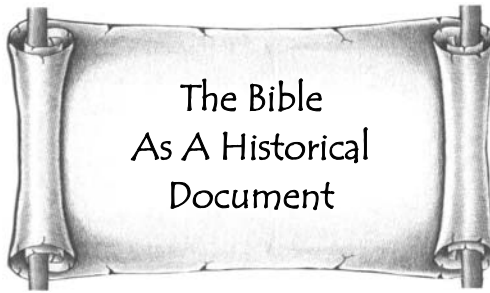


# Session 2



## ◆ Testing the Reliability of Ancient Documents

### - The Bibliographic Test

- Histories of Thucydides 1300 years from original
- Histories of Herodotus 1350 years from original
- Annals of Tacitus 950 years from original
- Caesar's "Galic War" 950 years from original
- Histories of Tacitus 750 years from original
- Roman Hisotry of Livy 350 years from original
  
- The Books of the Bible

Manuscript (MS)	Contains:	Date
Magdalen Papyrus (P64)	Matthew 26:7-8, 10, 14-15, 22-23 and 31.	Before 66 A.D.
Dead Sea Scroll MSS 7Q5	Mark 6:52-53	Before 68 A.D. "could be as early as A.D. 50"
Dead Sea Scroll MSS 7Q4	1 Timothy 3:16-4:3	Before 68 A.D.
Barcelona Papyrus (P67)	Matthew 3:9, 15; Matthew 5:20-22, 25-28	Before 66 A.D.
Paris Papyrus (P4)	Luke 3:23, 5:36	"not much later" than 66 A.D.
Chester Beatty Papyri (P46)	Paul's Epistles	85 A.D.
Bodmer Papyrus (II) (Johannine Codex P66)	Gospel of John, "near complete"	125 A.D.

- The Entire Bible

Manuscript (MS)	Date
Codex Vaticanus	325-350 A.D.
Codex Sinaiticus	350 A.D.
Codex Alexandrinus	400 A.D.
Codex Ephraemi	400 A.D.
Codex Bezae	450 A.D.+
Codex Washingtonensis	ca. 450 A.D.

## ◆ The Amount of Manuscript Copies

- Sophocles 200 manuscripts
- Roman History of Livy 20 manuscripts
- Caesar's History of Gallic Wars 10 manuscripts
- Annals of Tacitus 2 manuscripts
  
- Greek New Testament 4,000 Greek manuscripts  
13,000 portions of New Testament in Greek
  
- Testimony of the church Fathers
  - In addition to the NT MSS themselves, we have the writings of the Church Fathers, early Christian writers who quoted from the NT. To quote extensively from books and epistles (letters) of the NT those books and letters must already have been written and be in circulation.
  - The number of such quotations of the Bible known from early Christian literature is vast - over 36,000 quotes are known from before the Council of Nicaea in 325 A.D.
  - Sir David Dalrymple once asked himself the question, "Suppose that the New Testament had been destroyed, and every copy of it lost by the end of the 3rd century, could it have been collected together again from the writing of the Fathers of the second and third centuries? His answer? "...as I possessed all the existing works of the Fathers of the second and third centuries, I commenced to search, and up to this time I have found the entire New Testament, except eleven verses."
  - Irenaeus, Bishop of Lyons, was martyred around 180 A.D. He was a student of Polycarp, the long-lived disciple of St. John himself. Extant quotes of Irenaeus' writings include quotes from Matthew, Mark, Luke, Acts, I Corinthians, I Peter, Hebrews and Titus.
  - Ignatius (70-110 A.D.) quoted from Matthew, John, Acts, Romans, I Corinthians, Ephesians, Phillipians, Galatians, Colossians, James, I and II Thessalonians, I and II Timothy, and I Peter.
  - Barnabas quoted from the N.T. around 70 A.D.,
  - Hermas 95 A.D.
  - Clement of Alexandria, who lived 150-212 A.D., quoted from all but three books of the NT.
  - Justin Martyr, in 133 A.D., quoted from the Gospels, Acts, Revelation, and both Pauline and the other epistles.

"We can already say emphatically that there is no longer any solid basis for dating any book of the New Testament after about A.D. 80, two full generations before the date between 130 and 150 given by the more radical New Testament critics of today." Dr. William Foxwell Albright

## ◆ How Accurate are These Copied Manuscripts?

### - Old Testament

- Bedouin shepherds discovered the first seven scrolls in 1947. Since that time, over 700 manuscripts have been found in eleven caves surrounding Khirbet Qumran (Caves I-XI), the site of an abandoned community located on the northwestern corner of the Dead Sea. The scrolls revealed that a commune of monastic farmers, , known also as a "Dead Sea Sect", flourished in the valley from 150 B.C. to 70 A.D. It is believed that when they saw the Romans invade the land they put their cherished leather scrolls in the jars and hid them in the caves on the cliffs northwest of the Dead Sea.
- The documents contain over 100 copies of the books of the Hebrew Bible, most of which survived only as fragments. Out of 24 books all except the Book of Ester are represented. The largest manuscript (the complete Isaiah Scroll in Hebrew, 7m. long) was authoritatively dated by around 100 BCE.
- The supreme value of these Qumran documents lies in the ability of biblical scholars to compare them with the Masoretic Hebrew texts of the tenth century A.D. If, upon examination, there were little or no textual changes in those Masoretic texts where comparisons were possible, an assumption could then be made that the Masoretic Scribes had probably been just as faithful in their copying of the other biblical texts which could not be compared with the Qumran material.
- A comparison of the Qumran manuscript of Isaiah with the Masoretic text revealed them to be extremely close in accuracy to each other: "A comparison of Isaiah 53 shows that only 17 letters differ from the Masoretic text. Ten of these are mere differences in spelling (like our "honor and the English "honour") and produce no change in the meaning at all. Four more are very minor differences, such as the presence of a conjunction (and) which are stylistic rather than substantive. The other three letters are the Hebrew word for "light". This word was added to the text by someone after "they shall see" in verse 11. Out of 166 words in this chapter, only this one word is really in question, and it does not at all change the meaning of the passage. We are told by biblical scholars that this is typical of the whole manuscript of Isaiah.

### - New Testament

- With the wealth of manuscripts, scholars are able to compare the different manuscripts with one another. In the many thousands of manuscript copies we possess of the New Testament, scholars have discovered that there are some 150,000 "variants." Or differences in manuscripts.
- This may seem like a staggering figure. But to those who study the issue, the numbers are not so damning as it may initially appear. Many of these variants simply involve a missing letter in a word; some involve reversing the order of two words (such as "Christ Jesus" instead of "Jesus Christ"); some may involve the absence of one or more insignificant words. Most of the manuscript variations concern matters of spelling, word order, tenses, and the like;
- No single doctrine is affected by variants in any way.
- Reconstructing the original from these various manuscripts is called 'textual criticism.'



## ◆ What About Other Historical Accounts?

### - Old Testament

- Campaign into Israel by Pharaoh Shishak (1 Kings 14:25-26), recorded on the walls of the Temple of Amun in Thebes, Egypt.
- Revolt of Moab against Israel (2 Kings 1:1; 3:4-27), recorded on the Mesha Inscription.
- Fall of Samaria (2 Kings 17:3-6, 24; 18:9-11) to Sargon II, king of Assyria, as recorded on his palace walls.
- Defeat of Ashdod by Sargon II (Isaiah 20:1), as recorded on his palace walls.
- Campaign of the Assyrian king Sennacherib against Judah (2 Kings 18:13-16), as recorded on the Taylor Prism.
- Siege of Lachish by Sennacherib (2 Kings 18:14, 17), as recorded on the Lachish reliefs.
- Assassination of Sennacherib by his own sons (2 Kings 19:37), as recorded in the annals of his son Esarhaddon.
- Fall of Nineveh as predicted by the prophets Nahum and Zephaniah (2:13-15), recorded on the Tablet of Nabopolassar.
- Fall of Jerusalem to Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon (2 Kings 24:10-14), as recorded in the Babylonian Chronicles.
- Captivity of Jehoiachin, king of Judah, in Babylon (2 Kings 24:15-16), as recorded on the Babylonian Ration Records.
- Fall of Babylon to the Medes and Persians (Daniel 5:30-31), as recorded on the Cyrus Cylinder.
- Freeing of captives in Babylon by Cyrus the Great (Ezra 1:1-4; 6:3-4), as recorded on the Cyrus Cylinder.

### - New Testament

- The existence of Jesus Christ as recorded by Cornelius Tacitus (Roman Historian 112 A.D.)
- The existence of Jesus Christ as recorded in the Letter of Mara-Seapion (written to his son 73 A.D.)
- The existence of Jesus Christ as recorded by Pliny the Younger (Governor of Bithynia 112 A.D.)
- The existence of Jesus Christ as recorded by Seutonius (Court official and annalist under Hadrian 120 A.D.)
- The existence of Jesus Christ as recorded by Flavius Josephus. A Jewish general turned Roman historian, born in 37 A.D.
- Forcing Jews to leave Rome during the reign of Claudius (A.D. 41-54) (Acts 18:2), as recorded by Suetonius.
- The destruction of Jerusalem between 66-70 A.D. from Roman manuscripts.

## ◆ What About the Accuracy of the Originals?

### EyeWitness Accounts

- Testimony of PETER: for we did not follow cleverly devised tales when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of His majesty // and we ourselves heard this utterance made from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain. (2 Peter 1:16-18)
- Testimony of JOHN: what we have heard, what we have seen with our own eyes, what we beheld and our hands handled // and we have seen and bear witness and proclaim to you // what we have seen and heard we proclaim to you also (1 John 1:1-2)

### The Master Historian: Dr. Luke

In as much as many have undertaken to compile an account of the things accomplished among us, just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and servants of the word have handed them down to us, it seemed fitting for me as well, having investigated everything carefully from the beginning, to write it out for you in consecutive order, most excellent Theophilus; so that you might know the exact truth about the things you have been taught.

#### √ Taking pains to situate his account in familiar historical markers

Luke 1:5 In the days of Herod king of Judea ..

Luke 2:1-2 a decree went out from Caesar Augustus .. this was the first census taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria.

Luke 3:1-2 Now in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, and Herod was tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip was tetrarch of the region of Iturea and Trachonitis, and Lysanias was tetrarch of Abilene, in the highpriesthood of Annas and Ciaphas ..

#### √ Gospel/Acts - has over 100 personal names, usually given with their occupation or the city they were from - and over 40 references to specific cities/provinces.

Luke 1:5 Zacharias .. a certain priest, of the division of Abijah

Acts 18:8 Crispus .. leader of the synagogue

Acts 20:4 Sopater of Berea .. son of Pyrrus

Acts 20:4 Aristarchus and Secundus ..of the Thessalonians

Acts 20:4 Gaius of Derbe

Acts 13:13-14 put out to sea from Pathos and came to Perga in Pamphylia

Acts 14:6 fled to the cities of Lycaonia, Lystra and Derbe

Acts 20:6 and we sailed from Phillipi after the days of the unleavened Bread, and came to them at Troas within five days; and there we stayed seven days.

