

The Prattmont Church of Christ is just what the name suggests, a church that belongs to Christ. We are not a denomination; we are simply a group of Christians trying very hard to practice the teachings of our Head, Jesus Christ. The New Testament offers a complete pattern for what each local church should be like—its organization, its worship, its work, etc. We are committed to following that pattern. We cordially invite you to attend our services. We would also welcome any comments or questions about this bulletin.

TIMES OF SERVICES:

Sunday

Bible Study 9:00 A.M.
 Worship 10:00 A.M.
 Training Class 5:00 P.M.
 Worship 6:00 P.M.

Wednesday:

Bible Study 7:00 P.M.



Weekly Bulletin
 February 4, 2018

**The Bible: Is It The Same Today
 As When It Was First Written? (Part 3)**

By Bryan Gibson

Two previous articles (January 21, 28) have discussed this question. The first considered it from the standpoint of God’s providence. Conceding that God has both the ability and the desire to preserve His word, it is indeed a serious matter to charge Him with failing to do so. The second focused on the reliability of the **Old Testament** in particular. This final article in the series shifts our attention to the **New Testament**. Can we be sure that what we have today is what God intended us to have?

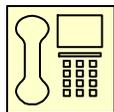
Before we look at some “external” evidences, keep in mind the New Testament itself offers the most convincing proof. Give the mighty power of God’s word a fair hearing (Heb. 4:12-13), and faith in God and in His word will be the result (Romans 10:17).

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Commenting on the many manuscripts, versions and quotations of the New Testament available, F.F. Bruce said, “There is no body of ancient literature in the world which enjoys such a wealth of good textual attestation as the New Testament” (ETDAV, p. 50). In other words, we have more evidence to support the accuracy of the New Testament than any other ancient document. But what about the variations in the manuscripts? There are some, but according to Westcott and Hort, two 19th century textual critics, substantial variations could “hardly form more than a thousandth part of the entire text” (NTIG, p. 2). These variations are usually noted in the margins of our Bibles. But let’s look more closely at what is available to us today.

- There are about 5000 different Greek manuscripts available. The earliest substantially complete ones date from the 4th century, but we do have fragments or portions from earlier times. For example, one fragment of John has been dated about A.D. 130.
- Additionally, textual critics have available to them translations made from Greek into Latin, Syriac and other languages. Some of these translations were made in the 2nd century and manuscripts from the 4th and 5th centuries have been found.
- Quotations of N.T. writings can also be found in the early “church fathers” (called “patristics”). These men lived as early as the end of the 1st century and in their writings have preserved for comparison very large portions of the N.T.

- Lectionaries (works used for daily readings and public worship) also contain quotations from the N.T. Most of these date from the 6th century on.

Some are troubled by the time gap between the writing of the New Testament and these manuscripts we have. Here are a few things we need to keep in mind about the dates for manuscripts, writings, etc. A 4th century copy proves the existence of an earlier manuscript, doesn’t it? Why aren’t there more early manuscripts? Once new copies were made, is there a need to keep the old, worn copy? How many 200 year-old Bibles have you seen? But you don’t doubt that the King James Version of 1796 was the same as the King James Version of 1996, do you?

Really, when you compare the New Testament to other ancient documents, you will see that the time gap is quite short. For Homer’s *Odyssey*, the gap between composition and the oldest complete copy is about 2200 years. And then consider two other ancient works composed near the time of the New Testament. The oldest complete copy of Caesar’s *Gallic Wars* is dated about 1000 years after its composition (written between 58 and 50 B.C.). The Roman historian Tacitus wrote *Histories* around A.D. 100. The earliest copy we have of this book is about 800 years after its composition.

Conclusion

The New Testament has been preserved better than any other ancient historical document! How do we account for this if it is just another book?