

WHO WAS JESUS?

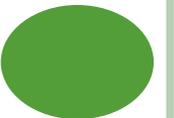
VALIDITY OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

1 John 1:3 That which we have seen and heard we declare to you, that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ.

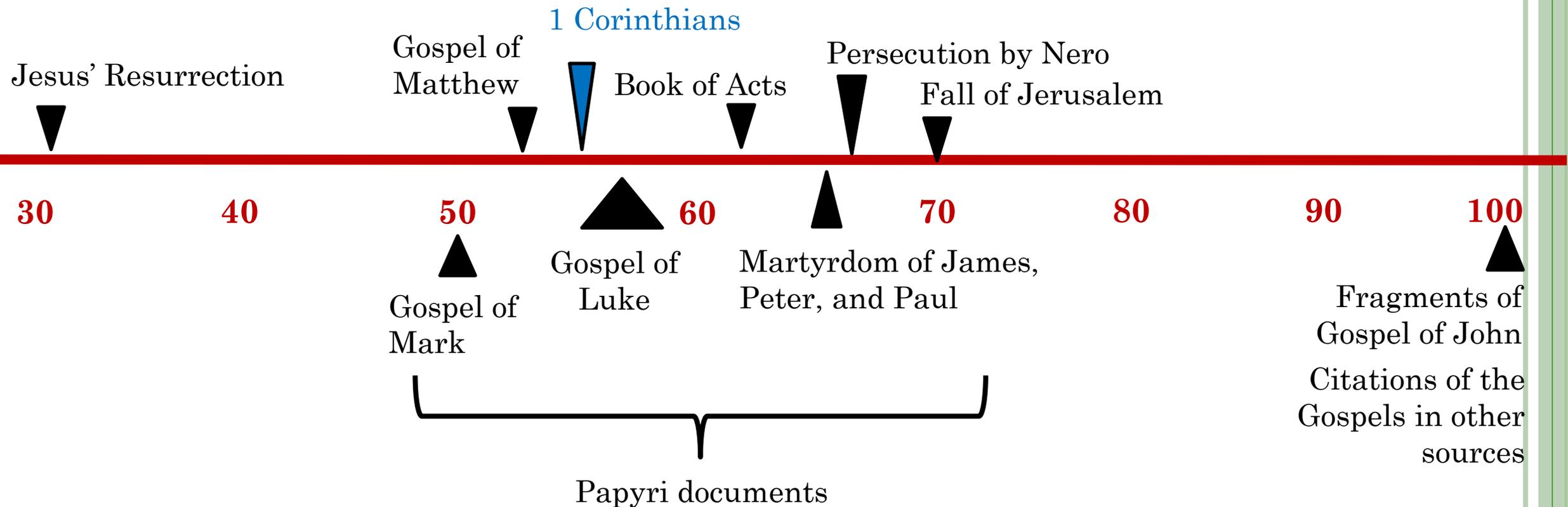
Mark 8:29 Jesus said to them, “But who do you say that I am?”

ASSESSMENT OF ANCIENT LITERATURE

- Bibliographical test:
 - Is the text we have now what was originally recorded?
- Internal evidence test:
 - Is the text credible?
- External evidence test:
 - Do other historical texts confirm or deny the contents?



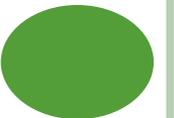
WHEN WAS THE NEW TESTAMENT WRITTEN?



WHEN WAS THE NEW TESTAMENT WRITTEN?

- Paul wrote 1 Corinthians around AD 55 or 56, while most of the 250 witnesses of Jesus' resurrection were still alive.
 - “I passed on to you what was most important and what had also been passed on to me. **Christ died for our sins**, just as the Scriptures said. He was **buried**, and he was **raised from the dead** on the third day, just as the Scriptures said. He **was seen** by Peter and then by the Twelve. After that, he **was seen** by more than 500 of his followers at one time, **most of whom are still alive**, though some have died. Then he was seen by James and later by all the apostles. Then last of all He was seen by me also, as by one born out of due time.”

-- 1 Corinthians 15:3-8



MANUSCRIPT EVIDENCE

- Historical accuracy of ancient texts are judged by:
 - Number of **manuscripts** (a handwritten copy) and
 - Time interval between the manuscript and the original (**the autograph**).

Document	Date of Original	# Manuscripts	Date of Manuscripts	Time Interval
History of Thucydides	460-400 BC	8	AD 900	1300 years
Aristotle's documents	343 BC	5	AD 1100	1500 years
Caesar's composition on Gallic Wars	59-50 BC	10	AD 950	1000 years
<i>Annals of Imperial Rome</i> by Tacitus	AD 116	1	AD 850	700 years
<i>Jewish War</i> by Josephus	AD 100	9	AD 900	800 years
<i>Iliad</i> by Homer	800 BC	650	AD 200	1,000 years

MANUSCRIPT EVIDENCE OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

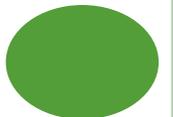
- More than 5,000 individual Greek manuscripts that contain all or part of the New Testament have been found
 - Augmented by more than 10,000 copies of the Latin Vulgate
- In total, the New Testament has 24,970 manuscripts all within 350 years of the events they relate

Document	Date of Original	Date of Manuscripts	Time Interval
John Ryland's manuscript: Portions of Gospel of John	AD 60-90	AD 117-138	70 years
Bodmer Papyri: Portions of each Gospel, most of Luke and John	AD 55-90	AD 200	140 years
Beatty Papyri: Almost all of NT, large portions of each Gospel	AD 55-90	AD 250	200 years

MANUSCRIPT EVIDENCE OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

- Five important Greek writings on parchment in codex form (arranged more like a modern book instead of on a scroll form)

Document	Content	Date
Codex Sinaiticus	Contains entire New Testament and parts of the Old Testament	AD 340
Codex Vaticanus	Includes almost the entire Bible	AD 325-350
Codex Alexandrinus	Contains most of the Bible	AD 450
Codex Bezae	Written in Greek and Latin, includes most of the four Gospels	AD 450-550
Codex Ephraemi	Contains part of the Old Testament and most of the New Testament	AD 400



MANUSCRIPT EVIDENCE OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

- “The interval then between the dates of the original composition and the earliest extant evidence becomes so small as to be in fact negligible, and the last foundation for any doubt that the Scriptures have come down to us substantially as they were written has now been removed. Both the authenticity and general integrity of the books of the New Testament may be regarded as finally established.”

-- Sir Frederic Kenyon, expert on ancient manuscripts

- “To be skeptical of the resultant text of the New Testament books is to allow all of classical antiquity to slip into obscurity, for no documents of the ancient period are as well attested bibliographically as the New Testament.”

-- John Warwick Montgomery, *History and Christianity*



CREDIBILITY OF THE AUTHORS

○ Peter

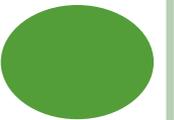
- “We did not follow cleverly invented stories when we told you about the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but **we were eyewitnesses** of his majesty.” – 2 Peter 1:16
- “God has raised this Jesus to life, and **we are all witnesses** of the fact.” – Acts 2:32
- “**We are witnesses** of everything he did in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem.” – Acts 10:39

○ John

- “We proclaim to you what we have **seen and heard** so that you also may have fellowship with us.” – 1 John 1:3
- “The man **who saw it** [Jesus’s death on the cross] has given testimony, and his testimony is true.” – John 19:35

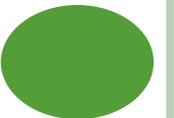
○ All the disciples

- “On my account you will be brought before governors and kings **as witnesses** to them and to the Gentiles” (Jesus to the disciples) – Matthew 10:18
- “Therefore, **since I myself have carefully investigated everything** from the beginning, it seemed good also to me to write an orderly account for you.” – Luke 1:1-3



CREDIBILITY OF THE AUTHORS

- The authors appealed to their contemporaries
 - Acts 2:22-23 “Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a Man attested by God to you by miracles, wonders, and signs which God did through Him in your midst, as you yourselves also know— Him, being delivered by the determined purpose and foreknowledge of God, you have taken by lawless hands, have crucified, and put to death.”
 - Acts 26:26 “For the king, before whom I also speak freely, knows these things; for I am convinced that none of these things escapes his attention, since this thing was not done in a corner.”

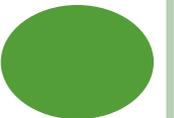


CREDIBILITY OF THE AUTHORS

- Gospel of Matthew: written by Matthew, one of the disciples of Jesus; firsthand account of the ministry of Jesus
- Gospel of Mark: written by John Mark, cousin of Barnabas and associate of the apostle Paul; reflects the eyewitness testimony of the apostle Peter
- Gospel of John: written by John, a disciple and closest friend of Jesus; refers to himself as the disciple “whom Jesus loved”
 - John 21:24-25 “This is the disciple who testifies of these things, and wrote these things; and we know that his testimony is true. And there are also many other things that Jesus did, which if they were written one by one, I supposed that even the world itself could not contain the books that would be written. Amen.”
 - 1 John 1:1-4 “That which was heard from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, concerning the Word of Life – the life was manifested, and we have seen, and bear witness, and declare to you that eternal life which was with the Father and was manifested to us...”

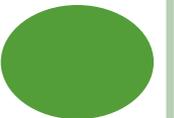
CREDIBILITY OF THE AUTHORS

- Gospel of Luke: written by Luke, a companion of the apostle Paul. Luke also had access to all the principle apostolic figures including Peter and James (the brother of Jesus)
 - Luke 1:1-4: “**Many have undertaken to draw up an account** of the things that have been fulfilled among us, just as they were handed down to us by those who from the first were eyewitnesses and servants of the word. Therefore, **since I myself have carefully investigated everything** from the beginning, it seemed good also to me to write an **orderly account** for you, most excellent Theophilus, so that you may know the **certainty** of the things you have been taught.”



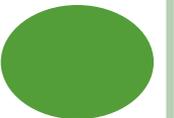
CREDIBILITY OF THE AUTHORS

- Acts of the Apostles also written by Luke
 - Contains the “we” passages for Luke’s firsthand accounts
 - Historian of the first degree
 - “It did not lie then in my line of life to investigate the subject minutely, but more recently I found myself often brought into contact with the book of Acts as an authority for the topography, antiquities, and society of Asia Minor. It was gradually borne in upon me that in various details the narrative showed marvelous truth.”
 - Archaeologist Sir William Ramsay
 - “For Acts the confirmation of historicity is overwhelming...any attempt to reject its basic historicity even in matters of detail must now appear absurd.”
 - Historian A.N. Sherwin-White



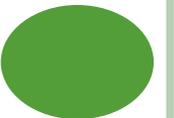
CREDIBILITY OF THE AUTHORS

- Epistles of Peter Although Peter didn't pen one of the Gospels himself (his account is written by Mark), we do have his letters
 - 2 Peter 1:15-18 “Moreover, I will be careful to ensure that you always have a reminder of these things after my decease. For we did not follow **cleverly invented stories** when we told you about the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were **eyewitnesses** of his majesty. For we received honor and glory from God the Father when the voice came to Him from the Majestic Glory, saying, “This is My Son, whom I love; with Him I am well pleased.” We **ourselves heard this voice** that came from heaven when we were with him on the sacred mountain.”



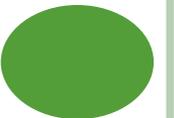
CREDIBILITY OF THE AUTHORS

- All the new testament writers were either apostles or associated with the apostles
- They included material that is not flattering to themselves
- They documented their tendency to doubt whether Jesus rose from the dead
- They included “hard sayings” of Jesus
- Their stories had variations between them
- They had little to gain in the world if this were a fabrication



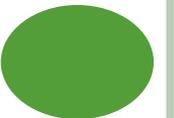
EVIDENCE FROM EXTERNAL SOURCES

- The historian Eusebius preserved the writings of Papias, a bishop of Hierapolis in AD 130:
 - “The Elder (Apostle John) used to say this also: ‘Mark, having been the interpreter of Peter, wrote down accurately all that he (Peter) mentioned, whether sayings or doings of Christ, not, however, in order. For he was neither a hearer nor a companion of the Lord; but afterwards, as I said, he accompanied Peter, who adapted his teachings as necessity required, not as though he were making a compilation of the sayings of the Lord. So then Mark made no mistake, writing down in this way some things as he mentioned them; for he paid attention to this one thing, not to omit anything that he had heard, not to include any false statement among them.’”



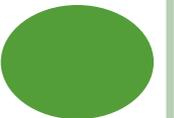
EVIDENCE FROM EXTERNAL SOURCES

- Irenaeus, Bishop of Lyons in AD 180 wrote:
 - “Matthew published his Gospel among the Hebrews in their own tongue, when Peter and Paul were preaching the gospel in Rome and founding the church there. After their departure, Mark, the disciple and interpreter of Peter, himself handed down to us in writing the substance of Peter’s preaching. Luke, the follower of Paul, set down in a book the gospel preached by his teacher. Then John, the disciple of the Lord...produced his Gospel, while he was living at Ephesus in Asia.”



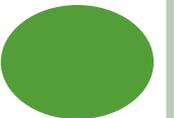
EVIDENCE FROM EXTERNAL SOURCES

- Josephus, Jewish historian, AD 37-100
 - Records many of the people well-known to us from the New Testament: Herod's family, procurators of Judea, high priestly families (Annas, Caiaphas, Ananias), the execution of James (Jesus' brother) and John the Baptist.
 - “At this time, there was a wise man who was called Jesus...Pilate condemned Him to be condemned to die. And those who had become His disciples did not abandon His discipleship. They reported that He had appeared to them three days after His crucifixion and that He was alive; accordingly He was perhaps the Messiah concerning whom the prophets have recounted wonders.”



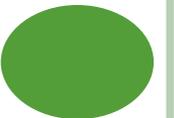
EVIDENCE FROM EXTERNAL SOURCES

- References to Christ from Tacitus, a Roman historian living from AD 56 to AD 117, in his account of Nero's attempt to cover up his burning of Rome:
 - “Nero fastened the guilt and inflicted the most exquisite tortures on a class hated for their abominations, called Christians by the populace. **Christus**, from whom the name had its origin, suffered the extreme penalty during the reign of Tiberius at the hands of one of our procurators, **Pontius Pilatus**, and a most mischievous superstition, thus checked for the moment, again broke out **not only in Judea, the first source of the evil**, but even in Rome...Accordingly, an arrest was first made of all who pleaded guilty: then, upon their information, an immense multitude was convicted, not so much of the crime of firing the city, as of hatred against mankind.”



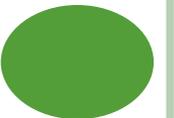
EVIDENCE FROM EXTERNAL SOURCES

- Pliny the younger, a Roman lawyer from AD 61 to 112, in a letter to the emperor Trajan for advice on whether he should kill all Christians or just certain ones.
 - “I have asked them if they are **Christians**...warning of the punishment awaiting them. If they persist, I order them to be led away for execution...They affirmed, however, that the whole of their guilt, or their error, was that they were in the habit of **meeting on a certain fixed day before it was light**, when they **sang in alternate verse a hymn to Christ as to a god**, and bound themselves to a solemn oath, **not to do any wicked deeds**...This made me decide it was all the more necessary to extract the truth by torture from two **slave-women, whom they called deaconesses**.”



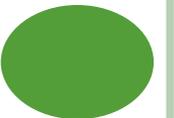
EVIDENCE FROM EXTERNAL SOURCES

- Lucian of Samosta, a Greek satirist in the second century AD.
 - “The Christians, you know, worship a man to this day – the distinguished personage who introduced their novel rites, and was crucified on that account....You see, these misguided creatures start with the general conviction that they are immortal for all time, which explains the contempt of death and voluntary self-devotion which are so common among them; and then it was impressed on them by their original lawgiver that they are all brothers, from the moment that they are converted, and deny the gods of Greece, and worship the crucified sage, and live after his laws. All this they take quite on faith, with the result that they despise all worldly goods alike, regarding them merely as common property.”



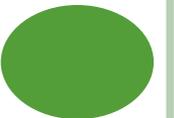
EVIDENCE FROM EXTERNAL SOURCES

- Suetonius, a court official under Emperor Hadrian
 - “As the Jews were making constant disturbances at the instigation of Chrestus, he [Claudius] expelled them from Rome.”
 - “Punishment by Nero was inflicted on the Christians, a class of men given to a new and mischievous superstition.”



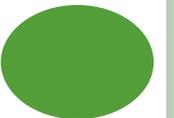
EVIDENCE FROM EXTERNAL SOURCES

- Even if there were no manuscript evidence of the New Testament directly, we could conclude just from the external sources alone:
 - Jesus was a wise and virtuous man from Judea
 - Jesus reportedly performed miracles and made prophetic claims
 - Jewish leaders condemned him for acts of sorcery and apostasy
 - He was crucified by the Roman procurator Pontius Pilate at the time of the Jewish Passover during the reign of Emperor Tiberius
 - Jesus' followers, called Christians, believed He had risen from the dead
 - The Christian faith had spread to Rome where Christians were charged with crimes and faced persecution
 - First century Christians worshiped Jesus as God
 - The disciples were known for courage and virtue in the face of intense persecution



CONCLUSION

- The Gospel accounts are dated such that they were written within 7 to 30 years after the events they record
- The New Testament books have more manuscript evidence than any other ancient text that is readily accepted as accurate
- The authors were credible because they were either eyewitnesses to the events they wrote about or they carefully investigated those that were eyewitnesses
- Other external ancient sources confirm much of what the New Testament states



CONCLUSION

- “There is no body of ancient literature in the world which enjoys such a wealth of good textual attestation as the New Testament.”

-- Scholar F.F. Bruce

- “There exists no document from the ancient world witnessed by so excellent a set of textual and historical testimonies, and offering so superb an array of historical data on which an intelligent decision may be made. An honest person cannot dismiss a source of this kind. Skepticism regarding the historical credentials of Christianity is based upon an irrational bias.”

-- Dr. Clark H. Pinnock, Professor of Systematic Theology

