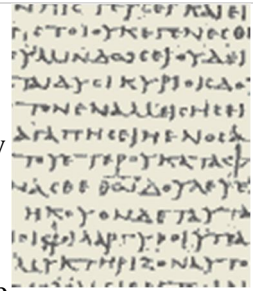


Manuscript evidence for superior New Testament reliability

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The New [Testament](#) is constantly under attack, and its reliability and accuracy are often contested by critics. If the critics want to disregard the New Testament, then they must also disregard other ancient writings by Plato, Aristotle, and Homer. This is because the New Testament documents are better-preserved and more numerous than any other ancient writings. Because they are so numerous, they can be [cross checked](#) for accuracy . . . and they are very consistent.

There are presently 5,686 Greek manuscripts in existence today for the New Testament.¹ If we were to compare the number of New Testament manuscripts to other ancient writings, we find that the New Testament manuscripts far outweigh the others in quantity.²

Author	Date Written	Earliest Copy	Approximate Time Span between original & copy	Number of Copies	Accuracy of Copies
Lucretius	died 55 or 53 B.C.		1100 yrs	2	----
Pliny	A.D. 61-113	A.D. 850	750 yrs	7	----
Plato	427-347 B.C.	A.D. 900	1200 yrs	7	----
Demosthenes	4th Cent. B.C.	A.D. 1100	800 yrs	8	----
Herodotus	480-425 B.C.	A.D. 900	1300 yrs	8	----
Suetonius	A.D. 75-160	A.D. 950	800 yrs	8	----
Thucydides	460-400 B.C.	A.D. 900	1300 yrs	8	----
Euripides	480-406 B.C.	A.D. 1100	1300 yrs	9	----
Aristophanes	450-385 B.C.	A.D. 900	1200	10	----
Caesar	100-44 B.C.	A.D. 900	1000	10	----
Livy	59 BC-AD 17	----	???	20	----
Tacitus	circa A.D. 100	A.D. 1100	1000 yrs	20	----
Aristotle	384-322 B.C.	A.D. 1100	1400	49	----
Sophocles	496-406 B.C.	A.D. 1000	1400 yrs	193	----
Homer (Iliad)	900 B.C.	400 B.C.	500 yrs	643	95%
New Testament	1st Cent. A.D. (A.D. 50-100)	2nd Cent. A.D. (c. A.D. 130 f.)	less than 100 years	5600	99.5%

As you can see, there are thousands more New Testament Greek manuscripts than any other ancient writing. The internal consistency of the New Testament documents is about 99.5% textually pure. That is an amazing accuracy. In addition, there are over 19,000 copies in the

Syriac, Latin, Coptic, and Aramaic languages. The total supporting New Testament manuscript base is over 24,000.

Almost all biblical scholars agree that the New Testament documents were all written before the close of the First Century. If Jesus was crucified in A.D. 30., then that means the entire New Testament was completed within 70 years. This is important because it means there were plenty of people around when the New Testament documents were penned--people who could have contested the writings. In other words, those who wrote the documents knew that if they were inaccurate, plenty of people would have pointed it out. But, we have absolutely no ancient documents contemporary with the First Century that contest the New Testament texts.

Furthermore, another important aspect of this discussion is the fact that we have a fragment of the gospel of John that dates back to around 29 years from the original writing (John Rylands Papyri A.D. 125). This is extremely close to the original writing date. This is simply unheard of in any other ancient writing, and it demonstrates that the Gospel of John is a First Century document.

Below is a chart with some of the oldest extant New Testament manuscripts compared to when they were originally penned. Compare these time spans with the next closest, which is Homer's *Iliad*, where the closest copy from the original is 500 years later. Undoubtedly, that period of time allows for more textual corruption in its transmission. How much less so for the New Testament documents?