

**Bibliographical Test: THE NEW TESTAMENT COMPARED WITH
OTHER WORKS OF ANTIQUITY**

The Manuscript Comparison⁵:

F.F. Bruce in *The New Testament Documents* vividly pictures the comparison between the New Testament and the ancient historical writings.

As Bruce also comments in *The Books and Parchments*, "There is no body of ancient literature in the world which enjoys such a wealth of good textual attestation as the New Testament."

Author	When Written	Earliest Copy	Time Span	No. of copies
Caesar	100-44 BC	AD 900	1,000 yrs.	10
Plato	427-347 BC	AD 900	1,200 yrs.	7
Sophocles	496-406 BC	AD 1000	1,400 yrs.	193
Aristotle	384-322 BC	AD 1100	1,400 yrs.	49

Historian J. Harold Greenlee rightfully concludes, "Since scholars accept as generally trustworthy the writings of the ancient classics even though the earliest MSS (handwritten copies of the Scriptures) written so long after the original writings and the number of extant MSS is in many instances so small, it is clear that the reliability of the text of the New Testament is likewise assured."

Bruce Metzger observes: "in the entire range of ancient Greek and Latin literature, the Iliad ranks next to the New Testament in possessing the greatest amount of manuscript testimony."

Work	When Written	earliest Copy	Time span	No. of copies
Homer (Iliad)	900 BC	400 BC	500 yrs.	643
New Testament	40-100 AD	125 AD	25 yrs.	Over 24,000 ⁶

As Floyd McElveen has observed in *God's Word, Final, Infallible and Forever*,

"Even if someone deliberately or by accident amended or corrupted a manuscript, it would be corrected by the many other manuscripts available. To sum up; unless we want to throw a blanket over all of history and say that there is nothing knowable about the past, no history that can be trusted, no Grecian or Roman history, no Aristotle or Plato or Socrates, we had better not make any claims against the historicity and accuracy of the New Testament. The New Testament documents are far more numerous, older, demonstrably more accurate historically, and have been examined by a far greater battery of scholars, both friend and foe, than all the other ancient manuscripts put together. They have met the test impeccably!"⁷

⁵ Much of the information on this page has been adapted from Josh McDowell and Bill Wilson, *A Ready Defense* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1993) 44-47.

⁶ Josh McDowell, 43. McDowell points out, “There are now more than 5,300 known Greek manuscripts of the New Testament. Add of 10,000 Latin Vulgate and at least 9,300 other early versions and we have more than 24,000 manuscript copies of portions of the New Testament in existence.”

⁷ Floyd McElveen, *God’s Word, Final, Infallible and Forever* (Grand Rapids: Gospel Truth Ministries, 1985) 19.