrote?

We want to see how the New Testament compares with other ancient works in two areas:

1. The **time-gap** between the oldest extant manuscript and the date of the original writing
2. The **number** of extant manuscripts

Why are these important?

Do We Have What They Wrote?

The Importance of the Time-Gap

Author	Book	Written	Earliest Copy	Time Gap	No. of copies
Homer	<i>Iliad</i>	800 BC	c. 400 BC	c. 400 yrs.	643
Herodotus	<i>History</i>	480-425 BC	c. AD 900	c. 1,350 yrs.	8
Thucydides	<i>History</i>	460-400 BC	c. AD 900	c. 1,300 yrs.	8
Caesar	<i>Gallie Wars</i>	100-44 BC	c. 900 AD	c. 1,000 yrs.	10
Livy	<i>History of Rome</i>	59 BC-AD 17	4th cent. (partial) mostly 10th cent.	c. 400 yrs. c. 1,000 yrs.	20
Tacitus	<i>Annals</i>	AD 100	c. AD 1,100	c. 1,000 yrs.	20
Pliny	<i>Natural History</i>	AD 61 – 113	c. AD 850	c. 750 yrs.	7
Suetonius	<i>De Vita Caesarum</i>	AD 75 - 160	C. AD 950	c. 800 yrs.	8

No book has been subject to more criticism than the Bible, yet it remains more reliable than any ancient document.

Spinoza and other critics had no idea of these manuscripts as they criticized the notion of reliability of the Bible

John Rylands Fragment



recto
part of
John 18:31-33

verso
part of
John 18:37-38

- located in the John Ryland Library of Manchester, England
- oldest known fragment of the New Testament
- dated AD 117-138
- contains fragments of the gospel of John
- within 40 years of the original

This one fragment decimates the attacks on the Bible by the German Higher Critical School (which taught that the Gospel of John was written AD 200-300). It was German Higher Criticism that set the template for liberal theories that spread throughout American liberal theological institutions.

Bodmer Papyrus

- at the Bodmer Library in Geneva, Switzerland
- contains 88 papyri manuscripts
- part of an extensive collection that contains both Greek and Coptic and both secular and sacred texts
- earliest copies of Luke, Jude, First & Second Peter
- contains
 - ✓ P⁶⁶ (shown here) - most of the Gospel of John (AD 200)
 - ✓ P⁷² - Jude, the Epistles of Peter, Psalms 33 and 34 in Greek (3rd cent.)
 - ✓ P⁷⁴ - Acts virtually complete and the General Epistles (James, 1 & 2 Peter, 1, 2 & 3 John, Jude) in fragmentary form (6th or 7th cent.)
 - ✓ P⁷⁵ - most of Luke and John (2nd or 3rd cent.)



This papyrus begins with John 1:1.

Nothing in the ancient world has anything close to the date or number of these manuscripts.

Chester Beatty Papyri



- in the Chester Beatty collection in Dublin, Ireland
- part of P⁴⁵ is owned by the University of Michigan
- early 3rd century AD
- major portions of the New Testament
- original codex contained 220 leaves
- P⁴⁵ contains much of the Gospels and Acts
- P⁴⁶ contains the Pauline Epistles
- P⁴⁷ contains Revelation

Tischendorf actually found these codices as illiterate monks at the monastery at Mt Sinai were burning them (maybe even having a “worship” service – ha! ha!

Codex Sinaiticus (Ⲙ) AD 340



Codex Alexandrinus (A) AD 450



These are prominent
in New Testament
textual criticism
(science of
manuscript selection)

Codex Vaticanus (B) AD 325-350



This one is a Rescriptus manuscript which means that it was written on, and erased, and written on again. With modern technology, we can see what was erased and then what was written on it again.

Codex Bzae (D) AD 450



Do We Have What They Wrote?

The Importance of the Time-Gap

Sir Frederic Kenyon

"The interval then between the dates of original composition and the earliest extant 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."

Do We Have What They Wrote?

The Importance of the Time-Gap

F. F. Bruce

"The evidence for our New Testament writings is ever so much greater than the evidence for many writings of classical authors, the authenticity of which no one dreams of questioning. And if the New Testament were collection of secular writings, their authenticity would generally be regarded as beyond all doubt."

F. F. Bruce, *The New Testament Documents: Are They Reliable?* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1988), 15.

Do We Have What They Wrote?

The Importance of the Number

- The more manuscripts we have of a document, the better we are able to cross-check variant readings in order to reconstruct the original reading.
- The science of comparing variant readings in copies of an ancient document in order to ascertain the original reading is called

Some liberal critics of the Bible, like Bart Ehrman, repeatedly misleads the media and the public by stressing the amount of differences in the manuscripts. I believe he is doing this intentionally---he knows better. There are differences, but we have so many that we can determine the original. Furthermore, most differences have to do with things like personal pronouns used instead of the previous proper names.

Ask yourself: if you got the messages on the right in an e-mail, would you be able to tell what the message is?

Do We Have What They Wrote?

The Importance of the Number

Congratulations! %ou have won one million dollars!
Congratulations! You have won one %illion dollars!
Con%ratulations! You have won one m%illion dollars!
Congratulations! You hav\$ won one million dollars!
Congratulations! You have %on one million %ollars!
Congratulations! You %ave won one million dollars!
%ongratulations! You have won one million dollars!
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Congratulations! You have won o%e million dollars!
Congratu%ations! You have won one million dollars!
Congratulations! You have won one millio% dollars!
Congratulations! You %ave won one million dollars!
Congratulations! You have won one ?illion dollars!
Congratulatio%is! You have won one million dollars!
Congratulations! You have won on() million dollars!
Congratulations! You have %on one million dollars!
Congratulations! %ou have won one million dollars!
Congratulations! You have won one %illion dollars!
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Congratulations! You ha%e won one million dollars!
Congratulations! You have %on one million %ollars!
Congratulations! You %ave won one million dollars!
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Congratulations! You have %on one million %ollars!

Congratulations! %ou have won one million dollars!
Congratulations! You have won one %illion dollars!
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Con%ratulations! You have won one m%illion dollars!
Congratulations! You ha%e won one million dollars!
Congratulations! You have %on one million %ollars!
Congratulations! You %ave won one million dollars!
Congratulations! You have won one mill?n dollars!
Congratulations! You %ave won one million dollars!

Do We Have What They Wrote?

The Importance of the Number

Number Greek Manuscripts of the New Testament

Papyri	109
Uncials	307
Minuscules	2,860
<u>Lectionaries</u>	<u>2,410</u>
Total:	5,686

Do We Have What They Wrote?

Other Support for the New Testament Text

Besides comparing the New Testament to other ancient literature in terms of the time-gap and the number of manuscripts, scholars consult other supporting documents in re-constructing the original reading including:

- Early versions of the New Testament
- Patristic quotations of the New Testament

Do We Have What They Wrote?

Other Support for the New Testament Text Early Versions of the New Testament

Latin Vulgate	10,000+	Old Latin	50
Ethiopic	2,000+	Anglo Saxon	7
Slavic	4,101	Gothic	6
Armenian	2,587	Sogdian	3
Syriac Pashetta	350+	Old Syriac	2
Bohairic	100	Persian	2
Arabic		Frankish	1
75		Total	19,284+

Do We Have What They Wrote?

Other Support for the New Testament Text Patristic Quotations of the New Testament

Bruce Metzger

Besides textual evidence derived from New Testament Greek manuscripts and from early versions, the textual critic has available the numerous scriptural quotations included in the commentaries, sermons, and other treatises written by early Church Fathers. Indeed so extensive are these citations that if all other sources for our knowledge of the text of the New Testament were destroyed, they would be sufficient alone for the reconstruction of practically the entire New Testament.

Bruce Metzger, *The Text of the New Testament: Its Transmission, Corruption, and Restoration*, 2nd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1968), 85.

Do We Have What They Wrote?

Other Support for the New Testament Text Patristic Quotations of the New Testament

	Gospels	Acts	Pauline Epistles	General Epistles	Revelation	TOTAL
Justin Martyr	268	10	43	6	3	330
Irenaeus	1,038	134	499	23	65	1,819
Clement of Alexandria	1,017	44	1,127	207	11	2,406
Origen	9,231	349	7,778	399	165	17,922
Tertullian	3,822	502	2,609	120	205	7,258
Hippolytus	734	42	387	27	188	1,378
Eusebius	3,258	211	1,592	68	27	5,176
TOTALS	19,368	1,352	14,035	870	664	36,289

The manuscript evidence for the historicity of the New Testament is phenomenal. Nothing comes close to it in the ancient world. It is great that the Lord, in His providence, provided all of this manuscript evidence to backup what we know to be true! The skeptic really does not have any excuse for his skepticism regarding the fact that we do have what they wrote.

In Him,
Pastor Don