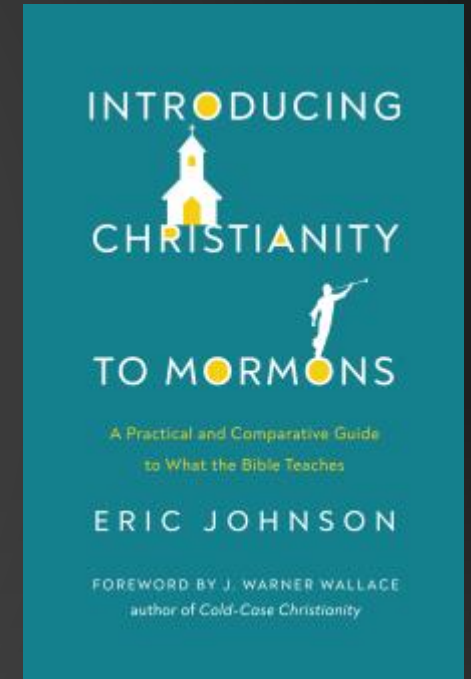
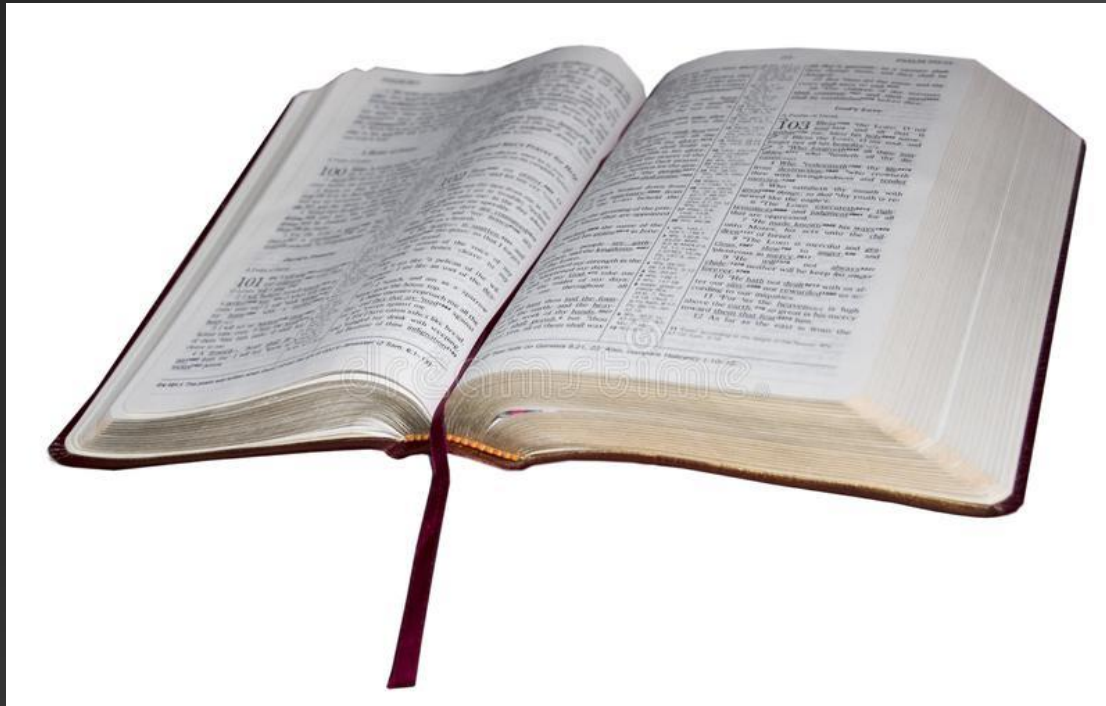


TRANSLATION OR TRANSMISSION? HOW WE GOT THE NEW TESTAMENT



BY ERIC JOHNSON
MORMONISM RESEARCH MINISTRY

For a PDF file of this presentation, go to mrm.org/scripture

INTRODUCING CHRISTIANITY TO MORMONS

Dave approached me on a warm early summer evening while I was passing out Christian information in Salt Lake City.

“Do you believe the Bible with its many problems?” he asked as we stood across from each other on the public sidewalk.



INTRODUCING CHRISTIANITY TO MORMONS

He didn't give me a chance to answer before he continued.

“Our church has produced a document called the Articles of Faith. The eighth article states, ‘We believe the Bible to be the word of God as far as it is translated correctly.’ While the Bible is part of our scripture, we are aware that it cannot be fully trusted.”



INTRODUCING CHRISTIANITY TO MORMONS

Article 8 in the Pearl of Great Price:

“We believe the Bible to be the word of God
as far as it is translated correctly.”



INTRODUCING CHRISTIANITY TO MORMONS

Before we could continue, I needed to distinguish the difference between the meanings of translation and transmission.

“In your mind, what does ‘translation’ mean?” I asked.



INTRODUCING CHRISTIANITY TO MORMONS

“It’s taking words from one language and putting them into another, like from Spanish into English,” he said.

“Exactly,” I responded. “If that is what is meant, I would agree that a bad translation of the Bible is possible.”



ACCORDING TO LDS CHURCH FOUNDER JOSEPH SMITH

“I believe the Bible as it read when it came from the pen of the original writers. Ignorant translators, careless transcribers, or designing and corrupt priests have committed many errors.”



Founder Joseph Smith, Jr.

LDS CRITICISM OF THE BIBLE

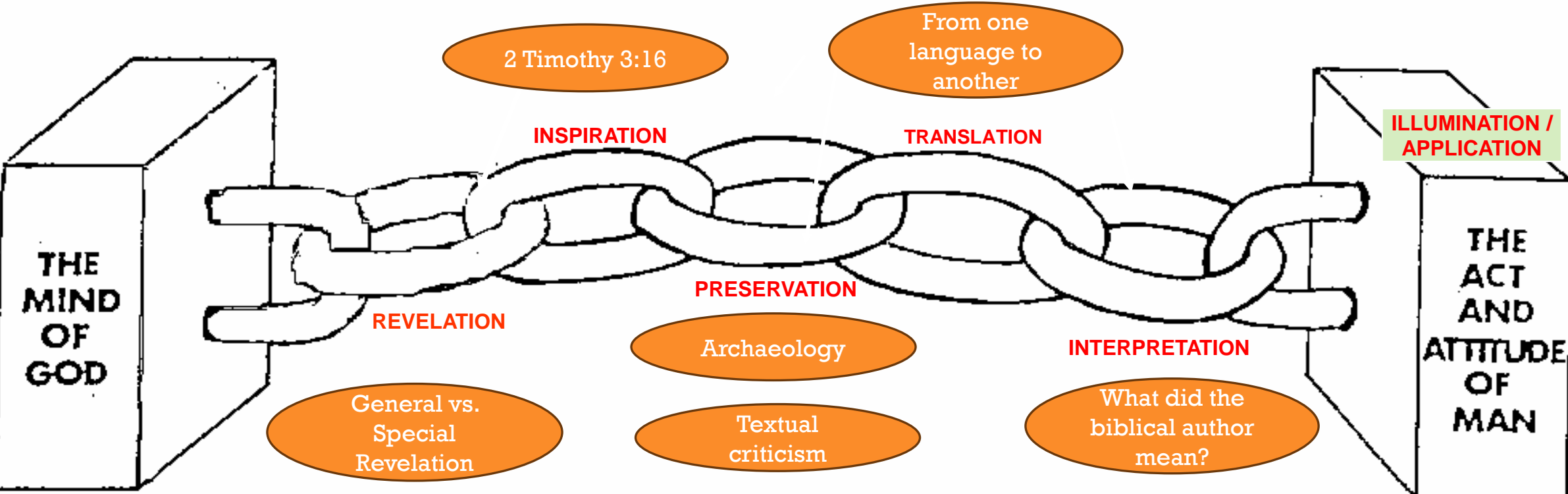
“The Bible, as it has been transmitted over the centuries, has suffered the loss of many plain and precious parts.”



President Benson with Gordon B. Hinckley and Thomas S. Monson

Presidents Ezra Taft Benson, Gordon B. Hinckley, and Thomas Monson, “Letter Reaffirms Use of King James Version of Bible,” Church News, June 20, 1992, p. 3.

HOW WE GOT THE BIBLE



FIRST THING WE MUST UNDERSTAND: WHAT IS TEXTUAL CRITICISM?

Textual criticism is not about “criticizing the Bible.” Rather, it is about studying manuscripts, the discipline of comparing the different texts and seeing how they relate. The goal is to understand what the original text said.

EXAMPLE: JOHN 1:18

- (KJV): “No man hath seen God at any time, the only begotten **Son**, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.”
- (NASB): “No one has seen God at any time; God the only **Son**, who is in the arms of the Father, He has explained Him.”
- (NIV): “No one has ever seen God, but **God** the one and only, who is at the Father’s side, has made him known.”
- (ESV): “No one has ever seen God; the only **God**, who is at the Father’s side, he has made him known.”

WHICH ONE IS IT?

Daniel Wallace writes:

“... both readings enjoy wide geographical distribution, . . . As a whole, I believe θεός is more probable due to the quality, antiquity, and transmissional history of the witnesses listed above.”

THREE FACTS TO SUPPORT THE RELIABILITY OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

Fact 1: We possess multiple copies of the NT

FACT 1: WE POSSESS MULTIPLE COPIES OF THE NT

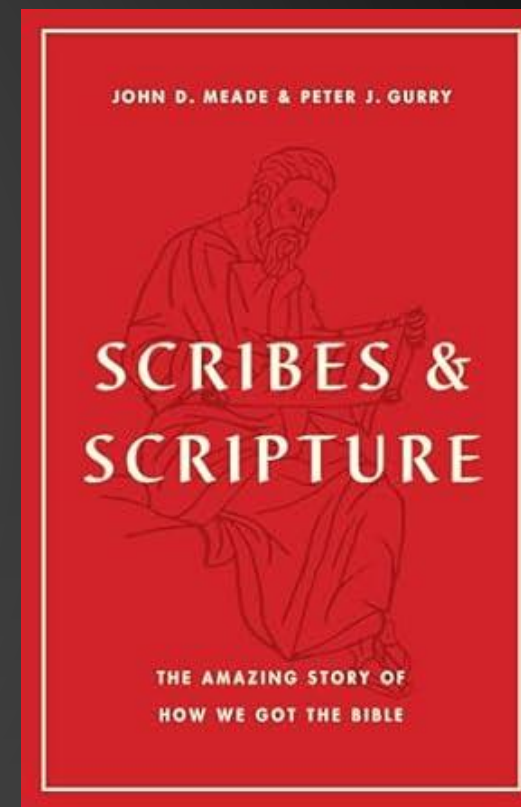
- Indeed, we own no **autographs** (originals)
- Yet for the New Testament we have...**5,800** Koine Greek apographs (manuscript copies)
- There are 4 dozen manuscripts written in the first two centuries AD
- Of manuscripts completed before AD 400, **99** still exist

POSSESSION OF MULTIPLE COPIES

- 10,000 manuscripts in Latin and 9,300 in additional languages (Coptic, Armenian, Aramaic and more)—about 20,000
- Average size: 450 pages in length
- 2.5 million manuscript pages
- Early papyri, later parchment (animal skin)
- In addition, we have 1 million quotations from the Bible from church fathers

COMPLETE COPIES

“Only around 60 of our Greek manuscripts contain all 27 books of the NT. Another 150 or so contain all but Revelation. The rest typically contain just the Gospels, just Paul (including Hebrews), or just Acts and the so-called Catholic Epistles (James through Jude).”



AVERAGE CLASSICAL GREEK WRITER

- There are fewer than 20 copies of each writer's works (average) still in existence
- Stack them up and they're 4 feet high
- Homer's Iliad (8th century BC) one of best: 1757 total
 - Earliest copy is 300 BC
- Daniel Wallace says if you could stack up all handwritten manuscripts of NT, it would equal 4.5 Empire State buildings!

COMPARING ANCIENT MANUSCRIPTS

ANCIENT WORK

EARLIEST MANUSCRIPT

TOTAL MANUSCRIPTS

TACITUS' ANNALS (110 AD)

850 AD - 1050 AD

36

HERODOTUS HISTORY (400'S BC)

150-50 BC

106

THUCYDIDES' HISTORY (400'S BC)

3RD CENTURY BC

188

SOPHOCLES' PLAYS (400'S BC)

3RD CENTURY BC

226

PLATO'S TETRALOGIES (400'S BC)

3RD CENTURY BC

238

CAESAR'S GALLIC WARS (50 BC)

9TH CENTURY AD

251

PLINY NATURAL HISTORY (79 AD)

5TH CENTURY AD

200+

DEMOSTHENES (300'S BC)

1ST CENTURY BC

444

LIVY'S HISTORY OF ROME (17 AD)

4TH CENTURY AD

473

HOMER'S ILIAD (~800 BC)

415 BC

1,900

NEW TESTAMENT

125 AD

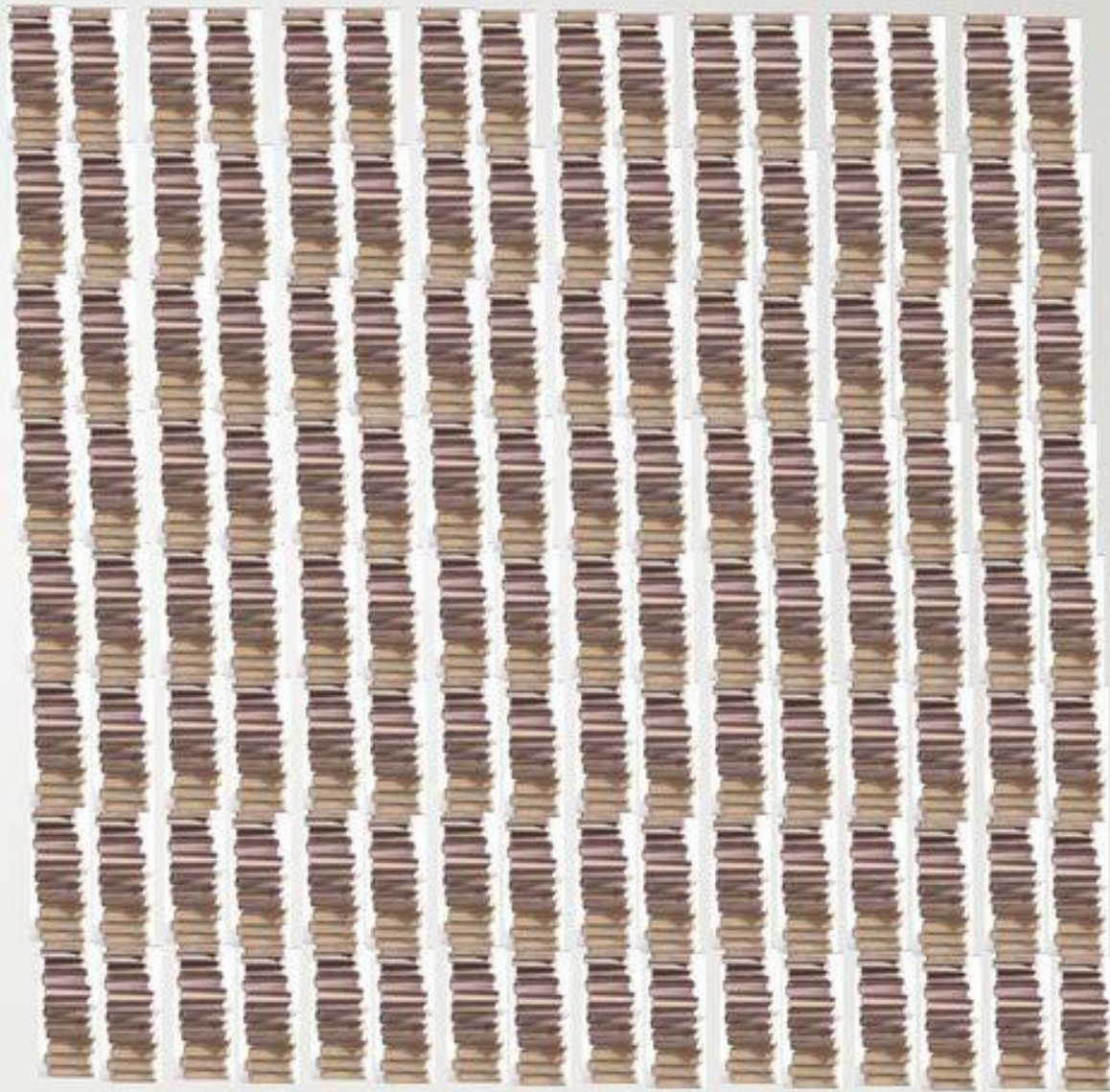
5,856

SOURCE: INSTITUTE FOR NEW TESTAMENT TEXTUAL RESEARCH (INTTR) MÜNSTER, GERMANY.
JOSH MCDOWELL AND SEAN MCDOWELL, EVIDENCE THAT DEMANDS A VERDICT (UPDATED 2017).

The NT compared to the average classical work



average classical work

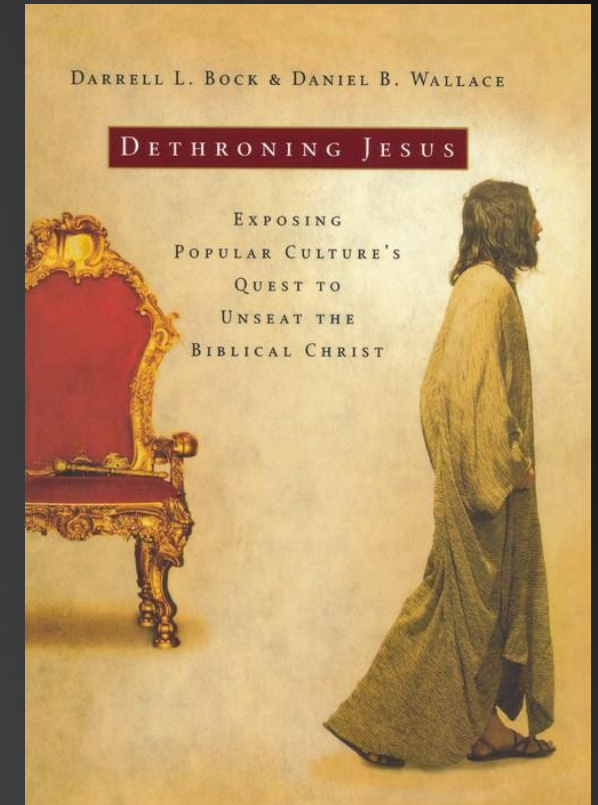


x8

New Testament

1000X MORE MANUSCRIPTS!

“All told, the New Testament is represented by approximately one thousand times as many manuscripts as the average classical author’s writings. Even the well-known authors—such as Homer and Herodotus—simply can’t compare to the quantity of copies enjoyed by the New Testament.”



NO COMPARISON

“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.”

THE NUMBER OF MANUSCRIPTS MATTERS

“Put simply, the New Testament is far and away the best attested work of the ancient world. Precisely because we have hundreds of thousands of variants and hundreds of early manuscripts, we’re in an excellent position for recovering the reading of the original. To speak about the number of variants without also speaking about the number of manuscripts is an irresponsible appeal to sensationalism.”



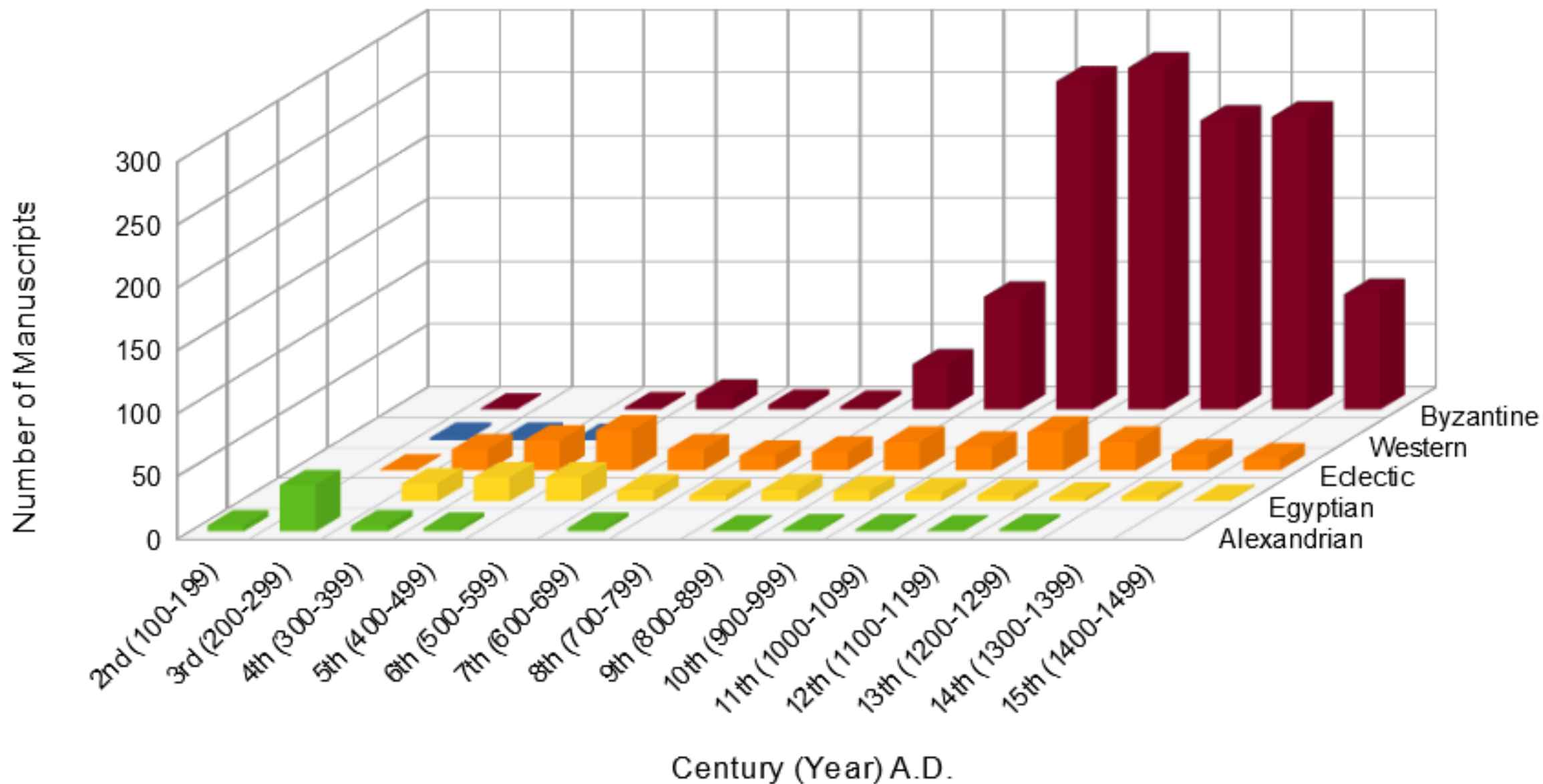
FOUR TYPES OF GREEK FAMILY (TEXTS)

- **Alexandrian:** This text type tends to be abrupt, use fewer words, and have readings that are considered difficult.
- **Western:** This is one of the main text types of the New Testament.
- **Byzantine:** Most surviving manuscripts from the ninth century onward are of the Byzantine type. The King James Version and other Reformation-era Bibles are based on the Byzantine text type.
- **Caesarean:** This is one of the possible main text types of the New Testament

Greek New Testament Manuscripts Age and Text Type

Data from: Brannan, Rick. New Testament Manuscript Explorer (Logos Bible Software, version 8.8; NTME 2015)

Alexandrian Egyptian Eclectic Western Byzantine



Fact 2:

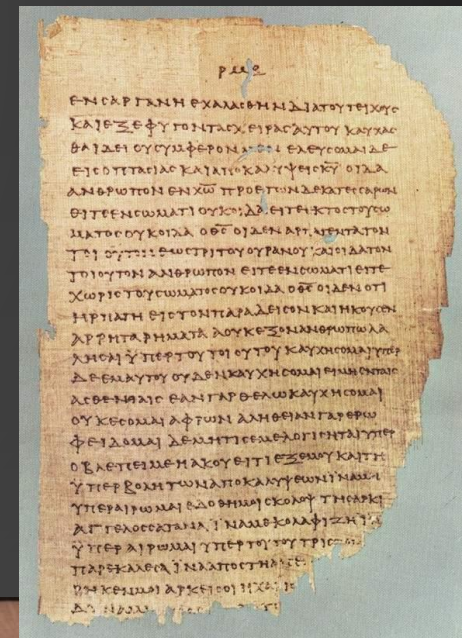
**We have important early manuscripts in the
first 5 centuries after Christ**

NEW TESTAMENT PAPYRI

- 141 documented NT papyri in first 3 centuries
- P45 (200-250) Chester Beatty Library (Dublin, Ireland) containing 28 sheets: Gospels
- P46 (200-225) Chester Beatty Library (Dublin, Ireland) containing 56 sheets: Pauline epistles
- P47 (200-300) Chester Beatty Library (10 fragments): Revelation
- P66 (200-225) Bodmer Library (78 sheets and 2 fragments): Oldest copy of Gospel of John



P45



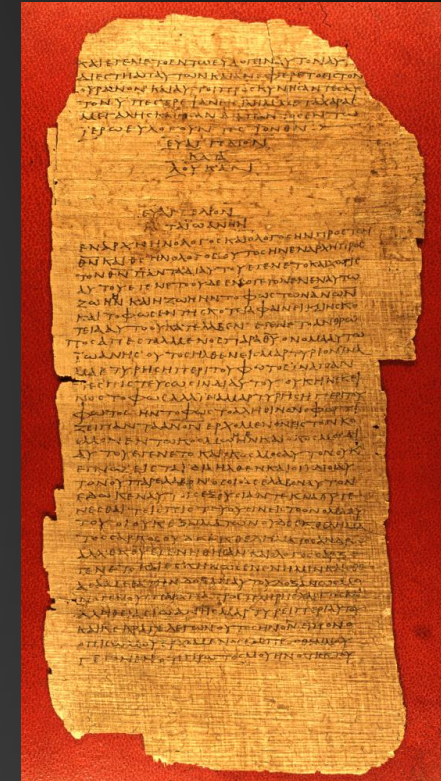
P46

IF YOU HAVE A CHANCE. GO LOOK UP WES HUFF/BILLY CARSON

- Impromptu debate early December 2024 (on line)
- Billy threatens with lawsuit
- Wes is invited to talk on Joe Rogan's podcast
- Wes' subscriber list goes from under 10,000 in December to more than 300,000 today!
- Wes is a scholar in Canada and does a great job

NEW TESTAMENT PAPYRI

- P72 (200-400) Vatican Library 1 and 2 Peter (18 sheets) and Bodmer Library Jude (4 sheets)
- P75 (200-225) Vatican Library Gospels of Luke and John (50 sheets)
- P90 (mid to late 100s) Sackler Library Oxford, small fragment of John (18:36-19:7)
- P94 (mid to late 100s) Sackler Library Oxford, Matthew (21:34-37/43 and 45 on back)
- P115 (200-400) Sackler Library Oxford Revelation (9 sheets)



p75

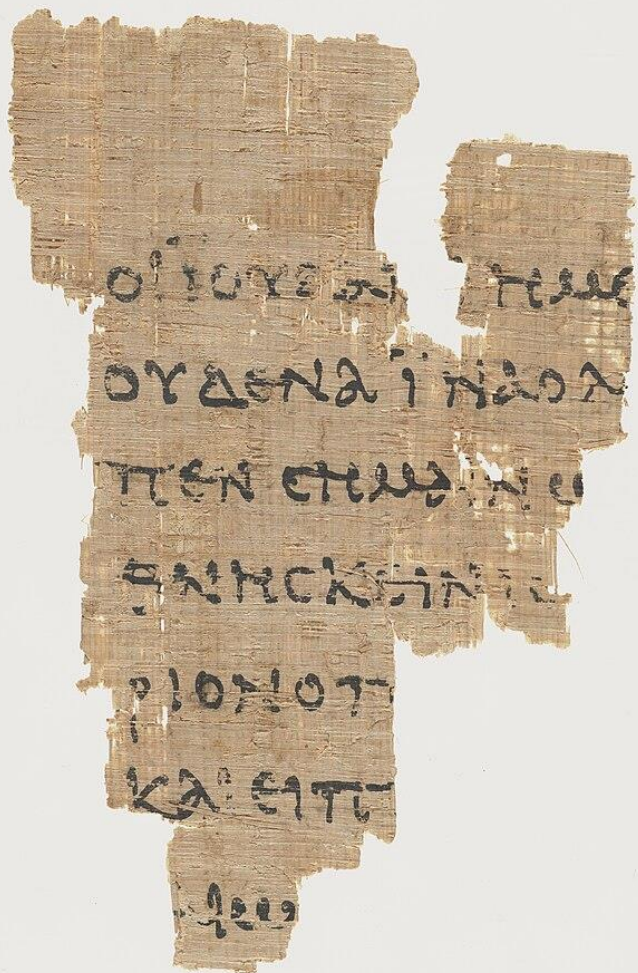
MY FAVORITE: P52

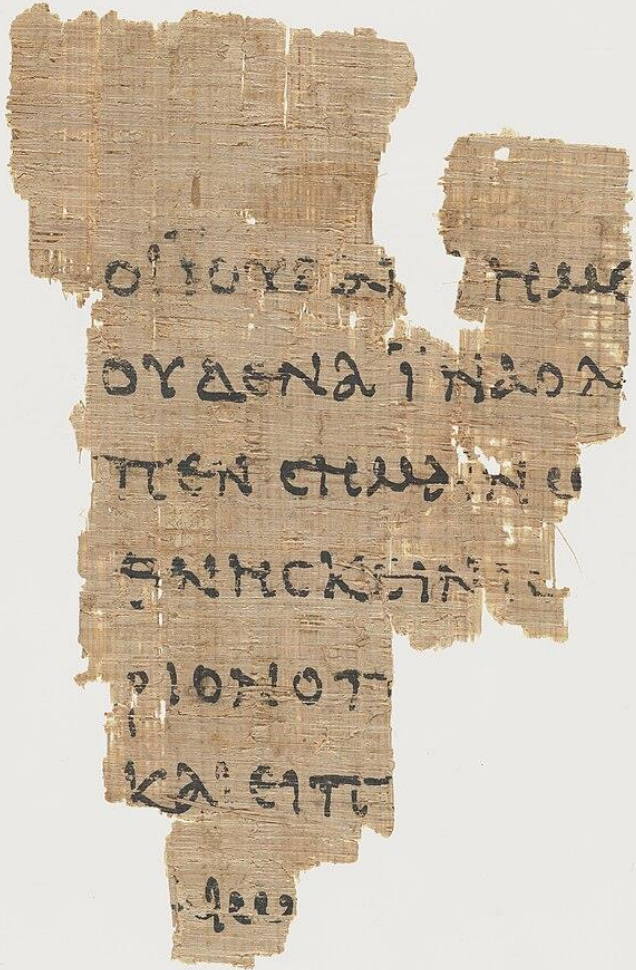
- Rylands Library
- 3.5 x 2.5 inches (credit card size)
- John 18:31-33 / 37-38
- Dated between AD 100-150, earliest of any manuscript
- Found on Egyptian market in 1920
- 118 legible letters



FRONT PART (RECTO)

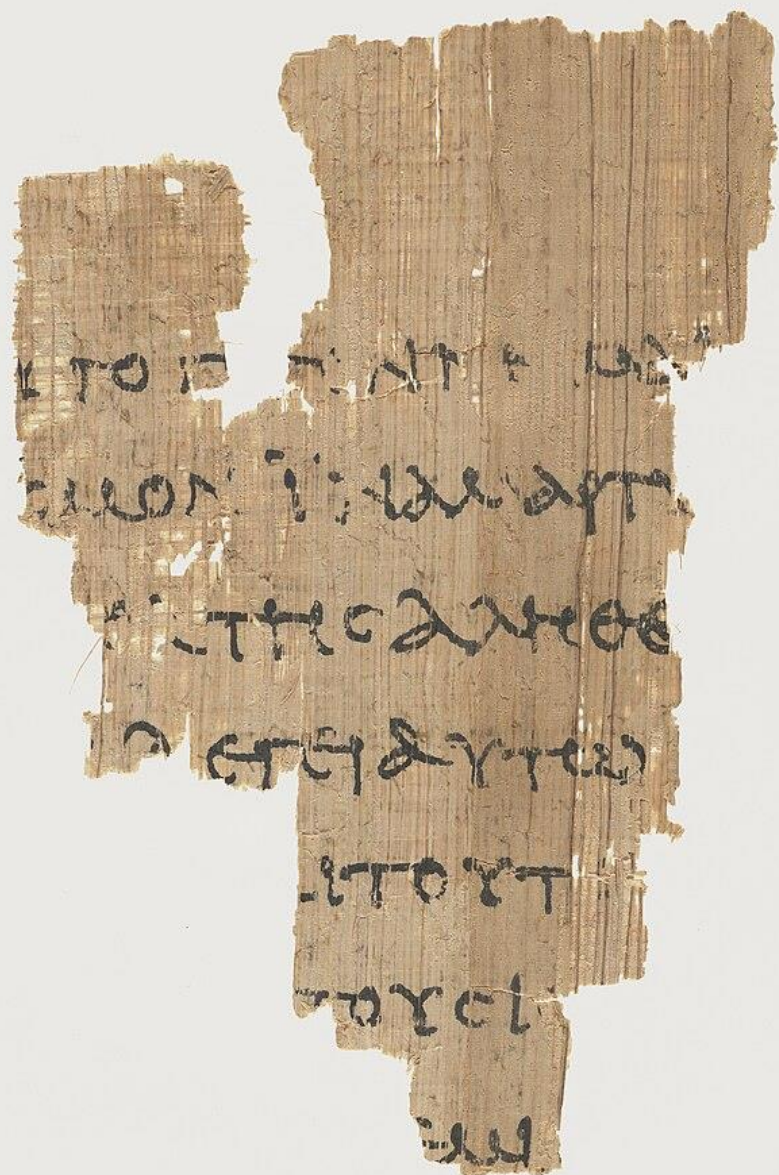
- the Jews, "For us
anyone," so that the w
oke signifying
die. En
rium P
and said
Jews





FRONT PART (RECTO)

- **the Jews, "For us** it is not permitted to kill **anyone," so that the w**ord of Jesus might be fulfilled, which he **s**poke **signifying** what kind of death he was going to **die. E**ntered therefore again into the Praetorium **P**ilate and summoned Jesus **and said** to him, "Thou art king of the **Jews?"**



BACK PART (VERSO)

- a King I am. For **this I have been born** and (for this) I have come into the **world so that I would testify to the truth**. Everyone who is of **the truth** hears of me my voice." **Said to him** Pilate, "What is truth?" **and this** having said, again he went out unto **the Jews** and said to them, "I find **not one** fault in him."

THEOLOGIAN SIMON PETER SUTHERLAND

“Is it not amazing that the oldest fragment in the world of the New Testament, dated possibly earlier than 100 AD and no later than 150 AD, speaks of such a great testimony to the word of God Jesus said, ‘Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away.’ Matthew 24: 35.”



CONSIDER...

- The original autographs possibly could have existed for 150-200 years!
- If most of the NT was written in the 50s to 70s AD, these very well could have existed all the way until the late 3rd century before they wore out!
- Perhaps they could have been copied off the autograph or even a second-generation text

Fact 3: We are able to determine that there are some passages not found in the earliest manuscripts

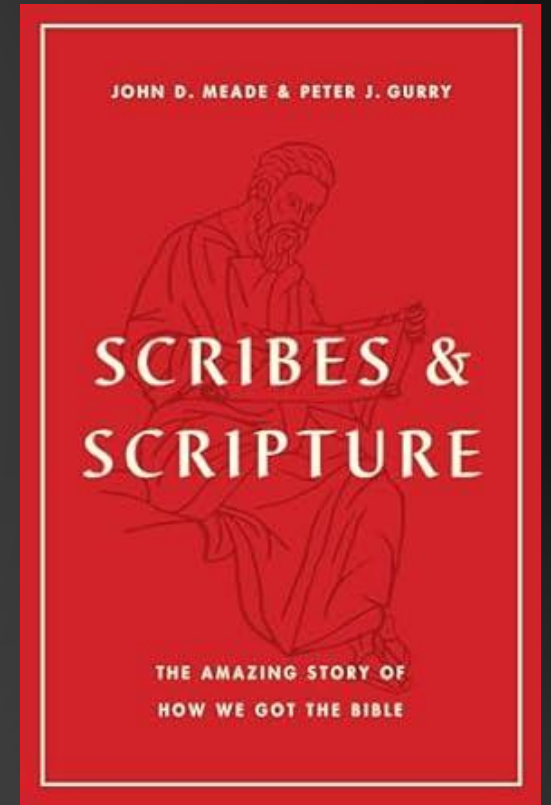
WHAT DO WE DISCOVER ABOUT TWO LONG QUESTIONABLE PASSAGES?

Mark 16:9ff: Longer ending of Mark

John 7:53-8:11: Jesus and the Adulterous Woman

MARK 16:9FF: LONGER ENDING OF MARK

“The manuscript evidence for the longer ending of Mark is numerically overwhelming. It is found in some 1600 Greek manuscripts—all but two—and in many of the versions. It’s also quoted from as early as the second century by Irenaeus (Against Heresies 3.10.6) and others, and possibly earlier by Justin Martyr (1 Apology 45). Throughout history, almost all readers of Mark’s Gospel have had the longer ending. So why are there doubts about it?”



REASONS TO EXCLUDE MARK 16:9FF

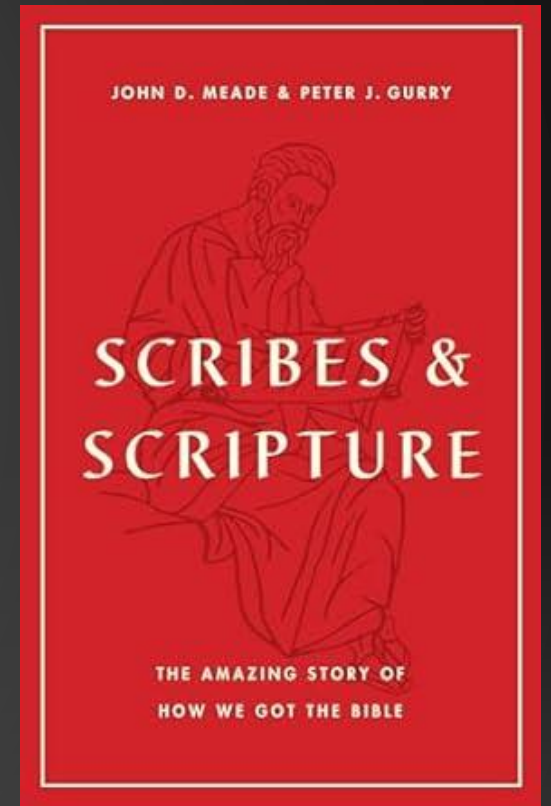
- Codex Vaticanus and Codex Sinaiticus don't have this portion
- A group of medieval manuscripts has a note alerting the reader that some manuscripts end at 16:8 and that Eusebius did not include the longer ending
- Some Coptic and Syriac manuscripts lack the ending
- Awkward transition: Mary Magdalene has already been introduced in 16:1, flees tomb in 16:8, but reintroduced in 16:9

JOHN 7:53-8:11: JESUS AND THE ADULTEROUS WOMAN

- Stronger evidence against this passage in John than long Mark ending
- Almost 270 continuous-text Greek manuscripts (out of about 1500) don't have it
- Not seen in any manuscript of John until 3rd or 4th centuries
- Not in p66, p75, Codex Vaticanus, Codex Sinaiticus and 100s of medieval copies
- Missing in most Syriac copies and some early Latin copies—though Jerome includes it in Vulgate
- Could it have been in another source and put into John later?

JOHN 7:53-8:11: REASONS TO EXCLUDE

“It may well be that the story is historical—it certainly fits well with the portrait of Jesus in the Gospels. We also know from John’s Gospel itself that Jesus did far more than the evangelists were able to record (John 21:25). In this case, we may have a true story about Jesus, but one that was not originally part of John’s Gospel.”



WE MUST CONSIDER...

These are the only two passages of length that should be left out

If we did not have these two passages, what exactly did we lose?

ONE MORE: WHAT ABOUT 1 JOHN 5:7-8?

- “For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost; and these three are one. And there are three that bear witness in earth, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood; and these three agree in one.”
- In the NIV, it says, “For there are three that testify: the Spirit, the water, and the blood,; and the three are in agreement.”
- NIV footnote says, “Late manuscripts of the Vulgate *testify in heaven; the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit, and these three are one. And there are three that testify on earth: the* (not found in any Greek manuscript before the 14th century)”