**Historical Jesus**

“…One is obliged to say, ‘Here was a man. This part of the tale could not have been invented.’”

H.G.Wells, *Outline of History*

**Pagan Sources:**

Thallus ( Samaritan Historian, ca. 52 AD)

Wrote trying to give a natural explanation for the darkness which occurred at the crucifixion of Jesus

Letter of Mara-Serapion (written to his son, ca. 73 AD)

Tells of deaths of Socrates, Pythagoras, and Jesus

“What advantage did the Jews gain from executing their wise king? ... Nor did the wise king die for good; he lived on in the teaching which he had given.”

Cornelius Tacitus (Roman historian, ca. 112 AD)

“Christus, the founder of the name, was put to death by Pontius Pilate, procurator of Judea in the reign of Tiberius.” *ANNALS*

Pliny the Younger (governor of Bithynia, ca. 112 AD)

Wrote to Emperor Trajan about Christians and their devotion to Christ

Seutonius (court official and annalist under Emperor Hadrian, 120 AD)

“As the Jews were making constant disturbance at the instigation of Chrestus, he expelled them from Rome.” (Speaking of EmperorNero, Acts 18:1-2)

**Jewish Sources**

The Talmud (2 Jewish law books, 100–500 AD)

Speaks frequently of Jesus, never favorably though

Flavius Josephus (Jewish general, roman historian, born 37 AD)

Makes several references to Jesus in *History of the Jews*

“… and brought before it the brother of Jesus, the so-called Christ, whose name was James.”

**Evidence for Early Existence of the New Testament**

**Internal Evidence**

Ending of Acts (Acts 28:30-31)

Ends with Paul imprisoned before seeing Emperor Nero (62-63 AD)

If written later, this knowledge would have been known and finished

No mention of Destruction of Jerusalem

Matthew, Mark, and Luke all record Jesus’ prophecy of the destruction, yet no book mentions it

If NT written later, would have been great evidence for the power of Jesus to mention his fulfilled prophecy

**Papyri Fragments**

Chester Beatty Biblical Papyri (dated 200-250 AD)

Made public in 1931

Contains the Gospels, Acts, Paul’s Epistles, and Revelation

Papyrus Bodmer II (Dated 200 AD)

Discovered 1956

Contains fourteen chapters of John and portions of last seven

Early Christian Papyri (dated 150 AD)

Made public in 1935

Written by someone who had the four gospels before him and knew it well

John Rylands Manuscript (MSS) (dated 130 AD)

Oldest fragment of NT

“Because of its early date and location (Egypt), some distance from the traditional place of composition (Asia Minor), this portion of the gospel of John tends to confirm the traditional date of the composition of the gospel.”

*General Introduction to the Bible*, Geisler and Nix

**Patristic Writings**

Epistle of Polycarp to the Philippians (dated 120 AD)

A personal acquaintance of John the apostle

He quotes from: the synoptic gospels, Acts, Romans, 1&2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, 2 Thessalonians, 1&2 Timothy, Hebrews, 1 Peter, 1 John

Letter of Ignatius(dated 115 AD)

Written to several churches in Asia Minor

He quotes: Matthew, John, Romans, 1&2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, 1&2 Timothy, Titus

Epistle of Clement to the Corinthians (dated 95 AD)

Written to encourage Christians to respect their elders

Quotes: synoptic gospels, Acts, Romans, 1 Corinthians, Ephesians, Titus, Hebrews, 1 Peter

**Manuscript Attestation for the New Testament**

**“Bibliographical Test”**

**How many copies of New Testament are available?**

Over 4000 complete Greek manuscripts; 13,000 portions in Greek

Compare to:

Emperor Caesar’s *Gallic Wars* – 10 Greek manuscripts

Tacitus’ *Annals* – 2

Livy – 20

Plato – 7

Sophocles – 100

**Where were they found?**

Egypt, Palestine, Syria, Turkey, Greece and Italy

**What length of time passed between the original and the earliest copies?**

Fragments date to within 50-100 years

Nearly complete NT Greek manuscripts 300-400 years

Codex Sinaiticus, found near MT. Sinai

Codex Alexandrinus, found near Alexandria, Egypt

Codex Vaticanus, located at the Vatican

Compare:

Emperor Caesar’s *Gallic Wars* – 950 years

Tacitus’ *Histories* – 750 years

Tacitus’ *Annals* -- 950 years

**What variances exist between the copies of the NT?**

Many minor variations

Spelling, differences in phraseology; modern translators often note these variations in footnotes

Only ½ of a percent is actually in question; Compare to 5 percent for Homer’s Iliad

“No fundamental doctrine of the Christian faith rests on a disputed reading… It cannot be too strongly asserted that in substance the text of the Bible is certain: especially is this the case with the New Testament.”

Sir Frederick Kenyon

“The evidence for our New Testament writings is ever so much greater than the evidence for many writings of classical authors, the authenticity of which no one dreams of questioning. And if the New Testament were a collection of secular writings, their authenticity would generally be as beyond all doubt.”

F. F. Bruce

"After trying to shatter the historicity and validity of the Scripture, I came to the conclusion that they are historically trustworthy. If one discards the Bible as being unreliable, then he must discard almost all literature of antiquity."

"One problem I constantly face is the desire on the part of many to apply one standard or test to secular literature and other to the Bible. One needs to apply the same test, whether the literature under investigation is secular or religious."

"Having done this, I believe one can hold the Scriptures in his hand and say, 'The Bible is trustworthy, and historically reliable.'"

Josh McDowell