

Has the Bible Been Changed?

We have no original documents of the New Testament (N.T.) written by the apostles. We only have copies. But the fact is, we have no originals of any old, trusted book. And besides, if we had only a single original of the Bible, how would we know it hadn't been stolen and replaced by a fraud?

We know that modern Bibles say what the apostles wrote because we have three types of writings:

1) Manuscripts (MSS) Copies in the original language

- 76 papyri which survive only in Egypt due to climate.
- 250 uncials (printing) on vellum (calf skin), dating A.D. 350 - 800
- 2,646 cursives, or minuscules, on paper which was invented in the 9th century
- 1,997 lectionaries (passages from a church's calendar of readings, not in Biblical order)
- about 25 ostraca (Bible verses on pottery)
- 9 talismans (Bible verses on "lucky charms")

These 5,000 MSS vary in length from a few verses to several N.T. books, but seldom contain the entire N.T. Some MSS are on torn pieces of paper or broken pottery, others are in the form of a scroll, and others are in a codex (a book with pages). With thousands of MSS, we have many copies of some verses and only a few copies of others.

A "text" is the entire N.T. in the original language (Greek) which has been compiled by adding together all the MSS. Different texts were compiled from different MSS, resulting in small differences between some Bibles. No variations change a single doctrine or belief. For more detail, see "The Story of the English Bible."

2) Early Versions *The entire N.T.* can be compiled from over 19,000 copies of translations into:

- Aramaic ("Curetonian" and "Sinaitic" MSS (300's); a revision, the "Peshitta"; 350 MSS from 400's)
- Old Latin (for missionaries to N. Africa and Italy, later revised by Jerome), 300's to 1,200's
- Egyptian (Coptic, Sahidic and Bohairic dialects; copies from A.D. 200's)

3) Quotations by Christians, often from memory or paraphrased. *The whole N.T.* (except for less than a dozen verses) can be found in very early quotations from

- Clement of Rome (A.D. 96), Barnabas - not the one in the N.T. - (A.D. 100), the Didache (or, "Teachings of the 12", A.D. 100), Ignatius (A.D. 115), and Polycarp (A.D. 120), just for starters.

Now compare the N.T. to classical books (accepted by scholars as authentic and trustworthy).

Look at the age of what has survived:

<u>Book</u>	<u>Author</u>	<u>Date Written</u>	<u>Oldest MSS</u>	<u>Gap</u>
Secular (non-religious) works				
"Homer"	Homer	900 B.C.	400 B.C.	500 yrs.
"Gallic War"	Julius Caesar	58 - 50 B.C.	9th cent.	> 800 yrs.
"Roman History"	Livy	59 B.C. - A.D. 17	4th cent.	300 yrs.
"Annals"	Tacitus	A.D. 100	11th cent.	1,000 yrs.
"History of Heroditus"	Heroditus	480 - 425 B.C.	A.D. 900	1,300 yrs.
The New Testament				
Chester Beatty Papyri	Apostles	A.D. 40 - 100	Early 200's	125 yrs.
(Discovered in Egypt in the 1930's; 1 gospel; Acts; Paul's epistles; Revelation 9-17)				
John Rylands Fragment			Early 100's	30 yrs.
(Discovered in Egypt in 1935; A small part of the gospel of John)				
Bodmer Papyri			A.D. 175 - 225	120 yrs.
(Published by the Bodmer Library, Geneva; Jude, 1&2 Peter; all of Luke and John)				
Codices Sinaiticus and Vaticanus			A.D. 350	300 yrs.
Codex Alexandrinus			5th cent.	400 yrs.
Codices Bezae and Ephraemi			5th or 6th cent.	450 yrs.

Look at the quantity of what has survived:

<u>Book</u>	<u>Percentage</u>	<u>Number of MSS</u>
"Homer"	All	647 (457 papyri, 2 uncials, 188 cursives)
Livy's "Roman History"	35 of 147 books	~20
Tacitus' "Histories"	4 1/2 of 14 books	2
Tacitus' "Annals"	10 of 16 books	2
"History of Thucydides"	All	8
New Testament	All*	5,300 MSS plus 19,300 early versions

***Note:** We do not have every book ever written by an apostle, but we trust God to have preserved all that He intended for us to have.

For exhausting detail and many more examples, see Evidence that Demands a Verdict, by Josh McDowell, Here's Life Publishers, Inc., P.O. Box 1576 San Bernardino, CA 92402, ©1979. See also, Pillars of Faith: Biblical Certainty in an Uncertain World, Herman O. Wilson and Morris M. Womack, Eds., Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, MI, 1973.