
THE BIBLIOGRAPHICAL TEST

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(Adapted from an earlier article by Clay Jones, *The Bibliographical Test Updated*, *Christian Research Journal*, vol. 35, no. 3 (2012). Available at www.equip.org/articles/the-bibliographical-test-updated/)

SYNOPSIS

The bibliographical test examines manuscript reliability and for more than a generation, Christian apologists have employed it to substantiate the transmissional reliability of the Bible. The bibliographical test compares the closeness of the Old and New Testament's oldest extant manuscripts to its autographs (the date each book was originally penned) and the sheer number of the Biblical extant manuscripts with the number and earliness of extant manuscripts or other ancient documents like Homer, Aristotle, Herodotus and so on. Since the Bible outstrips every other ancient manuscript in sheer number and earliness to the autograph, then the Old and New Testaments have a solid basis to evaluate how accurately they have been transmitted.

However, although apologists have stayed abreast of the dates of the earliest extant manuscripts and latest New Testament Greek manuscript counts, we haven't kept up with the increasing numbers of manuscripts for other ancient authors that classical scholars now recognize. For example, although apologists rightly claim that there are well over 5,000 Greek manuscripts of the New Testament, they have reported the number of manuscripts for Homer's *Iliad* to be 643, but the real number of *Iliad* manuscripts now is actually more than 1,800. Further, the numbers of manuscript counts for the New Testament's translation into other languages have not remained static. Even though many numbers that apologists have employed are often significantly changed, the Old and New Testaments still have the best attested manuscript transmission of any ancient document, and the bibliographical test still remains a reliable indicator that the New Testament has been accurately transmitted to this day.

What has been overlooked in Old Testament apologetics numbers is the use of scrolls and codices.

INTRODUCTION

For over seventy years, Christians have appealed to what is called the "bibliographical test" as a means of establishing the New Testament's transmissional accuracy. The bibliographical test examines the overall number of extant manuscripts (sometimes abbreviated to MSS or MS for the singular) and the difference between the date of original writing, called the autograph, and the date of the earliest surviving, or extant, manuscript. Since we do not possess the autograph of even one ancient document, this test best determines transmissional accuracy for any ancient document.

Christians argue that if historians will consider an ancient document to have been accurately transmitted whose manuscripts are few and far between the date the autograph was penned and its earliest extant copy,

then they should accept that New Testament documents are accurately transmitted since its manuscripts are comparatively many and comparatively near their autographs.¹

**The trouble is that the numbers and dates that often appealed to
are woefully behind the new discoveries.**

CLASSIC WORKS OF ANTIQUITY

HOMER (F. 9TH OR 8TH CENTURY B.C.), *ILIAD*

Homer authored the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* and for years apologists have claimed that while there are over 5,500 manuscripts of the Greek New Testament, there are, by comparison, only 643 manuscripts of Homer's *Iliad*.² For example, a recent Google query of *Homer 643 manuscripts* turned up 143,000 results, and a review of the first 100 of those results revealed that *all* of them related to whether the New Testament has been accurately transmitted.³

But things have changed: the more recent number of *Iliad* manuscripts is 1800+.

Martin L. West, Senior Research Fellow, All Souls College, Oxford, catalogued a total of 1,569 *papyri*.⁴ But, this is a *papyri only* count and not a total manuscript count.⁵ Dr. West said that he didn't believe there was a more recent non-papyri count than that found in T. W. Allen's, *Homeri Iliad* which contains 188 items.⁶ Thus 1,569 papyri, plus 188 parchment manuscripts, comes to a total of 1,757.⁷

Martin L. West, *Studies in the Text and Transmission of the Iliad* (München/Leipzig: K.G. Saur, 2001). See especially 87-129 (papyri), 139-57 (medieval MSS). West notes that the total number of papyri (1569) is misleading because of various factors (email from West, 21 Aug 2013). He also notes that the 37 early medieval MSS are in addition to the 188 medieval MSS that T.W. Allen counted (see T.W. Allen, *Homer: The Origins and the Transmission* [Oxford, 1924]; idem, *Homeri Ilias* [Oxford, 1931]), but, West notes, Allen included documents that are not properly MSS of the *Iliad*. Thus, the total number of MSS of the *Iliad* extant today is less than 2000. (Correspondence from Dan Wallace to Josh McDowell, October 15, 2013.)

SOPHOCLES (c. 496—406 B.C.), TRAGEDIES

¹ For example, see John Warwick Montgomery, *History and Christianity* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1964), 26-29; Josh McDowell, *The New Evidence that Demands a Verdict* (Nashville: Nelson, 1999), 33-45. I (Clay Jones) am indebted to and in awe of these men and others who first researched the bibliographical test without the use of computers!

² All older numbers from McDowell, *New Evidence*, 38.

³ 8/26/11.

⁴ Martin L. West, *Studies in the Text and Transmission of the Iliad* (München: K. G. Saur, 2001), 86.

⁵ Even though "manuscript" literally means "handwrite," scholars like West sometimes use "manuscript" to refer only to non-papyri manuscripts. Papyri manuscripts they only call "papyri."

⁶ Clay Jones personal correspondence with Dr. Martin L. West October 30, 2010. Correspondence from Daniel Wallace to Josh McDowell October 15, 2013. Thomas W. Allen, *Homeri Ilias* (1931; repr., New York: Arno, 1979), 11-55. Personal correspondence with Dr. West on 10/30/10. West would add 32 early medieval MSS to Allen's 188 medieval MSS. See T.W. Allen, *Homer: The Origins and the Transmissions* [Oxford, 1924].

⁷ West also lists 142 Homeric papyri (glossaries, commentaries, *scholia minora*) and 47 witness papyri ("miscellaneous papyri and inscriptions in which verses of the *Iliad* are quoted"), *Ibid.*, 130.

Sophocles was a Greek playwright best known for his drama *Oedipus the King*. The count for the manuscripts of Sophocles remains at around 193.⁸ The earliest dates from the tenth century except for some fragments from the third century BC.⁹

HERODOTUS (C. 484—C 425 B.C.), *HISTORY*

Herodotus, the “father of history,” produced one of the great narrative histories of the ancient world. There are 49 papyrus fragments of Herodotus, and there are about 60 other non-papyrus manuscripts (up from 8).¹⁰ The oldest papyri date from the first century AD. POxy 1375 (I or II), POxy 1619 (end of I AD), Archiv für Papyrusforschung vol. 1, p. 471f. (I or II), British Library 1109 (Greek papyri in the British Museum III p.57 Milne, Catalogue of the literary papyri in the British Museum no. 102) (I or II).
(Correspondence from Dan Wallace to Josh McDowell October 15, 2013.)

THUCYDIDES (C. 460–C. 404 B.C.) *HISTORY OF THE PELOPONNESIAN WAR*

Thucydides chronicled the Athenian war against the Peloponnesians. The text of Thucydides is still based primarily on eight manuscripts but some papyri fragments exist with a 3rd century B.C. date.¹¹ These papyri narrow the previously reported date by 1150 years!

PLATO (428/427—348/347 B.C.), *TETRALOGIES*

Plato wrote seven Tetralogies.¹² The Plato Microfilm Project lists 210 manuscripts¹³ rather than 7. The oldest surviving manuscript was copied by John the Calligrapher in 895 leaving the gap unchanged.¹⁴ (December 6, 2013, we had the privilege of discovering a portion of a 2nd c B.C. fragment from Plato’s *Republic*.)

DEMOSTHENES (384–322 B.C.), *SPEECHES*

Demosthenes was an Athenian statesman and orator whose speeches reveal much about life in 4th-century Athens. There are at least 340 MSS for Demosthenes (up from 200) dating from the tenth or late ninth century and some rather unhelpful fragments which date to the first century B.C.¹⁵

⁸ Alexander Turyn, *Studies in the Manuscript Tradition of the Tragedies of Sophocles* (Rome: L’erma di Bretschneider, 1970), 5-9., See also Luigi Battezzato, *History of Scholarship: A Selection of Papers from the Seminar on the History of Scholarship held annually at the Warburg Institute*, Christopher Ligota and Jean-Louis Quantin, eds., (New York: Oxford, 2006), 92.

⁹ Turyn, 102. See also, *The Complete Sophocles*, Peter Burian and Alan Shapiro, ed., (New York: Oxford, 2010), 189.

¹⁰ Leuven Database of Ancient Books, <http://www.trismegistos.org/ldab/search.php>. Accessed 2 February 2011. See also R. A. McNeal, *Herodotus: Book I* (New York: University Press, 1986), xiii.

¹¹ The Leuven Database of Ancient Books lists 96 papyrus and parchment manuscripts. <http://www.trismegistos.org/ldab/search.php>. Accessed 2/2/2011. See also, Thucydides, *The Peloponnesian War*, P. J. Rhodes, trans., (Oxford, OUP, 2009), 663.

¹² A tetralogy contains four books.

¹³ Plato Microfilm Project of the Yale University Library, *The Plato Manuscripts: A New Index*, Robert S. Brumbaugh and Rolun Wells, ed., (New Haven: Yale, 1968), 11-70. The 210 number does not include *Spuria*. For a thorough analysis of past catalogs of Plato see Robert S. Brumbaugh, “Plato Manuscripts: Toward a Completed Inventory” *Manuscripta*, Vol. 34, Num. 2, July, 1990, 114-121.

¹⁴ T. H. Irwin, “The Platonic Corpus,” *The Oxford Handbook of Plato*, Gail Fine, ed., (Oxford: OUP, 2008), 71. Irwin further comments that “According to G. Pasquali, *Storia della Tradizione e Critica del Testo*, 2nd ed. (Florence: Le Monnier, 1952), 247, Plato is the classical author with the richest textual tradition after Homer” (71, n. 41).

CAESAR (C. 100–44 B.C.), GALLIC WARS

From 58-50 BC Julius Caesar conquered much of Gaul and described his success in *On the Gallic War*. Instead of 10, there are 251 manuscripts (a 2500% increase!) beginning from the ninth century (the majority are 15th century).¹⁶

PLINY THE ELDER (23/24–79 A.D.), NATURAL HISTORY

Pliny the Elder (Gaius Plinius Secundus) authored *Natural History* which was regarded as a scientific authority up to the Middle Ages. Apologists have sometimes confused him with his adopted son Pliny the Younger (Gaius Plinius Caecilius Secundus). Instead of 7, there are approximately 200 MSS of his *Natural History*, mostly from the 14th & 15th centuries. However, a manuscript fragment from the end of the fifth century survives, which narrows the previous gap by 250 years.¹⁷

LIVY (59/64 B.C.—17 A.D.), HISTORY OF ROME

Livy wrote a history of Rome which survives in around 100 MSS beginning in the early fifth century and over 60 copies¹⁸ (Up from 1 partial, 19 copies).¹⁹ Daniel B. Wallace, director of The Center for the Study of New Testament Manuscripts, explains that unlike classic texts which often have few manuscripts and many copies of those manuscripts, “New Testament scholars know of very, very few MSS that are direct copies of other MSS.”²⁰

TACITUS (56–C. 120 A.D.), ANNALS

Tacitus was a Roman orator and public official who from 14 to 68 AD chronicled the Roman Empire in his *Annals*. University of Michigan Greek and Latin professor David Potter wrote: “Tacitus’ historical works descend in two manuscripts, one for books 1-6, another for 11-16 and the surviving portions of the history.”²¹ The first is c. 850; the other is mid-eleventh century.²² From those two manuscripts spring “thirty-one fifteenth-century manuscripts” (up from 20).²³

NEW TESTAMENT

Of course, when it comes to the bibliographical test, the New Testament wins the race when others have barely left the starting gate. Bruce M. Metzger and Bart D. Ehrman put it in perspective:

¹⁵ Sealy, 222-223.

¹⁶ Virginia Brown, “Latin Manuscripts of Caesar’s Gallic War,” *Palaeographia Diplomatica et Archivistica: Studi in onore di Giulio Battelli* (Rome: University of Rome, 1979), 105-107.

¹⁷ Reynolds, *Texts and Transmission*, 317. See also, Hilda Buttenwieser, “Popular Authors of the Middle Ages: The Testimony of the Manuscripts,” *Speculum* vol. 17, No. 1, Jan. 1942, 52-53.

¹⁸ L. D. Reynolds, “Livy,” *Texts and Transmission: A Survey of the Latin Classics*, L. D. Reynolds, ed., (Oxford: Clarendon, 1983), 205-214.

¹⁹ McDowell, *New Evidence*, 38.

²⁰ Personal correspondence between Clay Jones and Daniel Wallace January 13, 2012.

²¹ David Potter, *Literary Tests and the Roman Historian* (Oxford: Routledge, 1999), 72.

²² M. Winterbottom, “Tacitus,” *Texts and Transmission: A Survey of the Latin Classics*, R. D. Reynolds, ed., (Oxford: Clarendon, 1983), 406-409.

²³ R. H. Martin, “The Leyden Manuscript of Tacitus,” *The Classical Quarterly*, Vol. 14, No. 1, 1964, 109.

In contrast with these figures [of other ancient works], the textual critic of the New Testament is embarrassed by a wealth of material. Furthermore, the work of many ancient authors has been preserved only in manuscripts that date from the Middle Ages (sometimes the late Middle Ages), far removed from the time at which they lived and wrote. On the contrary, the time between the composition of the books of the New Testament and the earliest extant copies is relatively brief. Instead of a lapse of a millennium or more, as is the case of not a few classical authors, several papyrus manuscripts of portions of the New Testament are extant that were copied within a century or so after the composition of the original documents.²⁴

It is extremely difficult and laborious to track classical and Biblical manuscripts, but one of the best sources is the Leuven Database - www.trismegistos.org/ldab/. Two challenges are that, 1) all databases are not usually current with new discoveries, and 2) most databases don't take into their calculations the many manuscripts in private collections. Plus most databases don't take into consideration the scrolls.

When it comes to Homer's work, it is difficult to calculate for there are constantly new discoveries. Also numbers used for Homer's Iliad do not include at least 5 in the Green family's collection, a number in other private collections, and the 12 manuscripts (destined for museums) from a friend of ours.

The following is an example of databases being outdated. I [Josh] just got an email from a friend that says yesterday he uncovered 7 more biblical manuscripts.

One needs to be careful in comparing the survival and dating of an abundance of biblical manuscripts with classical works.

God has done an "exceptional" work in preserving such an abundance of biblical manuscripts.

Dr. Scott Carroll, Director and Senior Research Scholar of the Manuscript Research Group, comments about caution in sharing the wrong conclusions.

It is implied that an unspoken reason for the preservation of manuscripts is supernatural over against the loss of non-inspired works, but it is a bit more involved. Most classical works were in a region that could promise preservation on papyrus and were then recopied in Egypt and disseminated (not like the Christian monastic system).

These texts were systematically copied and studied at the library in Alexandria which burned partially in the first century BC, and then the texts were also systematically destroyed by Christians in the fourth century and Muslims in the seventh and eighth centuries. Christians are in part to blame for destroying around 1 million classical scrolls, and the fact that any classical texts survive in large numbers is remarkable. Centuries later, we often use the dearth of evidence to show the superior preservation of the Bible.

Early classical works were written primarily on papyrus, a highly perishable medium, as was the scroll format. Christians quickly transitioned to the codex [book format] and to parchment and vellum, which were much more durable and suitable for the codex and thus, these factors hastened the decline of classical works.

²⁴ Bruce M. Metzger and Bart D. Ehrman, *The Text of the New Testament: Its Transmission, Corruption, and Restoration* 4th ed., (New York: Oxford, 2005), 51.

We also keep in mind that classical works were copied, only if by chance, by monks after the fifth century. They were left in the hands of the 'enemy' so to speak to preserve and perpetuate – which they did but not as aggressively.

One might argue it was only by divine appointment that Biblical manuscripts survived, but nevertheless, the above provide an important context in one's comparison of Biblical and classical works.

Surprisingly, we know some classical authors who were extremely popular, like Menander, but whose works for a variety of factors were not copied in great numbers (or did not survive as such). A Christian comparison would be Origen's Hexapla, which has no surviving manuscripts and yet is of extreme importance.

As for the dating and the tabulation of evidence, the wrong data or making the wrong assumptions can lead to unintentional and misleading conclusions. Case in point – when we say that the collected works of Plato do not appear until the medieval period, it is really comparing apples and oranges with New Testament evidence. After all, we are not comparing this with the first complete New Testament (Codex Sinaiticus circa 350) or better to the earliest complete Bible (Codex Amiatinus circa 8c) – making the collection of some of Plato's works dated to 895 not seem so bad.

The Republic exceeds the length of the New Testament, and they did not collect such things in books. It required a codex and these were preserved in scrolls early on. The fact is, there is abundant and early evidence for Plato's individual works (most). The Republic has about 70 papyri alone (Scott Carroll discovered one of the earliest ones yesterday), and the Death of Socrates is second to the Republic, with around 27 papyri.

I know of extensive papyri of Demosthenes' most famous speech, *On the Crown*, that survived within a generation of the composition of the speech! I know of an extensive fragment of a play by Menander that dates within decades of his death. And the list would abound and is constantly changing with new discoveries. Because of transitions in biblical studies, many reputable scholars are out of touch with such things in classical studies.²⁵

GREEK MANUSCRIPTS

Many Christian apologists base the number of New Testament manuscripts on the work of Kurt Aland and Barbara Aland of the Institute for New Testament Textual Research in Münster. A great source for manuscript study is also the Leuden Database. The latest tally from 4 February 2010: minuscules = 2926; majuscules (uncials) = 322; papyri = 128; lectionaries = 2462 for a total of 5,838.²⁶ The earliest New Testament Greek MS as of 2012 is the John Ryland's Papyrus (P⁵²) which Bart Ehrman dates to "125-130, plus or minus twenty-five years."²⁷ (It appears there has been discovered a portion of a Mark manuscript, ca 85-125 AD. One must wait for this discovery to go through peer review and publishing before we know for certain of the dating.) For me (Josh), my all-time favorite manuscript is P52 (The John Ryland manuscript) and the small fragment of John found in Egypt. Currently, it is the earliest published record of Scriptures. If you ever go to Manchester, England, make sure to stop at the John Ryland library. It is a great experience.

²⁵ Correspondence from Dr. Scott Carroll to Josh McDowell, October 31, 2013.

²⁶ The Institute for New Testament Textual Research, http://www.uni-muenster.de/INTF/KgLSGII2010_02_04.pdf. Accessed 9 January 2012.

²⁷ Bart D. Ehrman, *The Textual Reliability of the New Testament: Bart D. Ehrman and Daniel B. Wallace in Dialog*, Robert B. Stewart, ed., (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2011), 19.

A COMPARISON OF ANCIENT WORKS WITH THE NEW TESTAMENT (BOTH OLD AND NEW TESTAMENTS)*

Numbers in () are the previously reported dates.²⁸

Author	Work	Date Written	Earliest MSS	Time Gap	Old #	New
Homer	<i>Iliad</i>	800 BC	c. 400 BC	400	643	1,800+
Herodotus	<i>History</i>	480-425 BC	1 st C AD	1,350	8	109
Sophocles ²⁹	Plays	496-406 BC	3 rd C BC	100-200	100	193
Plato	Tetralogies	400 BC	895	1,300	7	210
Caesar	<i>Gallic Wars</i>	100-44 BC	9 th C	950	10	251
Livy	<i>History of Rome</i>	59 BC-17 AD	Early 5 th C	400	1 Partial, 19 copies	90 & 60 copies
Tacitus	<i>Annals</i>	100 AD	1 st half: 850, 2 nd : 1050 (1100 AD)	750-950	20	2 + 31 15 C copies
Pliny, the Elder	<i>Natural History</i>	49-79 AD	5 th C frag: 1; Rem. 14-15 th C	400 (750)	7	200
Thucydides	<i>History</i>	460-400 BC	3 rd C BC (AD 900)	200 (1,350)	8	96
Demosthenes	Speeches	300 BC	Some frags from 1 C. BC. (AD 1100)	1,100+ (1,400)	200	340
Greek N.T. Manuscripts		50-100 AD	AD 130 (or less) ³⁰	50	5366	5,838
Greek New Testament Early Translations						18,524
Old Testament						42,000+ **
Biblical Manuscripts, Scrolls and Translations:						
New Testament Greek Manuscripts						5,838
New Testament Early Translations						18,524
Old Testament Scrolls, Codices						42,000
TOTAL BIBLICAL MANUSCRIPT EVIDENCES						66,362

*All these numbers can be obsolete by publication date

** The traditional listings of Old Testament manuscripts normally leave out all the abundant scroll evidence. It is not easy to determine the exact number of extant scrolls. The following are intelligent estimates:

²⁸ McDowell, 38.

²⁹ McDowell only listed Sophocles in the original *Evidence That Demands a Verdict* (Arrowhead Springs, CA: Campus Crusade for Christ, 1973), 48.

³⁰ Daniel Wallace reports that a new fragment from the Gospel of Mark will probably date to the first century AD. Daniel B. Wallace, "Earliest Manuscript of the New Testament Discovered?" <http://www.csntm.org/> Accessed 3/26/2012. (It will probably take a year for documentation of this discovery to be made public - JDM)

Green Collection	5,000
Synagogues	20,000
Museums	1,000
Private family collections	5,000
Codices	3,000
Jewish Seminaries	5,000
Individuals	3,000
TOTAL	42,000**

**Estimates by Dr. Scott Carroll, correspondence with Josh McDowell, November 15, 2013. Of the 42,000 scrolls and codices, approximately 25,000 are from the 19th-20th centuries, while 17,000 are earlier.

To try and keep up with recent counts of scrolls and manuscripts, the following sites can be of great help:

- www.csntmn.org
- <http://ntvmr.uni-muenster.de/liste>

The text of the New Testament is also supported by translations into other languages.

ARMENIAN—2,000+

There are over 2,000 Armenian MSS (2,587)³¹ and the number would even be greater because, in this count, lectionary manuscripts have been ignored.³² The oldest extant manuscript dates to A.D. 887.³³

COPTIC—AROUND 975

In response to my [Clay Jones] query of the number of Sahidic New Testament manuscripts, University of Salzburg professor Karlheinz Schüssler³⁴ replied, “At the moment I count Sahidic around 700 manuscripts of the New Testament, Akhmimic, 5; Nubian, 8; Fayumic, 73; Lycopolitan, 3; and Mesokemic, 7.”³⁵ He estimates Bohairic to be between 150 and 200.³⁶ Thus by his count there are approximately 975 Coptic MSS of the New Testament. Although many are as late as the 19th century, others date from “the late third century.”³⁷

³¹ Metzger and Ehrman, *The Text of the New Testament*, 117.

³² Errol F. Rhodes, *An Annotated List of Armenian New Testament Manuscripts* (Tokyo: Rikkyo, 1959), v.

³³ Metzger and Ehrman, *The Text of the New Testament*, 117, n. 105.

³⁴ Karlheinz Schüssler, *Biblia Coptica: Die Koptischen Bibeltexte Band 3* (Wiesbaden: Harrasowitz, 2004).

³⁵ Karlheinz Schüssler e-mail to Clay Jones March 3, 2011.

³⁶ Karlheinz Schüssler email to Clay Jones March 5, 2011.

³⁷ Stephen Emmel, “The Christian Book in Egypt: Innovation and the Coptic Tradition,” *The Bible as Book: The Manuscript Tradition*, John L. Sharpe III and Kimberly van Kampen, eds., (New Castle, DE: The British Library & Oak Knoll, 1998), 39.

New Coptic manuscripts discovered December 5-6, 2013. These Coptic manuscript fragments are waiting further research and publication. I would not use these discoveries authoritatively until they have been vetted (possibly 2-4 years).

1. **Matthew 6:33 / Matthew 7:4**-reverse side. (Last half of 5c AD). **This could be the** earliest Coptic papyri of the Sermon on the Mount.

“But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.”
(Matthew 6:33)

“Or how can you say to your brother, ‘Let me take the speck out of your eye,’ and behold, the log is in your own eye.” (Matthew 7:4)

2. **Mark 15:9** (350 – 430 AD). **One of** the earliest Coptic papyri of this passage.

“Pilate answered them, saying, “Do you want me to release for you the King of the Jews?”

3. **John 14:28** (350 – 430 AD) This could be one of the early Coptic manuscripts.

“You heard that I said to you, ‘I go away, and I will come to you.’ If you loved Me, you would have rejoiced because I go to the Father, for the Father is greater than I.”

4. **Galatians 4:17**. One of the earliest Coptic papyri.

“They eagerly seek you, not commendably, but they wish to shut you out so that you will seek them.”

5. **I John 2:21** (350 – 430 AD). **This could be** the earliest Coptic papyri of I John. Not preserved in any Greek papyri.

“I have not written to you because you do not know the truth, but because you do know it, and because no lie is of the truth.”

6. **Jeremiah 33:24**. **This could be** the earliest discovered Coptic papyri of this passage.

“Have you not observed what this people have spoken, saying, ‘The two families which the LORD chose, He has rejected them’? Thus they despise My people, no longer are they as a nation in their sight”

7. A Second Century BC fragment of *The Republic* by Plato.

GOTHIC—6

Metzger and Ehrman comment that “The most nearly complete of the half-dozen extant Gothic manuscripts (all of which are fragmentary) is a deluxe copy dating from the fifth or sixth century.... It contains portions of all four Gospels....”³⁸

³⁸ Metzger and Ehrman, *The Text of the New Testament*, 115.

ETHIOPIAN—600+

George Fox University professor Steve Delamarter directs the Ethiopic Manuscript Imaging Project. Delamarter summed up the Ethiopian manuscript status: “Outside of Ethiopia, there are about six hundred Ethiopic manuscripts that contain the text of one or more books of the New Testament.” Delamarter explained that “Within Ethiopia there are perhaps 5,000 yet to be discovered and catalogued. Among these are undoubtedly several hundred from the 17th century and earlier.”³⁹ Although most manuscripts are late, “at least one manuscript of the four Gospels dates to the tenth century and a couple of others date to the eleventh century.”⁴⁰

LATIN TRANSLATIONS—10,050+

OLD LATIN—50

Vetus Latina director Roger Gryson catalogues 89 Old Latin manuscripts of the New Testament. These manuscripts date from the fourth to the thirteenth centuries.⁴¹ It is important to note, however, that Old Latin MSS are counted differently than most other MSS in that a single parchment that contains, say, the Gospel of Matthew and Ephesians is counted as two manuscripts.⁴² Therefore the present count of 50 MSS is a more accurate apples to apples comparison.

VULGATE—10,000+

The number of Latin Vulgate MSS of the New Testament remains at more than 10,000.⁴³ The earliest extant copy dates back to the 4th century. By comparison the first Latin manuscript in our possession of Homer’s *Iliad* dates from the eleventh century.⁴⁴

SYRIAC—350+

Beginning in the 5th century more than 350 Syriac Peshitta New Testament MSS survive, several of which date from the fifth and sixth centuries.⁴⁵

GEORGIAN—43+

There are at least 43 MSS beginning at the late ninth century.⁴⁶

³⁹ From a personal email exchange with the author on 3/21/11.

⁴⁰ *Early Versions*, 224-225.

⁴¹ Metzger and Ehrman, *The Text of the New Testament*, 101.

⁴² Metzger and Ehrman, *The Text of the New Testament*, 101. For the fourth century date see also Aland, *The Text of the New Testament*, 187.

⁴³ Roger Gryson, *Altlateinische Handschriften: Manuscripts Vieux Latins* (Germany, Freiburg: Herder, 1999), 19-143.

⁴⁴ J. K. Elliott, “The Translations of the New Testament into Latin: The Old Latin and the Vulgate,” *Aufstieg und Niedergang der Römischen Welt*, Widmen Dieses, et., al., eds. (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1992), 224. See also Metzger, *The Early Versions*, 293.

⁴⁵ L. D. Reynolds, “Introduction,” *Texts and Transmission: A Survey of the Latin Classics*, L. D. Reynolds, ed. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1983), XXXIII. Kurt Aland and Barbara Aland only grant that the number “must be well over 8,000.” Aland & Aland, *The Text of the New Testament*, 192.

⁴⁶ Metzger and Ehrman, *The Text of the New Testament*, 98.

⁴⁷ Metzger, *The Early Versions*, 186-190.

A low estimate of Slavic New Testament MSS is 4,000+ (unchanged) with some estimates much higher. University of Indiana Slavic professor Henry Cooper writes: “The most thorough description of the manuscript holdings of a Slavic country to date, conducted in 1965 on the territory of the then Soviet Union, yielded in all about 1,500 entries dating before the fifteenth century. More than 99 percent of these manuscripts were translations (usually from Greek), and the vast majority of those were of Biblical books, especially portions of the gospels and the Psalms.”⁴⁷ Cooper added that “a count for the fifteenth century added 3,500 more entries.”⁴⁸ On the higher end, St. Petersburg University professor Anatolij Alexeev writes that, “For the first time in the history of Slavistics the number of selected Gospel manuscripts has reached the significant figure of over eleven hundred.”⁴⁹ Cooper suggests that Alexeev’s higher numbers, “could be so, it seems to me, only if one included sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Slavonic manuscripts: manuscript production in the Slavic world continued long after the introduction of printing in Western, Central, and Southeastern Europe. In any event the later Slavonic manuscripts are of marginal value in tracing the development of the Church Slavonic Bible”⁵⁰ The earliest manuscripts date from the tenth and eleventh centuries.⁵¹

PATRISTIC QUOTATIONS FROM THE NEW TESTAMENT

All told, the sheer number of New Testament manuscripts and the earliness of the extant manuscripts give us great reason to believe that the New Testament accurately transmits the content of the autographs. But there’s more than that. Metzger and Ehrman point out the huge number of quotations available from the writings of the early church fathers:

Besides textual evidence derived from New Testament Greek manuscripts and from early versions, the textual critic has available the numerous scriptural quotations included in the commentaries, sermons, and other treatises written by the early Church fathers. Indeed, so extensive are these citations that if all other sources for our knowledge of the text of the New Testament were destroyed, they would be sufficient alone for the reconstruction of practically the entire New Testament.⁵²

A good estimate of patristic quotes before 300A.D. of Old and New Testament is:

Old Testament:	49,711
New Testament:	<u>36,289</u>
TOTAL	86,000

(Josh McDowell, *New Evidence That Demands a Verdict*, Thomas Nelson, 1999, p43)

⁴⁷ Henry R. Cooper, *Slavic Scriptures: The Formation of the Church Slavonic Version of the Holy Bible* (Madison: Fairleigh Dickenson, 2003), 25. Cooper is referring to the Lidija P. Zukovskaja, et al., eds., *Svodnyj Katalog Slavjano-Russkix Rukopisnyx Knig, Xranjaščixsja* [Preliminary List of Slavic Russian Manuscripts] (Moscow: Nauka, 1984), 177-184. I (Clay Jones) am indebted to Henry Cooper for guiding me through the literature and to Biola University Russian language professor, Amy Obrist, for her help with Zukovskaja’s article.

⁴⁸ Cooper, *Slavic Scriptures*, 170, fn 61.

⁴⁹ Anatolij Alexeev, “The Last but Probably Not the Least: the Slavonic Version as a Witness of the Greek NT Text,” in *Methodios und Kyrillos in Ihrer Europäischen Dimension*, Evangelos Konstantinou, ed., (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2005), 248.

⁵⁰ Henry C. Cooper, *Slavic Scriptures*, 170, fn. 61.

⁵¹ *Early Versions*, 403.

⁵² Metzger and Ehrman, *The Text of the New Testament*, 126.

THE FOLLOWING PAGES SHOW WHY THE TOTAL COUNTS OF BIBLICAL MANUSCRIPTS AND SCROLLS ARE CHANGING SO FAST

THE BIBLIOGRAPHICAL TEST: ITS VALUE TODAY

Although there has been an increase in the number of non-New Testament ancient manuscripts, nothing has changed regarding the applicability of the bibliographical test. Even Homer's *Iliad*, which has seen the greatest manuscript increase, is still dwarfed by the New Testament, which has more than ten times the Greek manuscripts as the *Iliad*. But then when you add the over 18,000 manuscripts in other languages, and then consider that almost the entire New Testament could be reproduced by the quotations of the early church fathers, one must conclude that there simply is no ancient work attested to as well as the New Testament.

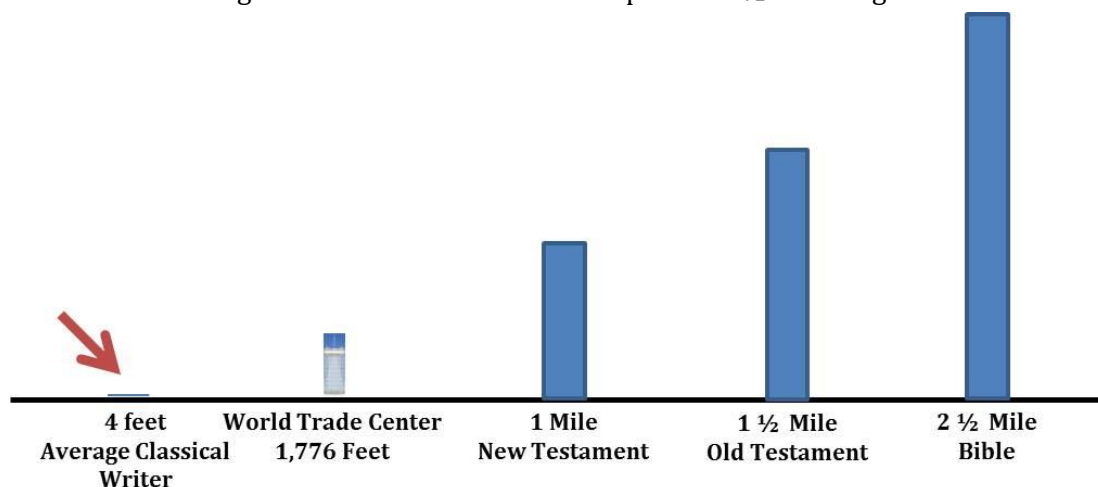
This troubles skeptics because if they reject the transmissional reliability of the New Testament, then they must also consider unreliable all other manuscripts of antiquity. As John Warwick Montgomery has often related: "Some years ago, when I debated philosophy professor Avrum Stroll of the University of British Columbia on this point, he responded: 'All right. I'll throw out my knowledge of the classical world.' At which the chairman of the classics department cried: 'Good Lord, Avrum, not that!'"⁵³

THE NEW TESTAMENT IS A MILE HIGH

THE BIBLE IS 2½ MILES HIGH

How high do you think the stack of New Testament manuscripts would be? Think about this – of just the 5,800+ Greek New Testament manuscripts – there are more than 2.6 million pages. Combining both the Old and New Testament (the Bible) and there are more than 66,000 manuscripts and scrolls.

Do you think it would hit a ten foot ceiling? A 4-foot stack of manuscripts for the average classical writer compares to over one mile high of New Testament manuscripts and 2½ miles high for the entire Bible.



⁵³ John Warwick Montgomery, *Human Rights and Human Dignity* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986), 139.

274 Scholars, professors,
laymen and students joined
Josh McDowell at...

DISCOVER THE EVIDENCE

December 5-6, 2013

Imagine being part of an historic event. You watch as manuscript experts carefully peel back layers of ancient writings hidden beneath Egyptian burial artifacts. What you hope to see is at least one small fragment of the ancient writings of Matthew, Mark, John or the apostle Paul. Your heart beats faster with anticipation. Then it happens. You watch in amazement as the biblical text of Matthew 6:33 is revealed. This writing has not been seen for over 1600 years. This and other fragments of Scripture confirm the very authenticity and reliability of the Bible.



Being at DISCOVER THE EVIDENCE our faith was strengthened, our love of Scripture was deepened and our vision to reach people with the gospel was enlarged.

At this unforgettable event we saw and touched these ancient biblical writings and artifacts. We were equipped to better teach and preach why God's Word is reliable, real and relevant for today's world.





COPTIC MANUSCRIPT FINDINGS

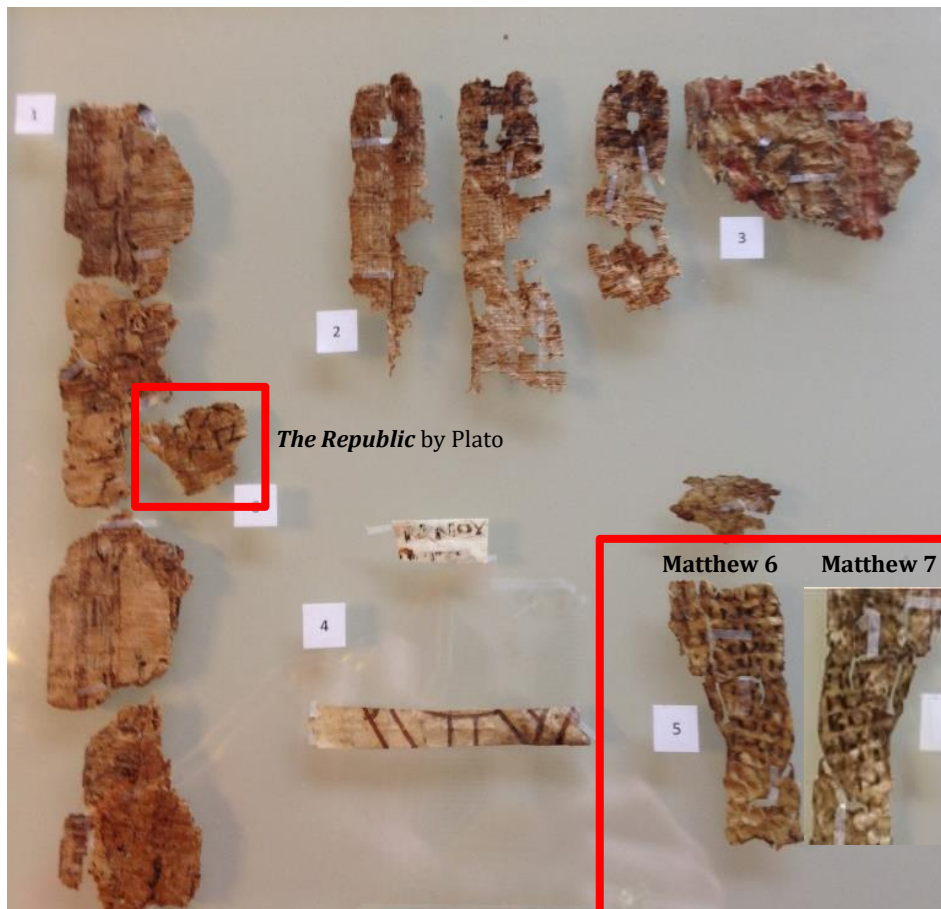
Definition of Coptic: The Coptic language is the name used to refer to the last stage of the written Egyptian language. It came about as the Greeks conquered Egypt. The language of the Greeks and Egyptians merged into the Coptic language. The sounds of the Egyptian language hieroglyphics are put to Greek letters (not words).

These newly discovered Coptic manuscript fragments are awaiting further research and publication. I would not use these discoveries authoritatively until they have been vetted (possibly 2-4 years).

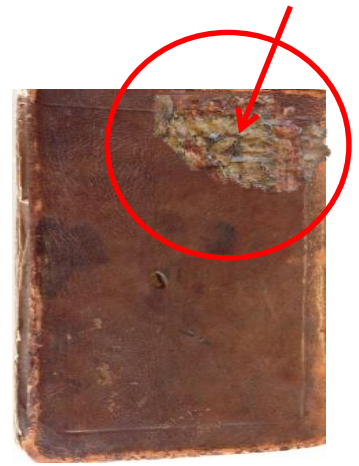
The photos have been purposely obscured to protect copying of manuscripts before their publication.

MANUSCRIPT CARTONNAGE

An early manuscript was discovered in an ancient parchment cluster and was probably written around the time of the legalization of Christianity.



The size of the codex leaf indicates it is probably from a short thick book of Matthew similar to the one at right. The top right of the photograph is a portion of the cover from an ancient parchment book.



The Matthew fragment (#5) came from **manuscript cartonnage** (Late 4th-5th century AD). Although it cannot be seen very well from this portion of the papyrus page (see right), there are lines of texts written in what is called **Coptic Biblical Uncial**.

“This parchment would have dated shortly after the last brief persecution of Christians by Julian the Apostate.”

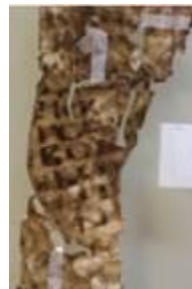
“The size indicates that it certainly was for private use, in a monastic setting.”

Matthew 6:33 with **Matthew 7:4** on reverse side (350-370 AD). Possibly the earliest papyri of the Sermon on the Mount.

But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. 6:33



Matthew 6:33
(front)



Matthew 7:4
(back)

Or how can you say to your brother, ‘Let me take the speck out of your eye,’ and behold, the log is in your own eye. 7:4

“Matthew is the second most attested book in papyrus in Greek. Apart from Codex Sinaiticus, this is probably the earliest known text in the world of the Sermon on the Mount in either Greek or Coptic.”

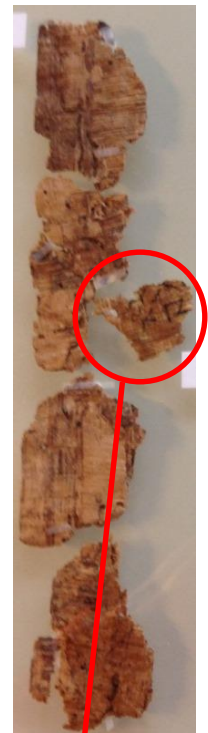
In this early time period, fragments of texts that are written on parchment are called papyrus. Parchment is referred to as papyrus if it's a small fragment. Technically written on parchment, but considered papyrus.

Discovered in the parchment (on right) is a fragment of ***The Republic*** by Plato (ca2nd century BC).

“In classical and Greek papyri, scribes absolutely lined everything up to begin and end on the same line so there would be no mistakes when they copied it.”

“As far as we know right now, there are no other corresponding Greek texts

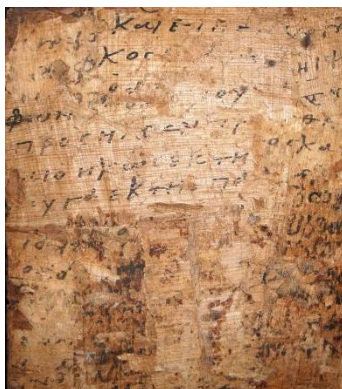
“This combination of words is found most prevalently in Plato’s *Republic* but also in a few other works including Psalm 112 and the Gospel of Matthew. The identification incorporates the textual correction made between the lines.”

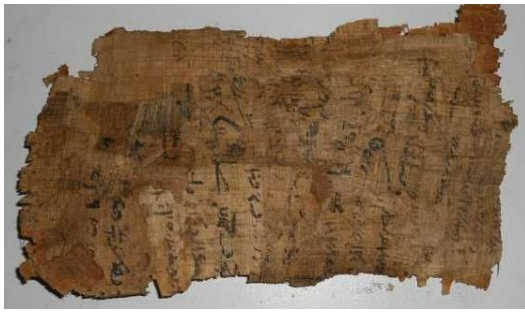


The Republic

PAPYRUS PLATES

The following manuscripts came from two different ancient **papyrus plates** which were used for collecting memorabilia on papyrus of a person’s life.

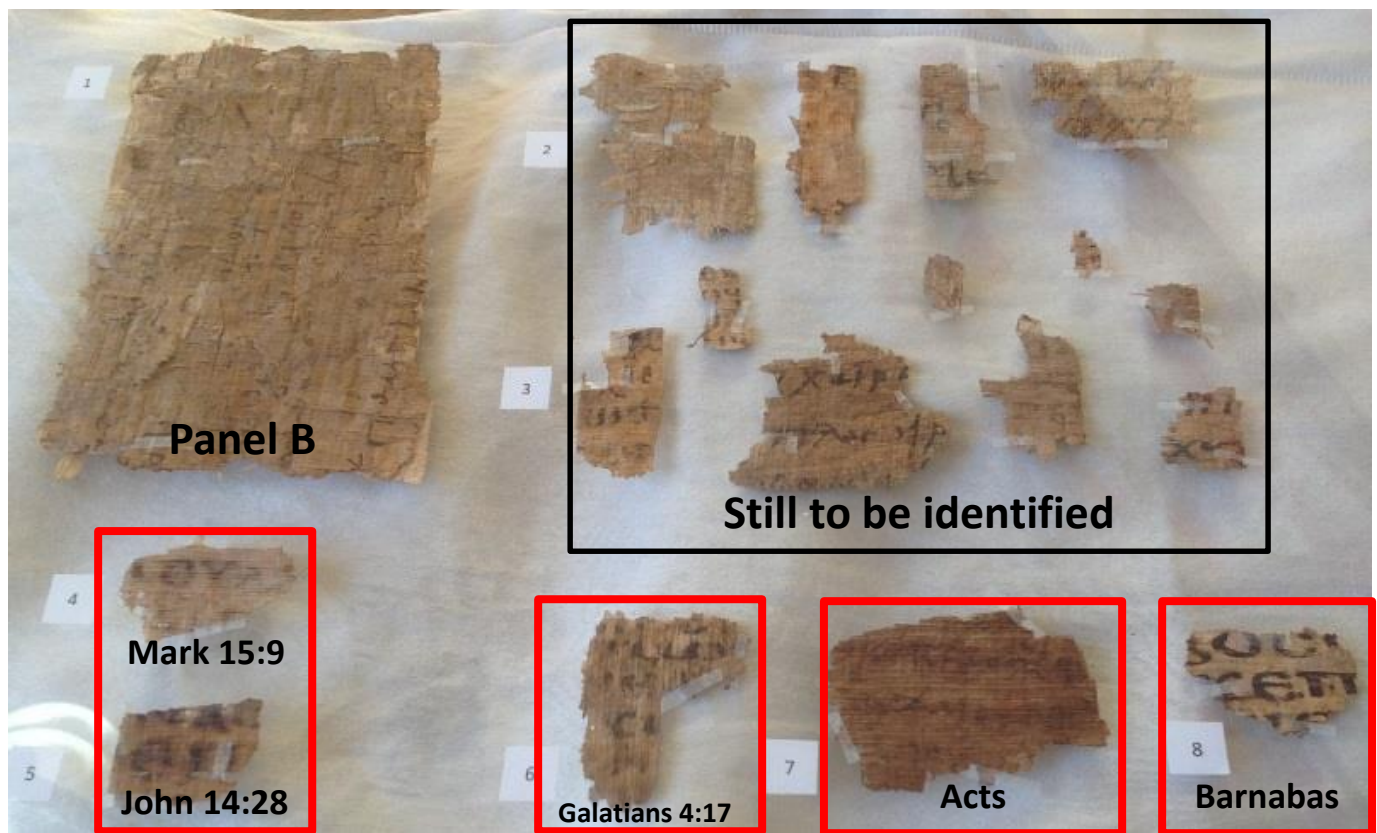




Scriptural, classical and other items special to an individual were layered together (similar to paper mache).

All the manuscript fragments (see below) on the right came out of the **one large grouping** to the left. These fragments are still to be identified.





MANUSCRIPT FRAGMENTS EXTRACTED

Mark 15:9 (350 – 430 AD). Possibly the earliest Coptic papyri of this passage.

Pilate answered them, saying, "Do you want me to release for you the King of the Jews?"



"There are three known papyri in Greek of Mark. None are of this passage. This is possibly the earliest surviving papyri of this text of Mark in the world."

"The text is clearly from a biblical codex and the name 'Jews' I]OYD[A is clear. The text was water damaged but traces were retrieved using IR photography."

John 14:28 (350 – 430 AD)

You heard that I said to you, 'I go away, and I will come to you.' If you loved Me, you would have rejoiced because I go to the Father, for the Father is greater than I.



“There are more published papyri of the gospel of John (currently 30+) than any other New Testament book in Greek.”

“This particular verse is not the earliest of this passage, but appears to be one of the earliest surviving passages of the text.”

“This fragment has parts of three lines of a codex leaf with traces on the verso or back. This was carefully copied by a skillful hand on finely prepared papyrus. It is apparent that it came from an impressive book.”

Galatians 4:17 (4th-5th century AD). One of the earliest Coptic papyri. This fragment has seven lines.

They eagerly seek you, not commendably, but they wish to shut you out so that you will seek them.



“There are only three known Greek New Testament papyri of Galatians. The third one was found just 1½-2 month ago. This Galatians 4:17 fragment in Coptic is one of the earliest of Galatians. The Codex Sinaiticus dates to about the same time.”

“There are just four Coptic papyri of Galatians (including a codex quire or section containing 2 Corinthians 6 - Galatians 3) underscoring how rare this is. The text was water damaged but traces were retrieved using IR photography.”

I John 2:21 (350 – 430 AD). Possibly the earliest Coptic papyri of I John recorded. This particular verse is not preserved in any Greek papyri.

I have not written to you because you do not know the truth, but because you do know it, and because no lie is of the truth.

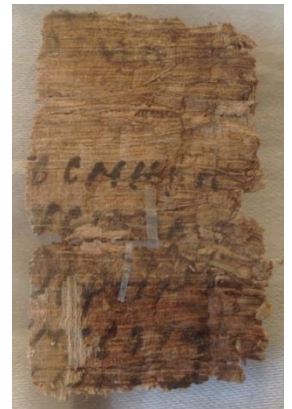


“There are two Greek New Testament papyri of I John. The first one dates to 250 AD, but does not include chapter 2. The second one dates to about 600 AD. But it is missing this verse so this is an example of a Coptic verse that is not preserved in any Greek papyrus record.”

“It is about the time of Sinaiticus.”

Jeremiah 33:24 (5th century AD). Possibly the earliest discovered Coptic papyri of this passage.

*Have you not observed what this people have spoken, saying,
“The two families which the LORD chose, He has rejected them”?
Thus they despise My people, no longer are they as a nation in
their sight.*



“Of this passage of Jeremiah, there is one Dead Sea scroll and one Septuagint fragment. This could be the third earliest text of Jeremiah in the world.”

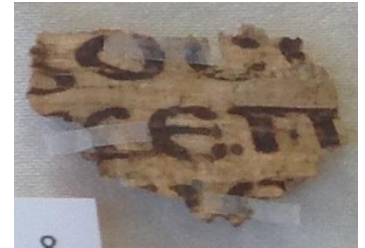
“A sermon that quotes from **Acts** (5c AD). It could be by a very famous Egyptian ascetic, Shenoute, who was a very fiery preacher. He’s paraphrasing from the book of Acts.”

“This fragment contains five lines of text preserving an exposition that recounts a historical narrative from the New Testament, reminiscent of Peter’s sermon in Acts 2. The text recounts how [Peter] cries out that the Jews (naming them twice) have done this to Him [condemned Jesus to be crucified]. It most likely recounts the event rather than a hagiographical account of the life of a saint or monk insomuch that the Romans, rather than the Jews, were the culprits in Coptic legends.”



“Sermons like this are not uncommon at this time. The emphatic blame of the Jews is of special interest. This provides an example of bringing the Bible to life through exposition especially to a population that was largely illiterate. This was very much a part of the transmission of God’s word. It also provides a glimpse as to how scripture was interpreted and applied.”

A popular non-canonical epistle purportedly written by **Barnabas** (5c AD). The account was popularly circulated in Greek and in Coptic. The complete text is included in The Codex Sinaiticus.



COPTIC BURIAL ROLLS

Late 4th/Early 5th century AD.

These rolls are composites of texts. This “roll” was for a baby. At burial they would place them in the burial container.

“This roll consists of fragments of Coptic literary texts — none of which could be identified. One papyrus contains a simple cross indicating the opening of a letter and mentions the name ‘Apa or Father’. It is writing a letter in the name of Christ to a father. This indicates use in a monastic setting...very possibly a letter to an important monk.”

“There is a cross on the outside which is the symbol of the resurrection.”

*Comments in “ ” by Dr. Scott Carroll, January 30, 2014.



(Front)



(Back)



(Close up of Cross)

Ptolemaic-Era Demotic and Greek Papyri – Texts from the Dismantled Burial Mask



Front



Back

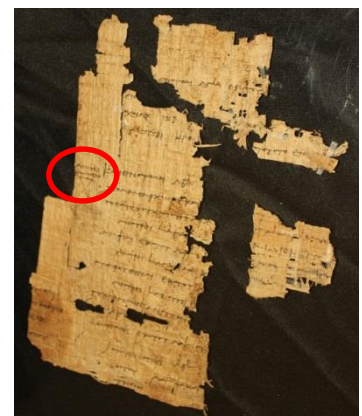
“It is true that no biblical discovery has ever undermined our confidence in scripture.” (Scott Carroll)

“All the following findings came out of the above mask and date to Ptolemaic times (the time of the great Library of Alexandria) and are royal accounts, decrees and correspondences.”

“They tell us about the world prior to the emergence of Christianity. The Jews were very active in Alexandria during this time period.”

This mask was completely lined with papyrus. No biblical or classical fragments were discovered in this mask.

Ptolemaic Accounting Texts (2c BC). A lengthy economic text, perhaps for tax purposes, mentioning Ptolemy.



Official Ptolemaic Documents (2c BC) in Greek.

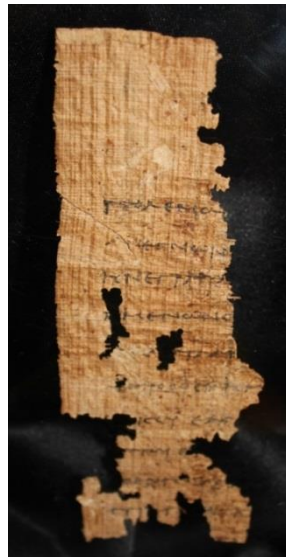
“Beginnings of letters (including titles, salutations, etc.) which provide us with important information about the time period.”



“The letters are written by official political scribes on behalf of the kings and queens of Egypt and are considered royal correspondence.”

These are written:

- “During the time the Ptolomys ruled in Egypt (Marc Anthony, Cleopatra)”
- “All of these came at a time when one of the greatest cultural attractions in Egypt was the Library of Alexandria.”*



Greek & Hieratic Fragments (2c BC). Hieratic is a cursive form of Egyptian Hieroglyphics used especially by priests.



The mask contained a mix of both Greek and Hieratic texts (no biblical texts).

There are about 100 additional fragments that have not yet been identified.

**Hieratic (informal hieroglyphs) Scripts - Demotic (for the common people)
Account (3c BC).**

Accounting and religious burial documents.



“In the last 130 years there has not been a single manuscript discovery that has produced a new reading for the New Testament that scholar think is authentic...not a single manuscript that tells us a totally different story about Jesus.” (Dr. Daniel B. Wallace)

“In about the second century B.C., the rules for careful copying and textual criticism were developed heavily in Alexandria, Egypt, which became the primary scholarly city in the ancient world for book reproduction (before the New Testament was ever written). The New Testament manuscripts became benefactors of that approach. A number of our earliest manuscripts come from Egypt and were either from Alexandria or from regions around Alexandria. They comprise what we call the Alexandrian type or text type of manuscripts.” (Dr. Daniel B. Wallace)

GOLDEN MASK



“A reconstructed, gold, gilded mummy head covering lined with linen and papyrus. 2-1c BCE from a private collection in Europe. Acquired in 2013.” Through 3-D imaging and CT scan, there have been 20 Greek papyri manuscripts identified embedded in the mask throughout the forehead and face.

However, no New Testament biblical manuscripts will come from this mask because it was probably constructed in B.C. There is also little probability that any manuscript fragments would be Old Testament or classical texts.

*Comments in “ ” by Dr. Scott Carroll, January 30, 2014.

“One must realize that almost every day, marvelous new discoveries are being made. That is why the above numbers of scroll and manuscript discoveries are out-of-date as soon as you print them.” --Josh D. McDowell

“NINE UNOPENED DEAD SEA SCROLLS FOUND”



A phylactery case from Cave 5. (Shai Halevi, courtesy of the Israel Antiquities Authority)

“Nine tiny but mighty Dead Sea Scrolls have been discovered – or more accurately, re-discovered – within the vaults of the Israel Antiquities Authority (IAA), The Times of Israel reported.”



The rolled scroll (in the second row) and their empty cases from Cave 4.

“Dr. Yonatan Adler...had the case scanned on the suspicion that it might contain an undocumented scroll and in December continued investigating for unopened scrolls while on a visit to the IAA Dead Sea Scrolls labs. There he found two scrolls inside a tefillin case that had been documented after the original 1952 discovery but never examined.”

“Adler eventually found seven more previously unopened scrolls, all of which are believed to have been included in the discoveries in Qumran Cave 4. Phylacteries, also called tefillin in Hebrew, are pairs of leather cases containing biblical passages and traditionally worn by Jews during prayer.”



A phylactery case from Cave 5.

“These newly re-discovered scrolls are among more than two dozen tefillin [leather cases hung around the neck] scroll fragments discovered in the Qumran caves, and among thousands of scrolls and scroll fragments found containing biblical and secular texts.”

“Due to the scope of the scrolls' initial discovery, curator and director of the IAA's Dead Sea Scrolls Projects Pnina Shor told The Huffington Post, it is reasonable to assume these nine 'new' finds will not be the last.”

““With the progress of research on the one hand and our digitization project on the other we hope 'new' finds will keep 'popping up',” Shor said. ‘Since we intend to image and eventually treat and preserve every single fragment/item, we hope to find many more such treasures, that have gone unnoticed and have not been deciphered yet.’”

“Although no major revelations are anticipated from the new scrolls, some of the tefillin cases from the Qumran caves that have been opened have revealed fascinating insights into Jewish life in that era (roughly the 2nd century BCE to the 1st century AD), Shor told HuffPost.”

““These parchment slips, folded and placed in capsules, are understood to be the ‘frontlets between your eyes,’ mentioned in the Book of Deuteronomy (6:8). The texts are in principle the same as those required by later Rabbinic Halakha and those in use today. Since these tefillin – phylacteries from the Judean Desert caves are the only examples we have from the Second Temple period, we do not know whether their distinctive features reflect the traditions of a specific community or whether they represent a more widespread tradition. Perhaps these ‘new’ ones will shed more light on this matter.”



A phylactery scroll after it was opened and preserved.

“Professor Hindy Najman of Yale University also commented to The Times of Israel:”

““We have to be prepared for surprises. On the one hand there’s tremendous continuity between what we have found among the Dead Sea Scrolls — liturgically, ritually and textually — and contemporaneous and later forms of Judaism. But there’s also tremendous possibility for variegated practices and a complex constellation of different practices, different influences, different ways of thinking about tefillin.”

“Shor will oversee the task of opening and reading these new scrolls, but it will take time and patience, she said. ‘We need to do a lot of research before we start doing this,’ Shor told The Times.”

“Shor is simultaneously spearheading a project to digitize the entire Dead Sea Scrolls archive for access to a mass audience. She expects IAA to complete the imaging within the next two years, and these nine new scrolls may very well be included in the database.”

(“Nine Tiny, Unopened Dead Sea Scrolls Found In Israel Antiquities Authority Storeroom,” HuffPost, March 18, 2014, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/03/18/tiny-dead-sea-scrolls-found_n_4957631.html)

ANOTHER ACCOUNT OF THE “NINE UNOPENED DEAD SEA SCROLLS FOUND”

“Nine newfound penny-sized pieces of parchment belonging to the Dead Sea Scrolls laid unopened for nearly six decades before they were rediscovered in Israel.”



Seven of the recently rediscovered unopened phylactery scrolls from Qumran.
ISRAEL ANTIQUITIES AUTHORITY/SHAI HALEVI

“The scrolls went unnoticed for years until one scholar came across them while searching through the Israel Antiquities Authority’s (IAA) storerooms, the Times of Israel reported.”

“‘Either they didn’t realize that these were also scrolls, or they didn’t know how to open them,’ the IAA’s head of artifact treatment and conservation Pnina Shor explained.”

“The tiny scrolls were found inside three phylacteries, small leather boxes with Biblical verses written on them (called *tefillin*) that are worn by Jews during their morning prayers. Their discoverer, Yonatan Adler, had the boxes scanned by CT at a hospital in Israel in hopes there would be parchment inside.”

“Once opened, the scrolls are expected to shed new light on the religious practices of the Jewish people during the Second Temple Period between the years of 530 BC and 70, an era named for a holy place of worship for the Jewish people that was constructed by the builder of ancient Jerusalem King Herod. The Dome of the Rock stands today where the Second Temple purportedly once stood.”

“Until now, the scrolls remained bound inside the phylacteries for approximately 2,000 years.”

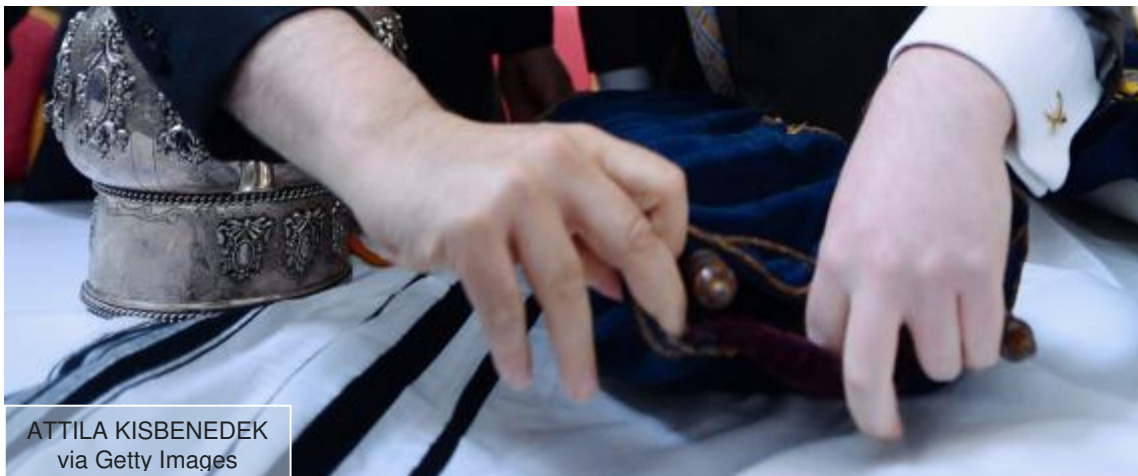
“The IAA has been tasked with the difficult job of unrolling the scrolls without damaging them.”

“‘We’re going to do it slowly, but we’ll first consult with all of our experts about how to go about this,’ said Shor, who would not reveal when the process would start. ‘We need to do a lot of research before we start doing this.’”

“Remains of more than 900 religious manuscripts were found in 11 caves near the Dead Sea in the 1940s and 50s in Qumran.”

(“Nine unopened Dead Sea Scrolls found,” Fox News, March 13, 2014, www.foxnews.com)

“103 TORAH SCROLLS FROM HUNGARY FOUND BY JEWISH LEADERS IN RUSSIA”



“Hungarian Jewish leaders say they have found 103 Torah scrolls taken from Hungary during the Holocaust in a Russian library.”

“Rabbi Slomo Koves said Tuesday the sacred texts were discovered in the manuscript section of the Lenin State Regional Library of the western Russian city of Nizhny Novgorod. Koves said negotiations are underway with Russian officials to restore the scrolls and possibly display them in international exhibits.”

“Koves, of the Orthodox Chabad-Lubavitch community, called the find he helped make last year ‘of historical significance,’ adding that Hungary's government supports efforts to restore the scrolls.”

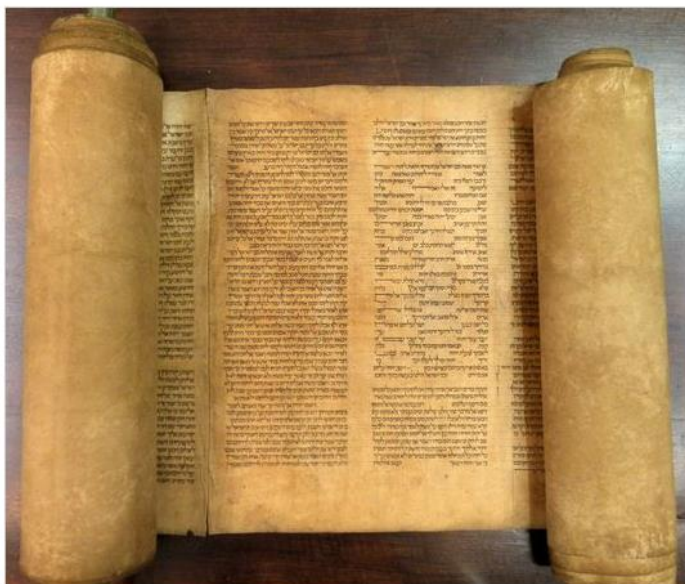
“A Torah is a hand-made copy on parchment scrolls of the first five books of the Old Testament.”

“Some 550,000 Hungarian Jews were killed in the Holocaust, while around 100,000 Jews live in Hungary today.”

(“103 Torah Scrolls From Hungary Found By Jewish Leaders in Russia,” AP, February 18, 2014, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/02/18/torah-scrolls-hungary-jewish-leaders_n_4810979.html?utm_hp_ref=tw)

CARBON DATING CONFIRMS WORLD'S OLDEST [JEWISH] TORAH” The oldest Torah might well be the Samaritan Torah

“A scroll at the University of Bologna is shown to be 800 years old.”



An Italian expert in Hebrew manuscripts says he has found the oldest known complete Torah scroll, a sheepskin document dating from 1155-1225.

Photograph by Alma Mater Studiorum Universita' di Bologna

“In 1889, an Italian librarian's faulty identification sentenced to archival obscurity an antique Torah scroll that has turned out to be the oldest complete such scroll in existence.”

“This week, [University of Bologna](#) Professor [Mauro Perani](#) announced the results of carbon-14 tests authenticating the scroll's age as roughly 800 years old.”

“The scroll dates to between 1155 and 1225, making it the oldest complete Torah scroll on record.”

“Like all Torah scrolls, this one contains the full text of the five Books of Moses in Hebrew and is prepared according to strict standards for use during religious services.”

“What a 19th-century cataloguer had interpreted as clumsy mistakes by what he guessed was an awkward 17th-century scribe provided the very clues that led Perani to investigate further. National Geographic spoke by telephone to Perani about his rediscovery.”

“What led you to take a second look at the scroll?”

“In 2012, a colleague and I decided to write a new catalog of the [University of Bologna] library's Hebrew manuscript collection. The original librarian and cataloguer from 1889, Leonello Modona, was an educated man but not a scholar. He had dated this scroll to the 17th century with a question mark.”

“He described the writing in this scroll as ‘an Italian script, rather clumsy-looking, in which certain letters, as well as the usual crowns and strokes, show uncommon and strange appendices.’ But when I went to examine the scroll, I saw immediately that it was not the ‘bad’ writing that Modona described. These Hebrew letters were in the Oriental style, not of Palestine, but of the Babylonian tradition, and from a much earlier time than the 17th century.”

“So what did you do?”

“I consulted with other colleagues and experts who agreed that this scroll originated from some time between the end of the 11th and the beginning of the 14th century. I then pursued carbon-14 testing at the University of Sorrento; the results showed a date of between [the] second half of the 12th century to [the] beginning of the 13th

century. In addition, a second carbon-14 test at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign confirmed the first result.”

“Even before you received the authentication of the carbon-14 dating, were there clues that led you to focus on an early date?”

“At the end of the 12th century Maimonides [a famous rabbinic authority] set down the rules for how to copy Torah scrolls, and those fixed rules have been followed ever since. This scroll's copyist did not know of those rules. Those rules would have forbidden him from using some of the graphical elements found here, such as use of compression of letters, line justification, and which letters can have [decorative] ‘crowns’ on top.”

“There is more freedom here. There are also passages whose graphical layout is identical to that of the Aleppo Codex [a Bible in book form], which dates to the 10th century. This all means that either the Torah scroll was made before the death of Maimonides, who died in 1204, or the copyist had not yet learned of those rules. Remember, there was no Internet then to spread the news immediately.”

“So when did the University of Bologna first obtain this Torah scroll—and how?”

“This scroll has been at the University of Bologna library for centuries. It's very possible that at some time it came into the possession of a monastery, was later taken to Paris after Napoleon suppressed the monastic and religious orders, and finally restored to Bologna after Napoleon's collapse.”

“How significant is this discovery?”

“This is important because this is the entire Torah scroll, the most ancient entire scroll that we know of. We have fragments of other Torah scrolls from the Cairo Geniza that date to the same time or earlier, and they show identical styles to this copyist. Maybe we will find another Torah scroll that is older, but for now this is it.”

“Editor's note: Some material in this Q&A comes from a press release from the University of Bologna.”

(Diane Cole, “Carbon Dating Confirms World’s Oldest Torah Scroll”, National Geographic, May 30, 2013, <http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2013/05/130530-worlds-oldest-torah-scroll-bible-bologna-carbon-dating/>)