

Evidence that The Bible is The Infallible Word of God
~ Ten Reasons to Believe ~
Lesson #5 • Evidence for the Reliability of the New Testament Text
Part 1 of 2
• H A N D O U T •

► For this study, we will look at the evidence for the New Testament texts to see if it is as trustworthy and reliable as the Old Testament.

Just like the Old Testament, we have no “autographs” – original manuscripts – of any book from the New Testament. But, we do have a great many manuscripts which are copies of the originals. In fact we have more from the New Testament than we do from the Old Testament. Our goal is to make sure these copies are accurate and reliably represent the originals. Also, we need to also make sure the text was not altered during the copying process.

► **To accomplish this, we are going to use the “science of textual criticism.”**

1. We need to understand the role of a textual critic.
2. Since there are no originals, we need to know where can we find evidence to determine the reliability of the text we do have.
3. We also need to know the time interval between the date of original work and the copy.
4. We also need to know how many copies are available to examine and compare.

So ... let's get started:

Q: What is a “textual critic”

Q: Why is the time span between the date of the original work and the date of the copy [the extant copy] important?

Q: As an example of the importance of the time span, if we use the original date and the extant date of one of the New Testament books and then compare that with the famous work of antiquity, Homer's Iliad, how would the time frame of the original compare to the extant?

► New Testament:

Original text or letters were written between _____

The earliest dated extant copy is: _____

At **most** that is an _____ span; at **least** only a _____ span.

► Homer's Iliad:

Written in _____

We have no autograph copy of the Iliad.

The earliest dated extant copy is _____

That is a span of _____ years.

Q: How should we view the span between the original and the extant copies of the New Testament? How does the span affect the reliability of the New Testament scriptures?

Q: Why is the number of copies available for study and reconstruction of the New Testament important to the issue of trustworthiness of the text?

The reliability of the New Testament depends on more than just the time span between the original and earliest dated extant copy, or the number of copies available.

We have additional evidence from:

The Greek Manuscripts, The Versions, and The Church Fathers.

1. THE GREEK MANUSCRIPTS

The language most often used to write the New Testament was Koine Greek – the same language used in the Septuagint to translate the Hebrew Text into Greek.

Within the Koine Greek there are three styles of manuscript writing:

UNCIAL • Minuscule • Lectionaries

Q: What are the differences between three styles of Koine Greek manuscript writing?

Style	Description
UNCIAL • 267 extant copies	
MINUSCULE • 2,764 extant copies	
LECTIONARIES • 2,143 extant copies	

**Other important Greek Manuscripts:
Codex Sinaiticus • Codex Vaticanus**

Codex Sinaiticus: Just as the Dead Sea Scrolls gave us reliable evidence that the Old Testament text has been preserved without textual change or error, we have a source from the same region that gives us evidence that the New Testament text is just as reliable and trustworthy as the Old. The fact that the evidence all comes from the same general physical region points to the climate of the desert. Only in this insufferably dry air could parchments or even leather ever survive. *[One scholar mused: "Perhaps that was God's purpose for creating the desert in the first place."]*



► In 1844 a German named Tischendorf found a manuscript of the Old and New Testaments at the Monastery of St. Catherine in the heart of the Sinai Desert. The New Testament is preserved complete with an added "Letter of Barnabas."

This manuscript, designated "Codex Sinaiticus," was copied between 330 and 350 A.D. and written in UNCIAL Koine Greek. The Codex Sinaiticus is, perhaps, one of the most significant extant manuscripts and provides great evidence for the accuracy of the New Testament.

Codex Vaticanus: This is the only other manuscript that is as old as the Sinaiticus. It is also written UNCIAL manuscript. It is a copy of the Septuagint O.T. but with the books of Judith and Tobit added. It reflects the N.T. books with the exception of 1 & 2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon and Revelation. Its place of origin is uncertain. Southern Italy, Alexandria, and Caesarea have been proposed. It resides in Rome, in the Vatican Library, where it has been since 1475. It is written on parchment in a three-column format, without any word division, punctuation or pagination; it's the work-product of two or three different scribes.



Q: What is a Codex?

Q: What is the biggest problem with Codices written during this general time-period? [The Byzantine Codex is a good example of another Codex available from the time-period.]

Example: **Byzantine Codex:**

Another manuscript text style during this period:

Q: The Sinaiticus or the Vaticanus were written in the same general time-line, but were ever together in the same location. Why is that important?

Q: How do the Codex Sinaiticus and the Codex Vaticanus compare to each other?

Q: Beyond the difference in content, are there other differences between the two codices?

Q: Why has the differences between the two codices become such a controversy?

► Note: [1]

► Note: [2]

Q: Should we be concerned that there are differences between them?

N.A.S. • Mark 10:27	N.I.V. • Mark 10:27	E.S.V. • Mark 10:27	K.J.V. • Mark 10:27
Jesus looking upon them saith, With men it is impossible, but not with God: for all things are possible with God.	Jesus looked at them and said, "With man this is impossible, but not with God; all things are possible with God."	Jesus looked at them and said, "With man it is impossible, but not with God. For all things are possible with God.	And Jesus looking upon them saith, With men it is impossible, but not with God: for with God all things are possible.

If we had to determine the reliability of the N.T. from the Codices alone, it might be a difficult task. However, there is more evidence to look at. The next line of evidence comes from

The Versions.

This is where we will pick up next time.



Next Time • **Lesson #6**

Evidence for the Reliability of the New Testament Text • Part 2

