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Quiz Question #1:

People say, “The Gospels have been translated and retranslated so many times, you don’t know what Jesus originally said.”

#1. Which English translations are more accurate, modern ones or the translations from 500 years ago?

#1. _____

Quiz Question #2:

People say, “There are gaps of hundreds and hundreds of years between when the Gospels were written and the manuscripts we have.”

#2. How old is the oldest currently extant manuscript of the New Testament?

#2. _____

Quiz Question #3:

People say, “Of course the Gospels are full of crazy stories about Jesus; they were written by people who lived long after Jesus was dead.”

#3. How many years had passed after Jesus’ death before the first New Testament book was written?

#3. _____

Quiz Question #4:

“The ancient manuscripts of the New Testament are full of errors and don’t agree with one another, so we don’t know what they originally said.”

#4a. How many currently extant manuscripts of the New Testament are there? Where are they from?

#4a. _____

#4b. How alike are the ancient manuscripts of the New Testament? Try to make your answer a percentage.

#4b. _____

#4c. List all the doctrines of the Christian faith that are altered, changed, or otherwise affected by the textual problems in the ancient manuscripts of the NT.

#4c.

Quiz Question #5:

“There was a time when the New Testament was full of other Gospels that were purged later.”

#5. Name all the Gospels that were universally believed to be apostolic, never rejected by any broad Christian community, and continuously affirmed from the second century forward.

#5. _____

The Question for Tonight:

How do we know that the Gospels were transmitted to us from the originals with reasonable accuracy?

(The problem of the telephone game.)

Do We Have the Originals?

We do not have the originals. We do not, as far as anyone knows, have copies of the copies of the original.

What Happened to the Originals?

- They were current so they didn't have any apologetic value.
- They were immediately copied and copied and copied for use in ministry.
- They were constantly in use in the missionary enterprise.
- They largely circulated in areas that were not conducive to the preservation of ancient writing materials.

Number of NT Witnesses:

There are ~6,100 manuscripts of the Greek New Testament in existence today, in whole or in part, that serve to corroborate the accuracy of the transmission of the New Testament. The earliest of these date to within forty years (give or take) of the time of the writing of the New Testament.

Is that a lot?

Compare with other ancient sources:

- Homer's *Iliad*, 643 copies
- Julius Caesar's *Gallic Wars*, 10 copies of it, the earliest of which was made 1,000 years after it was written.
- Livy wrote 142 books of Roman history, of which a mere 35 survive in only 20 manuscripts, only one of which is as old as the 4th century.
- Tacitus' *Histories* and *Annals*, 2 copies (9th and 11th century)
- The *History of Thucydides*, 8 copies (10th century)
- The writings of Plato survive in 7 copies.
- Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, 80 mss.
- *Beowulf*, 1 copy

The New Testament is the most well attested to document in the ancient world *by far*.

If you are willing to say, "You can't trust the New Testament because we don't have the original documents and because decades passed between the events and the earliest documents that wrote about them," then you have to admit you can't trust virtually *any* ancient document or historical account.

And no one is silly enough to say that!

How different are the manuscripts?

- 100% of the New Testament manuscripts agree in 90% of their texts.
- 95% of the New Testament manuscripts agree in 100% of their text.
- Two possible readings do not produce conjectural uncertainty.
- In every meaningful way, we have the "original" text of the New Testament.

What about all those errors?

- Obvious Mechanical (Nonsensical)
- Orthographic (Spelling)
- Minor (Non-Translatable) Various
- Major (Translatable) but Non-Viable Various
- Major (Translatable) and Viable Various