



TRANSCRIPT

August 27, 2017 • WHI-1377

Has The Bible Been Miscopied or Mistranslated?

00:00:02 00:00:02 00:00:02 **Daniel Wallace:** It's interesting. There's kind of an underlying assumption when the Bible has been translated and once it got translated, people have revised the translation without going back to those earlier manuscripts. And so, I thought that when I was in junior high school but I got past that relatively early. The reality is that we have almost a thousand times as many manuscripts as the King James New Testament was based on. So as time goes on, we're not actually farther and farther away from the original text. We're getting closer and closer.

00:00:38 **Narrator:** Five centuries ago in taverns and public houses across Europe, the masses would gather for discussion and debate over the latest ideas sweeping the land. From one such meeting place, a small Cambridge inn called The White Horse, the reformation came to the English-speaking world. Carrying on the tradition, welcome to the *White Horse Inn*.

00:01:05 **Michael Horton:** Well, we are privileged to have with us Daniel Wallace, Professor of New Testament Studies at Dallas Seminary and Executive Director of the Center for the Study of New Testament Manuscripts. He's authored many books and edited others. For the purposes of this interview, we'll primarily be focusing on a volume he recently edited titled *Revisiting the Corruption of the New Testament*, along with another book, that in addition to presenting a transcript of a debate between Daniel Wallace and Bart Ehrman also features a number of other essays interacting with the issue of scriptural integrity. This book is published by Fortress Press and is titled *The Reliability of the New Testament: Bart Ehrman and Daniel Wallace in Dialogue*. Professor Wallace, thanks for being our guest today on the *White Horse Inn*.

00:01:45 **Daniel Wallace:** Well, thank you. I'm honored to be here.

00:01:47 **Michael Horton:** First of all, can you tell us a little bit about your encounters with Bart Ehrman in debate and some of your general impressions of those encounters?

00:01:56 **Daniel Wallace:** Well, I've known Bart for over 30 years. I knew him when he was a first-year student at Princeton Seminary in the doctoral program and when he was still and evangelical. We've had three debates. The first one was at New Orleans Baptist Seminary for the fourth annual Greer-Heard Forum and most of that was published in this book by Fortress Press and it has the transcript of our two lectures.

00:02:24 **Michael Horton:** *The Reliability of the New Testament: Bart Ehrman and Daniel Wallace in Dialogue*. That's published by Fortress. We recently aired some interviews with a number of college students from a University of California campus. We asked them a number of questions about God, religion, morality and so forth and when we asked about the Bible, we received a number of very similar answers that I'm thinking from scholars as well as college students. Here's an example.

00:02:50 **Interviewer:** What are your thoughts about the Bible in particular?

00:02:52 **Male:** Personally, I think most of it is fiction. I hesitate to trust any book that's been revised that much. There's this nice book I'd recommend called *Misquoting Jesus*. It talks about how -- isn't it the most translated book in all of history? And they didn't have printing presses or just nice translators. It was up to the scribe to just say, hey, this sounds like this but this sounds like of stupid, I'm going to take this out and I might put this in. It's really just so up to human error that the English copy that we have today compared to the original works of these people is probably not all that similar.

00:03:32 **Michael Horton:** The college student was saying basically something that's been translated that many times can't be reliable. What would you say about that?

00:03:41 **Daniel Wallace:** The translation of it doesn't -- multiple translations don't make a text more or less reliable. But it's interesting, there's kind of an underlying assumption when people make that statement and it goes something like this: well, the Bible has been translated and once it got translated, people have revised the translation without going back to look at those early manuscripts. And so, I thought that when I was in junior high school but I got past that relatively early. The reality is that the King James Bible, when it was translated in 1611, it was essentially based -- the New Testament -- was essentially based on seven Greek New Testament manuscripts, the earliest of which went back to the 11th century. We still have those manuscripts and we have almost 6,000 more manuscripts. So, we have almost a thousand times as many manuscripts as the King James New Testament was based on and our earliest don't go back to the 11th century but so far as what's been published, they go back to the second century. So they go back almost a thousand years earlier. So as time goes on, we're not actually getting farther and farther away from the original text, we're getting closer and closer.

00:04:51 **Michael Horton:** In late 2012, you had another opportunity to debate Bart Ehrman and I'd like you to interact with some of the claims that he makes during this presentation. Let's play that first clip:

00:05:01 **Bart Ehrman:** We're not sure who Mark was, when he lived, where he lived. Whoever he was, he wrote a gospel. If anybody wanted a copy of this gospel of Mark, they had to make a copy by hand and so they did so. But invariably, they made a mistake or two or three or 20. When someone came along who wanted a copy of that copy, they copied the copy and they replicated the mistakes that the first copy has made and they made their own mistakes. And then when a third person came along to copy the copy of the copy, they replicated the mistakes of both of their predecessors and made mistakes of their own and it went on like this, week after week, month after month, year after year, decade after decade, century after century. We don't have the original copy that Mark made. We don't have the first copy. We don't have copies of the copy. We don't have copies of the copies. The earliest copy that we have of Mark dates from around the year 200, probably 130 years after the original. That's the first copy that we have, 130 years after the original. We don't have the originals of Mark or of any other book of the New Testament.

00:06:19 **Michael Horton:** Sounds pretty authoritative and persuasive to a mass audience. How do you respond?

00:06:23 **Daniel Wallace:** Oh, he's got tremendous rhetorical skills, I agree. The problem with what he had to say is that he's only telling part of the story. Let me analyze just a couple aspects of it. When he says we don't have that copy, we have to wait copies of copies copies of copies copies of copies before we get anything of Mark. He sounds as if the copying of the New Testament is like playing the telephone game and the telephone game is where you tell one very short story or a few sentences to somebody in the line, you whisper it in their ear, it goes down the line and then the ninth or tenth person spits out what everybody else had been saying but everybody has already heard the story in a different form and he tells the form that he got it in. It's a part of the game. It's meant to be fun. It's meant to be a corrupted story. So, when you compare the copy of the New Testament to the telephone game, first of all, these copies were done by hands, not orally. Secondly, and this is very important, it was not just a single line of transmission. One of the things that Ehrman leaves out as he talks about how our earliest copies, we don't have them because they must have worn out but he doesn't say how they wore out. They would have worn out from people copying them. So, let's say somebody sees Mark's gospel and it's written to the Roman Christians and he wants to get a copy of it so he comes to Rome and they allow him to copy the original text. Someone else from another part of the world comes in and makes a copy and then someone else from somewhere else makes a copy. So, you may have 10 or 20 first generation copies of Mark's gospel, all written by scribes of various skills, coming in with not only various skills coming in from different regions where they would spell things regionally and a little bit differently than elsewhere and they go back and then those copies are duplicated. So what we have is the proliferation of inexact copies, but not a single line of them. And by that very proliferation of inexact copies through multiple lines, we can make some comparisons of those manuscripts. And consequently, by the comparison of the manuscripts that we can see, we can tell this was a mistake that the scribe made, this scribe got it right, that kind of thing. That's the first thing I would say, is the image that he portrays is only part of the picture. If we only had one line of transmission and we had to wait for multiple generations before we got any copies, we might have some serious problems. But even there, I would say I'm not sure that's necessarily the case because the early scribes in our second debate, Bart said that these early scribes, the papyri that we have, were really prone to mistakes. They made more mistakes than later professional scribes did. Well, in one sense, that's true but the sense in which it's true is they made the kinds of mistakes that are easily detectable because they weren't professional scribes. They were not creative thinkers. They were typically bureaucrats and bean counters, CPAs and tax office folks who knew how to write out the text, but not be creative at all. And so, that kind of a scribe becomes the most valuable scribe we can have in the transmission of the text. We know, for example, of an early scribe of Luke and John, the scribe that was known as Papyrus 75 or P75, that he copied out his text one letter at a time. Well, somebody was copying out his text one letter at a time is going to make miniscule mistakes but he's not going to be making major transpositions or intentionally changing the text.

It's kind of like -- if I can give this illustration, which I did use with Bart, I think, in our second debate -- I said, if you came across a document, a handwritten document of the preamble to the constitution and it said, "We, the people of the United States, in order to form a more perfect onion," and you saw that and you say, well, wait a minute, I know it's not onion. That can't possibly be right. The word, of course, has to be cucumber. The word is union. In order to form a more perfect union. So, you'd see that kind of mistake and those are the kinds of mistakes we

have early on in these manuscripts. Those get corrected as time goes on and our copy of the New Testament manuscripts is basically not at all like the telephone game.

00:10:31 **Michael Horton:** So, with the telephone game, you have the sort of big fish story growing from the first person who tells it to the last person who recounts it. But what you're saying is this is not passing from one person to another person to another person to another person. It's proliferating text or copies and we can compare those and what we find is an enormous amount of agreement across lots of centuries and geographical locations.

00:10:59 **Daniel Wallace:** Yes, that's exactly right. It's a great summary. But not only that, but you have -- Ehrman even mentions this in his book, *Misquoting Jesus*. When you have these early copies and somebody sees a discrepancy between the two, he's going to go back and look at an earlier copy to see which one is right. And so, as time goes on, there's kind of a constant re-correction. But then, once we get in the fourth and fifth century, you get churches that are far removed from the original and then you kind of get their own established text forms that they follow. But the point here is that early on while you've got this proliferation of manuscripts, you've got churches that are reading the Gospel of Mark, somebody comes from Alexandria and he goes to Corinth and he says, wait a minute, that's not the way Mark's gospel is read in my church. Here's what we have to say. And so, they can go back and investigate and see what happened and that's exactly what did happen.

00:11:45 **Michael Horton:** So, the analogy isn't perfect, but with the natural sciences, no one would say if we had some questions about coming up with a particular theory. We want fewer samples. They would all say the more samples, the better so that we can compare them and then the anomalies become obvious.

00:12:04 **Daniel Wallace:** That actually is a very good analogy and it's one that Richard Bentley used 300 years ago in 1713. He wrote a book defending the first Greek New Testament that had thousands of textual variants. It was done six years earlier in 1706 by a fellow name John Mill. He said, "We are in much better shape than we would be if we only had one manuscript. The more manuscripts we have, the better shape we're in to get back to the original text because we can start tracing out the genealogies much better."

00:12:36 **Michael Horton:** We recently had the opportunity to talk with your colleague, Craig Evans, and he made the point in our program last time that many of these manuscripts would stay in use for over a hundred years and sometimes up to two or 300 years. Is that a component that's missing in this conversation? In other words, is it actually true that all of our manuscripts are copies of copies of copies of copies? Isn't it possible that some of the earliest papyri are copies of the originals?

00:13:05 **Daniel Wallace:** That's a great question. I think there's -- on the one hand, I would agree with Craig that these manuscripts, he cites a terrific source to show the average papyrus manuscripts could last a couple hundred years. I don't know if that's going to be the case with the New Testament manuscripts because they would have been read and copied far more frequently than any other kind of ancient text. And so, they're going to wear out sooner. I think all of them would have worn out by the end of the second century AD, so within a hundred years of

the completion of the New Testament. But still, that's a long time. And the same time, I'd say I think that these papyri could be very early generations. It is possible that we have something that would be a first generation or a second generation copy of a portion of the New Testament, especially when you get outside the gospels. And the reason for that is that the rest of the New Testament, apart from Paul and Paul's letters in the gospels, much of the rest of the New Testament struggled for some time to get granted its canonical status to be recognized as scripture. And so, because of that, there would be long periods between copies being made as opposed to something like the gospels where we have more copies of the gospels today than we do of any other portion of the New Testament. We have almost 10 times as many copies of the gospels as we do in the Book of Revelation, for example. And so, you could have a copy that's done 25 years later that might be a second generation copy of, say, Revelation or 2 Peter. But if it's something that's 25 years later for the gospels, it might be a fourth or fifth generation copy. So those are some issues to take into account. But once again, if you have more copies of the gospel, even though they may be several generations removed from the original, precisely because we have such a massive number of them, we have a better chance of getting back to the original wording.

00:15:08 **Michael Horton:** Dan, if you don't mind, let's listen to another clip. We'd love to get your response to this.

00:15:12 **Bart Ehrman:** How many complete manuscripts do we have from the second and third centuries? None. Ninety-four percent of our surviving manuscripts come from the ninth century and later, which is great if you want to know what the Bible looked like when Christians were reading it in the year 890. But if you want to know how they were reading it in the year 70, you've got a problem.

00:15:36 **Michael Horton:** What do you say to that?

00:15:39 **Daniel Wallace:** I'd say, first of all, he's got some inaccuracies in the statement. But let's -- his 94 percent for the ninth century and later is not correct. It's closer to between 80 and 85 percent. I want to be charitable here, but Bart's strength is not mathematics and number crunching. On what's called the TC list, which is a text critical international discussion board among textual critics, I picked on Bart for this. Bart, do you have any idea what you just said? He was basically blowing smoke about the numbers without realizing that people are taking him seriously as though he had really thought through these issues. Ninety-four percent is not accurate, it's closer, as I said, to 80 or 85 percent. That means that actually through the ninth century, we have approximately 15 percent of our Greek New Testament manuscripts now. If you hear just the percentage, you say, well, that's not very good. And he talks about the second and third century manuscripts that they're all fragmentary. What he doesn't say, he doesn't talk about the fourth century manuscripts or later. And so, he's giving a picture which is only part of the evidence. The fact is that in the fourth century, we have Codex Sinaiticus, the first complete Greek New Testament manuscript ever discovered. It was discovered in 1859 and it's still the oldest complete New Testament to this day. It's one of the two most important New Testament manuscripts we have, in fact. And by the time we get to the ninth century, we have hundreds and hundreds of manuscripts. If you had six percent of 200 manuscripts, you're talking about a dozen manuscripts. But if you're talking about six percent of almost 6,000 manuscripts, which is what we have for the New Testament, now you're talking about hundreds. And as I said, that 94

percent is not accurate. So, I'd say for the first nine centuries we have, something like six or 700 manuscripts or more. I have actually taken it through the eighth century, I haven't taken it through the ninth yet so I don't know the exact numbers. But I worked through every single manuscript in terms of when it was written and how much of the text we have, this kind of thing. In other words, we have the New Testament multiplied over and over and over again by the time Bart says we are reading ninth century manuscripts.

00:18:02 **Michael Horton:** Fascinating. In this next clip, Bart Ehrman makes a claim about the number of differences that exist among the different New Testament manuscripts that we have today.

00:18:12 **Bart Ehrman:** Well, how many differences are there among these manuscripts exactly? No one knows, because no one has been able to count them all. Some scholars say 200,000 differences, some say 300,000 differences, probably more accurately, 400,000 differences. It's easiest to put it in comparative terms. There are more differences in our manuscripts than there are words in the New Testament. That's a lot of differences.

00:18:39 **Michael Horton:** This is a pretty big one and persuasive one to people on the street.

00:18:43 **Daniel Wallace:** Yeah. And actually, he is factually correct on all of that. In fact, I believe I was the one who suggested to him years ago that we probably have as many as 400,000 differences. But here is the other factor to look at. When you talk about these differences, what that sounds like to the average person wrestling with this is, oh my gosh, we can't tell at all what the original New Testament text said, therefore, we have to throw the whole thing out. We have no possibility of getting back to it. When you look at the reasons why we have so many differences and then when you look at the quality of those differences, the nature of those differences, a completely different picture emerges. The reason we have so many differences among the manuscripts is precisely because we have so many manuscripts. He mentioned 5,500 manuscripts. That's just in Greek alone. We have another 10,000 in Latin which was a translation of the New Testament done as early as the second century. We have thousands more in Coptic and Syriac and Georgian and Gothic and Armenian and Arabic and Old Church Slavonic, a number of other ancient languages. In fact, our best guesses today as far as how many manuscripts we have is somewhere between 20 and 25,000 manuscripts of the New Testament, handwritten manuscripts before the time of the printing press. As I had mentioned earlier, Richard Bentley said more manuscripts gives you greater certainty as to what the original text said but every time a new manuscript is discovered, every time I'd say if it's of any substantial length, you will find more differences. In other words, it's going to add to the pool of the total number of differences we have.

We have a manuscript at the Center for the Study of New Testament Manuscripts from the 11th century and this manuscript is just of the Gospel of Luke and we transcribed the whole thing. It's a thousand years later than the New Testament and working through this, I discovered about 30 or 40 specific differences from all other manuscripts in the world in this one document. I go, how in the world did we get that? But when you look at what those differences are, the vast majority of them are spelling. I think there were two that made sense and they definitely were not going back to the original. So, the first thing to recognize is that we have a lot of differences

among the manuscripts, a lot of differences in the wording because we have so many manuscripts. That is not an embarrassing thing, that is a good thing. If all of these manuscripts were copied identically, that would suggest that there was a strong apologetic motive behind the copy and we do have that in a world religion and that's in Islam. They at least claimed that the copies of the Qu'ran were done identically, which is actually not a true claim at all, but they were far more careful than New Testament scribes were in copying their manuscripts because the New Testament scribes wanted to get this information out and they were more concerned with the essential gospel message than they were with getting the jots and tittles down right.

00:21:46 **Michael Horton:** So, this is more about definite articles and a more perfect union where you sort of know where the mistake was made?

00:21:56 **Daniel Wallace:** Yeah. In terms of the nature of the variants, the vast majority of them cannot even be translated. The vast majority of them. Over 70 percent are spelling differences that can't be translated at all. The most common one is what's known as movable nu which is N at the end of a word, like a book or an apple, that kind of thing. In Greek, as you know, you can have it on certain words before -- the following word starts with a vowel. That's the most common textual variant we have. It's so common that most textual scholars just say let's just ignore it because we see it everywhere. But every time the name John is written, it's spelled with one N or two N's. So there's textual variants there. It's the word 'the', the article, as you mentioned in Greek, proper names like Joseph, Mary, Michael, Daniel, those kinds of names can use the article but in English and many other languages, we don't translate it. We still don't know exactly why the article is used. So you read in Luke 3 about how the Joseph and the Mary left Jerusalem and then they started looking around for Jesus. We don't translate that. If you say, in fact, in Greek, Jesus loves Paul, there are 16 different ways to say that in Greek, where it's translated exactly the same. It's exactly the same spelling for Jesus, for loves and for Paul. Sixteen different ways to say that and yet all of them are translated exactly the same way. And when you start adding little particles that can't be translated in different spellings and then synonyms for love instead of Agape or Agapa, you use Phileo or something like that. Now, we're talking about over 500 ways to say Jesus loves Paul but the essential difference in meaning is nil.

00:23:43 **Michael Horton:** What would be the percentage of or even examples of something more substantive? What are we dealing with in terms of number and nature when it comes to basic gospel reports and claims?

00:23:57 **Daniel Wallace:** What I've calculated is that of the approximately 400,000 textual variants we have, less than one percent of them are both meaningful and viable. And by meaningful, that means it affects the meaning of the text in some way and viable means that it has some possibility of actually going back to the original wording. Less than one percent. My calculations are that it's about one-fourth or one percent. That means that of those 400,000 textual variants, about a thousand places actually have variants that are both being full and viable. So, to give some examples, in Mark 1:41, we have Jesus healing a leper and when he heals the leper -- in Mark 1:41, most manuscripts say, moved with compassion, Jesus stretched out his hand and touched him, saying, "I am willing. Be clean!" But there are some early and significant manuscripts that say instead of "Moved with compassion," they say, "Moved with anger." Well, that is a significant difference between the two and it's one of the most important textual variants ac-

tually in the New Testament. Bart Ehrman has written on this extensively and he argued that the wording should be moved with anger. Now, I happen to agree with Bart. I think that is probably the original wording here and the new NIV 2011 now has, "Moved with anger." The net Bible that I was especially responsible for is going to have that, I think, in the second edition where we're wrestling with which reading to go with. But here is the question: does either one of these give us a radically different picture of Jesus? We read in Mark's gospel already that Jesus was angry at times in Mark 3:5, he's angry in Mark 10:41, at 10:14, he gets angry. So, he does get angry because of a number of issues and for Ehrman, what his issue is, is he talks about some of these meaningful variants and he puts a spin on them so that he says, well, if he got angry, this means Jesus was a hot head and he's not the messiah that you guys think he is. Well, that's completely unreasonable to suggest that kind of a thing from these kinds of variants. He tried to make out a case in *Misquoting Jesus*, that basic theological perspectives are radically changed in the manuscripts and he could not make the case and that's the point that I have stressed with him in all three of our debates, is I said, "You have not yet demonstrated one place where any cardinal doctrine is affected by these viable variants."

00:26:35 **Michael Horton:** Interesting. So, a kind of a naïve view of the person of Christ, downplaying of Christ's humanity. We rejected a long time ago. During your debate, Bart Ehrman had this to say on this particular point.

00:26:51 **Bart Ehrman:** Scholars can't agree on what the original text is supposed to be. Over the centuries, these disagreements have been very important. They have involved such crucial doctrines as the doctrine of the trinity, which relates to textual problems, the full divinity of Christ affected by textual problems, the full humanity of Christ affected by textual problems, the atoning sacrifice of his death affected by textual problems, favorite stories of Jesus' life affected by textual problems.

00:27:26 **Michael Horton:** Is any of that true?

00:27:28 **Daniel Wallace:** If what he means by affected by textual problems is we have a slightly different view in this particular passage about what this doctrine teaches, then perhaps. But that is an absolutely overblown statement. Let me give you what he's talking about with reference to the trinity and this is something that I've critiqued him on in book after book. He's talking about 1 John 5:7. In 1 John 5:7 in the King James Bible, it says that there are three who bear witness in heaven: the Father, the Word and the Spirit. These three are one. In modern translations at 1 John 5, 7 and 8, it says, "For there are three that testify: The Spirit and the water and the blood. And these three are in agreement." Now, the reason that there's a difference here is a fascinating story and Bart knows that he's absolutely disingenuous when he brings in this kind of stuff because as I said, he's an excellent debater and what he tries to do is to get to the other person on the defensive to answer all these issues but I'm really glad you're bringing this one up. 1 John 5:7, the Trinitarian formula, was put into our Greek New Testaments in 1522. Now, in 1516, the first published Greek New Testament was done by Erasmus of Holland. He was a textual scholar, a humanist, in the good sense, he was a Roman Catholic priest, almost joined the Reformation. In 1516, he publishes this first Greek New Testament on a printing press and it did not have this Trinitarian formula in it. His second edition in 1519 also didn't have it. By this time, there were people crying out for his head because they said we don't see

the trinity in 1 John 5:7 like we see in quite a few of our Latin manuscripts. What's going on here? Maybe your Greek text is totally corrupt. He put in his annotations. "I didn't put it in because I couldn't find it in any manuscripts." He never promised to put it in but he said, I didn't put in this Trinitarian formula because I found the manuscripts to have it. Well, in 1520, a scribe by the name of Roy or Froy working at Oxford University handwrote a manuscript of the entire Greek New Testament and when he got to 1 John 5:7, he translated from the Latin back in the Greek the Trinitarian formula and inserted it into this Greek manuscript. That manuscript shows up on Erasmus' doorstep in Basel and he says, "Well, I want to get the heat off my back. Put this in the third edition," but he did it under protest. That third edition became the basis behind the King James translation. That's how it got into our English translation and Luther used the second edition of 1519. And so, the German Bible history has never had the same kind of problem that we've had in the English-speaking world. But this is something that the earliest manuscripts we have of this is from the 11th century. The ancient church councils never referred to 1 John 5:7, yet they believed in the trinity. So, does that mean that they made this up? Where did they get that information if they didn't have this verse? And Ehrman just likes to say, well, we don't have any explicit statement for the trinity without this verse. He's right. Does that mean we don't have the trinity in the New Testament? That's hogwash.

00:30:50 **Michael Horton:** Turning a little bit away from the theological issues, what kind of comparison can be made between the number of New Testament documents that we have and the attestation for classics that we can order off of Amazon.com and nobody thinks that they're not reading those classics?

00:31:11 **Daniel Wallace:** That is a great question. That's the one that really needs to be asked when people are talking about this on campuses and somebody says, well, I read *Misquoting Jesus*. Well, let's read this in the context of the ancient Greco-Roman world. How many copies do we have of all these fabulous classical Greek and Latin authors? I'm going to put this in a perspective. The number one classical author whose writings we have more copies of than anything else, except, of course, for the New Testament, is Homer. Homer has a 900-year head start on the New Testament and yet we have today approximately 2,200 copies of all of his writings, both *Odyssey* and the *Iliad* and most of them very fragmentary. So 2,200 copies of Homer. Now, in Ehrman's book in the one that he wrote with Bruce Metzger that came out in 2005, *The Text of the New Testament*, the fourth edition of Metzger's standard introductory text to textual criticism, they continued to say that Homer had 657 manuscripts of the *Iliad*. That information was based on and worked on in the 1950s, so they didn't update it. And so, what I'm trying to tell you is I want to get the very best, the most current data we have on these classical authors so that it makes them look as good as possible in competition with the New Testament. And so, we have about four times as many manuscripts as what Ehrman thought we did when he wrote a book with Metzger. But you take Homer. Now, 2,200 manuscripts, that's approximately one-tenth as many as we have for the New Testament. When you count all the versions and that's how we're supposed to count it from Homer and for the New Testament, one-tenth as many manuscripts. And the earliest Homer manuscripts come hundreds and hundreds of years after he wrote. The earliest manuscripts for the New Testament come within decades of when the New Testament was written. That's the best classical author. If you take the average classical Greek or Latin author and I've used this in debates with atheists and agnostics. No one can challenge it because the data are very obvious. They are very clear. The facts are there. The average classical Greek

or Latin author has fewer than 20 copies of his writings still available, handwritten copies that are still available today. In fact, that number is a very, very high estimate. Most of them have two or three copies of their manuscripts and the average one comes 500 years, maybe sometimes even 1,000 years later before we get any existing copies of their manuscripts.

So, let's just give them the benefit of the doubt. Say, the average classical author, the stack of their manuscripts would be four feet high if it's 20 manuscripts on average. How high would that stack for New Testament manuscripts be? Well now, you compare when you look at the Greek and the Latin, the other ancient versions and you stack those up, the average Greek New Testament manuscript is more than 450 pages long and the calculations I've come up with mean that that stack would be more than one mile high. One mile high of New Testament manuscripts compared to four feet high. And then when Ehrman says we've only got six percent of the manuscripts up through the ninth century, well, that's six percent. Even if we took those numbers as accurate, that would be in the hundreds of manuscripts, maybe about 400 manuscripts, 350 manuscripts and that number of manuscripts we have is 20 times more than what we'd have for the average classical authors to the life of this copy. So, the comparisons that he's making are just ridiculous. In fact, for the average classical author, we have no extent remains for at least 300 years. Every once in a while, we get some that come in earlier than that. For the New Testament, within 300 years, we have over 100 copies. The point is that what comes to the number of copies we have for the New Testament, there's absolutely nothing in the ancient world that even comes close when it comes to the time that those copies are made in comparison to the original. There's absolutely nothing that comes close to the New Testament.

00:35:23 **Michael Horton:** A number of Homer scholars will argue even in the preface to their English translation, yes, it's centuries between whatever original telling of the story was and the actual manuscripts that we have, but they will say it was an oral culture and these were used in family reunions and social contexts where children grew up learning it by heart and in an oral culture, it was passed down from generation to generation pretty effectively. Now, if you have that kind of oral culture passing the basic substance down, centuries until it actually gets written down, what do we make of an oral culture in the first and second centuries where you only have a couple of decades separating the original events from the inscripturation?

00:36:22 **Daniel Wallace:** Yeah. When you're talking about the oral cultures of the ancient world, the Jewish-Christian oral culture is much stronger than the Greco-Roman world culture. For example, to be a deacon in the ancient church and much of the ancient church, you're not about to be a deacon unless you've memorized the Gospel of John and can just recite it. So, we're talking about a strong oral culture, but it's also, Christianity is the most literate religion in the world in the sense that it really links to a written text in all forms of worship and transmission. We're a people of the book and we're happy to say that, especially those of the reformed faith can say that. And so, as we think about the combination of the oral culture and the strong ability to memorize that people had back then, combined with this written culture, it's a two-fold cord that's not easily broken.

00:37:20 **Michael Horton:** Amazing intersection of God's providence in history, isn't it?

00:37:23 **Daniel Wallace:** Absolutely.

00:37:24 **Michael Horton:** You knew we were going to have to ask this question even if you can't answer it, but in your debate with Bart Ehrman, you made some news headlines by mentioning a new discovery of a first century fragment from the Gospel of Mark. What can you tell us that you're allowed to tell us about that?

00:37:41 **Daniel Wallace:** Well, I have signed a non-disclosure agreement and I'm not really allowed to speak about that until publication.

00:37:51 **Michael Horton:** When do you expect that to be published, Dan?

00:37:53 **Daniel Wallace:** I'm not allowed to even say that. I wish I could.

00:37:56 **Michael Horton:** Okay. Well, in the meantime, folks can read *Revisiting the Corruption of the New Testament*, edited by Daniel Wallace. Also, the very intriguing debate with Bart Ehrman, published by Fortress Press, *The Reliability of the New Testament*. And also, you have a website. People can keep with you on your website, is that correct?

00:38:17 **Daniel Wallace:** Yes. And I would mention on the website that our second debate was professionally videoed and edited. It was done at Southern Methodist University and they can get that DVD for that debate. It's actually two hours long which we include a Q&A from the audience. They can get this DVD at the website CSNTM.org and CSNTM stands for Center for the Study of New Testament Manuscripts, CSNTM.org. If you scroll down a little bit, you'll see the debate and you can order it. It's a great DVD to give to non-Christians. It's a great DVD to have as part of Sunday school classes and Bible study groups that really wrestle with these issues, because it gives both sides of the evidence.

00:39:09 **Michael Horton:** Well, we will link to it on our website, WhiteHorseInn.org. Dan, thank you so much for what you're doing to help equip us to know what we believe and why we believe it.

00:39:20 **Daniel Wallace:** Thank you. I got to say, I'm really honored to be on the show and I've been a big fan of it for some time.

00:39:26 **Michael Horton:** Thank you so much.

00:39:31 **Narrator:** The *White Horse Inn* is a listener supported broadcast. For more information about this program, visit us online at whitehorseinn.org. If you sign up as an innkeeper, architect or reformer, not only will you get a complimentary subscription to our magazine *Modern Reformation*, but you'll also get longer editions of every *White Horse Inn* broadcast. To find out how to join one of these support programs, click on the support tab of our website, whitehorseinn.org. You can also give us a call at 1-800-890-7556. That's 1-800-890-7556. We'll see you next time at the *White Horse Inn*.