

Apologetics

Manuscript Evidence For The New Testament

(II Ti 3:16-17)

INTRODUCTION

1. Good Evening
 - a. Greeting...
2. Series of lessons on "Apologetics"
 - a. Historical Jesus, Dinosaurs & Humans...
3. Tonight we are going to look at a most needed topic today the "MSS Evidence For The New Testament"
 - a. If we are going to be able to rely on the N.T. as our guide we must have a complete factual understanding of the reliability of it.
4. "What assurance is there, that what we have today in the form of the New Testament, is that which was penned by its original authors?"
 - a. To do this we must understand the process or test to determine authenticity.

I. The Bibliographical Test

- A. This test is applied to all ancient historical documents
 1. Documents like...
 - i. Julius Caesar's "Gallic War"
 - ii. Tacitus' "Histories" or "Annal"
 - iii. Plato's "Statesman"
 - iv. God's "New Testament"
- B. Questions raised in this test
 1. How many copies of the document are there?
 - i. This allows people to compare the copies with one another.
 - a. The more there are the better.
 2. Where were the copies found?
 - i. If they all are from the same place collusion is possible.
 - ii. However if they are from many different places and found written during different times it makes it less likely there would collusion.
 3. What length of time passed between the original and the earliest copies?
 - i. "If the earliest copies we have were written hundreds of years after the original, a lot of changes could have been made and we would not know it." (Christian Apologetics "Evidences For Logical And Rational Faith In Jesus Christ As The Son Of God" by Copeland, Mark pg. 19)
 - ii. The shorter the time the more reliable the copies.
 4. What variances exist between the copies?
 - i. If there were lots of major differences between the copies there would be doubt to what the original author intended.
 - ii. If the variances are few and minor then the copying of the originals over the years was accurately followed.

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II. The Bibliographical Test For The New Testament

- A. How many copies of the N.T. are available?
1. There are over 4,000 Greek MSS.
 2. There are over 13,000 fragments of the N.T. in Greek.
 3. Now compare that with other ancient writings considered "accurate" by scholars.
 - i. Caesar's "Gallic Wars" 10 MSS
 - ii. Tacitus' "Annals" 2 MSS
 - iii. Livy's "History Of Rome" 20 MSS
- B. Where were the N.T. MSS copies found?
1. All over...
 - i. Egypt, Palestine, Syria, Turkey, Greece, Italy...
 2. With the copies being found in so many different places it would be near impossible to a collusion.
 - i. Think about trying during the time frame we are talking about having so many different places coming up with the same account just to start a "revolution" especially considering the fact of how persecuted everyone was for following the N.T.
- C. How much time passed between the original writings and the earliest copies?
1. There are several N.T. papyri fragments that have been dated to within 50 to 100 years from their original.
 2. We have several **nearly complete** N.T. Greek MSS which were done 300 to 400 years after the originals.
 - i. Codex Sinaiticus
 - ii. Codex Alexandrinus
 - iii. Codex Vaticanus
 3. Now compare that with many historical MSS copies said to be accurate w/o doubt by scholars.
 - i. Histories of Thucydides 1,300 years later
 - ii. Histories of Herodotus 1,350 years later
 - iii. Gallic Wars 950 years later
 - iv. History of Rome 350 years & it is only a fragment.
 - v. Annals 950 years
- D. What variances are there between the different N.T. copies
1. There are some variations between the copies.
 - i. The "vast" majority of them are minor such as...
 - a. Spelling differences
 - b. Phraseology differences
 - c. Grammatical differences
 - ii. Only half of one percent is in question.
 - a. Homer's Iliad has five percent in question.
 - iii. Sir Frederick Kenyon wrote "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 is this the case with the New Testament."

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CONCLUSION

1. As far as the bibliographical test is concerned the N.T. passes with flying colors.
 - a. It gets a better grade than any other historical document.
 - b. 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 a collection of secular writings, their authenticity would generally be as beyond all doubt."
 - c. Josh McDowell even commented "After trying to shatter the historicity and validity of the Scripture, I came to the conclusion that they are historically trustworthy. If one discards the Bible as being unreliable, then he must discard almost all literature of antiquity."
2. Brothers and sisters we can rely on the N.T. with which we have today to be that which God intended.
3. Invitation¹
 - a. God's Plan of Salvation
 - i. Hear/Study **Rom 10:17; II Tim 2:15**
 - ii. Believe Jesus Is The Christ **Jn 3:16; 8:24**
 - iii. Repent/Turn To God **Ac 17:30; Lk 24:47**
 - iv. Confess Jesus As Lord **Mt 10:32; Rom 10:9**
 - v. Immersed For The Forgiveness of Sins **Ac 2:38; 22:16; I Pt 3:21**
 - vi. Live A Faithful Life **I Jn 1:7; Eph 5:8**

¹ Much was gleaned from brother Copeland's sermon outline "Manuscript Attestation For The New Testament" at "http://executableoutlines.com/pdf/ca_so.pdf"