

There were several historians of the ancient world whose works are quite popular. Thucydides, who wrote History of the Peloponnesian War, lived from 460 BC to 400 BC. Virtually everything we know about the war comes from his history. Yet, the earliest copy of any manuscripts of Thucydides' work dates around 900 AD, a full 1,300 years later! The Roman historian Suetonius lived between 70 AD and 140 AD. Yet the earliest copy of his book The Twelve Caesars is dated around AD 950, a full 800 years later. The chart below reveals the time gaps of these and other works from the ancient world and compares them to the earliest New Testament manuscripts (taken from McDowell 1972:42, & Bruce 1943:16-17).

Author	Date Written	Earliest Copy	Time Span	Copies (extent)
<b>Secular Manuscripts:</b>				
Herodotus (History)	480 - 425 BC	900 AD	1,300 years	8
Thucydides (History)	460 - 400 BC	900 AD	1,300 years	?
Aristotle (Philosopher)	384 - 322 BC	1,100 AD	1,400 years	5
Caesar (History)	100 - 44 BC	900 AD	1,000 years	10
Pliny (History)	61 - 113 AD	850 AD	750 years	7
Suetonius (Roman History)	70 - 140 AD	950 AD	800 years	?
Tacitus (Greek History)	100 AD	1,100 AD	1,000 years	20
<b>Biblical Manuscripts:</b> (note: these are individual manuscripts)				
Magdalene Ms (Matthew 26)	1st century	50-60 AD	co-existent (?)	
John Rylands (John)	98 AD	120 AD	22 years	
Bodmer Papyrus II (John)	98 AD	150-200 AD	52-102 years	
Chester Beatty Papyri (N.T.)	1st century	200 AD	150 years	
Diatessaron by Tatian (Gospels)	1st century	200 AD	150 years	
Codex Vaticanus (Bible)	1st century	325-350 AD	275-300 years	
Codex Sinaiticus (Bible)	1st century	350 AD	300 years	
Codex Alexandrinus (Bible)	1st century	400 AD	350 years	

The documentary support for our New Testament is hundreds of times greater in volume and quality than any other document of antiquity. We have over 5,300 Greek manuscripts (complete or partial) of the New Testament, over 10,000 Latin translation copies, over 9000 copies of other translations, and thousands of quotations from the N.T. in lectionaries in our possession. In addition to these we have over 89,000 N.T. quotes in the writings of early church fathers... enough to reconstruct the entire New Testament with the exception of about eleven verses!

### ***Ostracon (Ostraca plural)***

Pottery and other cast goods containing inscriptions.

### ***Lectionary***

A collection of verses written out for reading to an assembly of Christians.

### ***Synoptic Gospels***

Refers to Matthew, Mark and Luke who present similar accounts and views.

### ***Codex***

A book created by binding multiple pages of text together. The pages may be either papyrus or parchment.

## Resources

### ***The New Testament Documents***

book by F.F. Bruce. (Grand Rapids: Friedmans)

### ***Concise History of Bible***

<http://www.greatsite.com/timeline-english-bible-history/#timeline>

### ***How We Got the Bible***

book by Neil R. Lightfoot. (Grand Rapids: Baker), Rev 2003.

