

BIBLICAL AUTHORITY UNLEASHED

Although none of the original manuscripts written by Moses or Paul or the other biblical writers have been preserved (no doubt providentially; otherwise they might have become objects of worship), we can have full confidence in the integrity and canonicity of the text as transmitted to us. Some of the considerations supporting this confidence are summarized below.

Authenticity of the New Testament Text

LOGICAL BASIS OF CONFIDENCE IN THE TEXT

- Over 20,000 hand-copied manuscripts of the Greek text are in existence, far more than for any other documents of comparable [age].
- Some papyrus fragments, especially of John, are preserved from the middle of the second century.
- Although there are some differences in the preserved manuscripts, there is no doubt that at least 95% of the text is intact [whole and undamaged] from the [time the apostles lived].
- The complete text of all New Testament books was available to those who lived at the same time as the apostles, and they were satisfied with it.
- In particular, the portrait of Christ as given in the New Testament was accepted as authentic (accurate and true) by the earliest Christians.
- The conclusion is that the New Testament as we now have it is substantially identical with the original writings.

SECONDARY ATTESTATIONS OF AUTHORITY

- Hundreds of quotations are included in the writings of the early church fathers, probably adequate to construct the entire New Testament, if necessary.
- Accuracy of most New Testament historical and geographical references has been confirmed by archaeological and historical research, and no such reference has been found in error.
- The New Testament books were originally written in Koine Greek, the common language of the New Testament era, rather than classical Greek.

- Consistency of church ordinances (baptism, Lord's supper) as practiced by the early church prior to the circulation and collection of the New Testament books, with their initiation as described therein, can only be explained if the documents were authentic.

Authenticity of the Old Testament Text

NEW TESTAMENT ATTESTATION

- Traditional authorship accepted by Christ (Luke 24:27; John 5:46–47; Matthew 24:15–21; etc.).
- Included 320 direct quotations from the Old Testament, plus hundreds of allusions.
- Confirmation in the New Testament of supernatural events recorded in the Old Testament (Matthew 19:4–5; Luke 17:26; John 6:32; Matthew 12:39–40; etc.).

PRESERVATION OF THE HEBREW TEXT

- Over 1,000 hand-copied manuscripts of the Masoretic Text available.
- Meticulous study and compilation of all earlier texts by the Masoretes in AD 500.
- Extremely careful copying and cross-checking by the Hebrew scribes.
- Completion of writing and editing about the time of Ezra, with probably the first Old Testament canon developed at that time.
- Careful preservation and transmission from still earlier times.

INDIRECT CONFIRMATION OF OLD TESTAMENT TEXT

- Other ancient versions (Septuagint, Vulgate, Syriac, Samaritan, etc.).
- Dead Sea Scrolls (containing most or all of Old Testament).
- Acceptance by Jews and early Christians.
- Old Testament quotations in pre-Christian writings.
- Archaeological confirmations.
 - High culture, writing skills, etc., long before Abraham.

- Geographical and historical accuracy.
- Superiority of biblical records to the ethnic myths.
- Witness of Passover to Mosaic authorship.
- Claims of writers; universal acceptance by Jews.

CONCLUSION:

The biblical text as we have it is authentic, confirmed wherever it can be tested. Completely separate from the question of divine inspiration, the text has been accurately transmitted from the

original writings. Furthermore, the most difficult part to believe in the Old Testament (the Creation and the Flood) is supported by all true science, and the most difficult to believe in the New Testament (the bodily resurrection of Christ) is confirmed by all sound history.

*Taken from Henry Morris, *The New Defender's Study Bible*, World Publishing, Inc., 2006, pp. 2062–2063.

LESSON 1 OPTIONAL ACTIVITY

Digging deeper into God's Word is a surefire way to grow closer to Him and to mature in your Christian walk. Try to locate a Strong's Concordance (parent, pastor, church library, etc.) or if you have Internet access, you can log onto www.crosswalk.com and save it to your Favorites for future use. This link gives you access to Strong's Concordance, Greek and Hebrew lexicons, Bible Dictionaries, Encyclopedias, and a few other resources that can be excellent tools for deep Bible Study.

HERE'S YOUR CHALLENGE

Read 2 Timothy 3 to get the context (setting) for 2 Timothy 3:16, then look up the key words for 2 Timothy 3:16 in Strong's Concordance. Look at the number (usually 3 or 4 digits) to the right of the 2 Timothy reference and jot it down beside the word it goes with below. Then look up the Strong's number at the back of the concordance or in a Greek dictionary. On the lines below, write down the Greek word and the italicized definition provided.

Inspiration: _____ Concordance # _____

Profitable: _____ Concordance # _____

Doctrine: _____ Concordance # _____

Reproof: _____ Concordance # _____

Correction: _____ Concordance # _____

Instruction: _____ Concordance # _____

Perfect: _____ Concordance # _____

Now tie it all together. Rewrite 2 Timothy 3:16 in your own words as you understand it now.
