

Can we Trust the Text of the Bible?

Exhibition and presentations by Dr Trevor R Allin

Session 4: Codex Alexandrinus

For more information on Codex Alexandrinus, W. Andrew Smith's Ph.D. thesis is recommended:
Smith, W. Andrew, "A Study of the Gospels in Codex Alexandrinus: Codicology, Palaeography & Scribal Hands", Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2014

An indication of the historical importance of these Biblical manuscripts

Comparison with other ancient manuscripts: dates of earliest copies & numbers of copies

AUTHOR	BOOK	DATE WRITTEN	EARLIEST COPIES	TIME GAP SINCE WRITTEN	N° OF COPIES
Homer	Iliad	800 B.C. (?)	Fragments: c. 400 B.C. Complete: 1300 A.D.	c. 400 years 2,100 years	Fragments: 643 Complete: 1
Plato	Dialogues	400 B.C.	c. 900 A.D.	c. 1,300 years	7
Julius Caesar	Gallic Wars	100-44 B.C.	c. 900 A.D.	c. 1,000 years	10
Tacitus	Annals (16 books)	100 A.D.	c. 1100 A.D.	c. 1,000 years	20 (of the first 6 books there is only <u>one</u> copy)
Pliny the Elder	Natural History	61-113 A.D.	c. 850 A.D.	c. 750 years	7
	New Testament	50-100 A.D.	Fragments: c. 125 A.D. Complete books: c. 200 A.D. Most of NT: c. 250 A.D.	c. 50 + years c. 100 years c. 150 years	5,000 +
	Codex Sinaiticus (Complete NT + ...)		c. 320-340 A.D.	c. 220-240 years	
	Codex Vaticanus		c. 360 A.D.	c. 260 years	
	Codex Alexandrinus		c. 420 A.D.	c. 320 years	

The above data is based on respected academic sources published over the course of approximately the past 60 years. There continue to be discoveries of further ancient manuscripts – both of the Bible and of some of the secular writers listed above. The precise numbers of copies in each case are therefore likely to rise over time and exact dates are likely to change. However, the overall pattern and the proportions of Biblical and non-Biblical manuscripts remain broadly the same.

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