

# HISTORICAL RELIABILITY OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

## I. THE NEW TESTAMENT AS A SOURCE OF THE EVIDENCE:

A. **ROMANS 10:17** - The N.T says the “belief cometh of hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ.”

B. Our Dependence is on the New Testament.

1. **Jn. 17:20** - “Neither for these only do I pray, but for them also that believe on me through their (apostles’) word.”
2. The Apostles’ belief was based on their own objective observation of Christ’s life, death, and resurrection.
3. We’ve not seen Jesus, so we have to rely on the apostles written testimony.
  - a. **Jn 19:35** And he that hath seen hath borne witness, and his witness is true: and he knoweth that he saith true, that ye also may believe.
  - b. **Jn.20:30-31**

C. God’s plan for generating belief in Christ is generated by the New Testament.

1. After Thomas’ confession notice what Jesus said (**Jn.20:24-28**).
2. **John 20:29** - “Because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: bless are they that have not seen, and yet have belived.”

D. We are totally dependent upon the New Testament for a true portrait of the historical Jesus. Neither historian nor theologian can say with any authority whatsoever that Jesus said or did anything without an appeal to the New Testament.

## II. THE HISTORICAL RELIABILITY OF THE NEW TESTAMENT:

### A. *Archaeology*

1. Since 1798 archaeologists have unearthed hundreds of artifacts.
2. The value of biblical archaeologist has been to discover and organize material from the past to provide the general background for the historicity of the Bible.
3. The role of archaeology is to:
  - a. Excavate, decipher and critically evaluate the ancient records of the past that touch directly or indirectly upon the Bible and its message.

### B. *Contemporary documentation*

1. N.T. writers, and their Jewish and Gentile contemporaries from the first and second centuries.

## C. *The Acid Test*

1. The Books of the New Testament have passed the “acid test” for the trustworthiness of ancient documents.
2. They were written in the same generation in which the events took place, and were circulated among the very people about whom the documents spoke, while they were still alive to deny them.
3. The Gospel of Mark was in circulation in 50 A.D. only a dozen years after the death of Christ.

## D. The writings of the Apostolic Fathers.

1. There is a collection of documents written from 90 - 160 A.D. known as the writings of the apostolic fathers.
2. These writers lived in close proximity to the apostles by having either sat at their feet or one or more of the apostles, or sat at the feet of those who did.
3. Their testimony to completion of the N.T. before 100 A.D.
  - a. the early date of these writings makes it clear that the N.T. books were already in circulation among the churches of Christ before the end of the 1st century.
  - b. A letter from **Clement of Rome** to the Corinthian church about 96 A.D. we find quotes from (Mt, Mk, Lk, Act, Rom I Cor. Eph, Tit, Heb. I Pet).
  - c. Letters written by **Ignatius** about 115 A.D. we find quotes from (Mt, Jn, Rom, 1 & 2 Cor, Gal, Eph, Phil, 1 & 2 Tim, Tit).
  - d. A letter from **Polycarp** to the Phillipians about 120 AD quotes from (Mt, Mk, Lk, Act, Rom, 1 & 2 Cor, Gal, Eph, Phil, 2 Thess, 1 & 2 Tim, Heb, I Pet, and 1 Jn).
4. The value of the writings of these early fathers to us as an evidence of the historical reliability of the N.T. is two-fold.
  - a. Clear evidence the church attributed divine authority to the N.T. at that time.
  - b. Second, the church was persecuted at this time precisely for believing the message of the New Testament.