

## How do we know today's Bible accurately represents the original?

The New Testament was originally written in Greek. The earliest Greek manuscripts of the New Testament discovered date to about three centuries after Christ, and the number of ancient Greek manuscripts or fragments of the New Testament discovered thus far exceeds 5,800.

Two points should be raised. Firstly, what we know about the history of the Roman Empire is based largely on *The Annals of the Roman Empire*, written by the Roman historian Tacitus in 116 AD. There are only two manuscripts in the world of that in the original language: one dates from the 9th century and the other dates from the 11th century. Therefore, the details about the history of the Roman Empire stand on two manuscripts written about 1,000 years after the original, while the details about the New Testament stand on over 5,800 manuscripts that date from only about 300 years after the original. In other words, there is far stronger written evidence for the New Testament than for the history of the Roman Empire.

Secondly, these 5,800+ manuscripts of the New Testament in the original Greek were discovered over a vast geographic region encircled by the Middle East, Ethiopia, Spain, Ireland and Germany. Imagine a kindergarten class playing a game of whisper telephone. The teacher whispers, "*Johnny played with Mary near the swings yesterday*" to two children, and they each whisper to two other children, and so on. If after ten relays, a child in one corner of the room reports, "*Johnny played with Mary near the swings yesterday*," while a child in another corner reports, "*Johnny fought with Mary on the swings*" the children won't know what the teacher had whispered originally. But if two children in distant corners say exactly the same thing, the original message can be deduced without having been heard by all.

What's the point? The copies of the Gospels penned by Matthew, Mark, Luke and John have not been and are unlikely to ever be found since they most likely disintegrated long ago from having passed from hand to hand to be read and copied. But almost all (95-99%) of the 5,800+ manuscript copies all say in effect, "*Johnny played with Mary near the swings yesterday*." So what was originally penned can be logically deduced as what is in those 5,800+ copies.