

# Misquoting Jesus

# Bart Ehrman

- Best selling author
- Professor, U. of N. Carolina
- *Misquoting Jesus: The Story Behind Who Changed the Bible and Why* (2005 NY Times bestseller)

# I. Bart Ehrman's Position

# Ehrman says . . .

1. We are not actually reading the words of Matthew, Mark, Luke, etc.
2. Not reading translation of the originals
3. Copies differ; sometimes we do not know what an author originally wrote
4. Why think God performed miracle of inspiring the words in the first place if He didn't perform a miracle to preserve the words?

# Illustrated: *The Da Vinci Code*

- Buy one in Louisiana, another in California: same book
- Ancient world: copied by hand. (Try it)

Mark (Rome)

1 for Ephesus



1 for Smyrna

**Copies of copies / errors**  
**No original copy**

Many more



1 for Antioch

# Oldest copy of Mark

- P<sup>45</sup> – 45<sup>th</sup> papyrus MS discovered in modern age, cataloged; dated c. AD 220 (about 150 years after Mark wrote)
- First complete copy of Mark: c. AD 350 (300 years after Mark wrote)
- By comparing copies, we see mistakes

# NT is best-attested book from ancient world

- Greek MSS: 5700

But there are more differences in  
our MSS than there are words in  
NT: between 300,000 – 400,000?

- Most don't matter
  - Spelling errors; omitted words.
    - Lk.12:8-10 [parablepsis; homoeoteleuton]
  - Intentional errors: Jn.7:53-8:11; Mk.16...

# Intentional errors

- Mk.1<sup>41</sup> Then Jesus, moved with compassion, stretched out His hand and touched him, and said to him, “I am willing; be cleansed.”
- Mt.24<sup>36</sup> But concerning that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father only. [Mk.13:32]
- Hb.2<sup>9</sup> But we see him who for a little while was made lower than the angels, namely Jesus, crowned with glory and honor because of the suffering of death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone.



# False assertions

- “Matthew – Luke did not think Jesus was God”
- Compares textual transmission to telephone game

I. Bart Ehrman's Position

II. Things We Agree On

# We agree . . .

- There are differences in MSS
- Most affect nothing at all
- We have wording of original text almost all the time
- Some readings are difficult to decide
- Some scribes changed MSS readings

I. Bart Ehrman's Position

II. Things We Agree On

III. Things We Disagree On

# We disagree . . .

- BE overstates his case
  - Printed books: mistakes do occur
    - Britannica
    - Merriam Webster
    - *Misquoting Jesus*, p.33

If 100,000 printed:  
100,000 errors.  
What if 400,000 printed?

# Printing “errors” (KJV)

- 2 Sm.19<sup>19</sup> And said unto the king, Let not my lord impute iniquity unto me, neither do thou remember that which they servant did perversely the day the king went out of Jerusalem...
- Ps.90<sup>9</sup> For all our days are passed away in the wrath...
- Dn.5<sup>1</sup> Belshazar the king made a great feast...  
5<sup>2</sup> Belshazzar, whiles he tasted the wine...

# Real issue: significance of variants

1. We have many variants because we have many MSS. Greek mss: ~~5700~~ 5856
2. Average MS: 400+ pages long
  - ◆ 2.5+ million pages of texts
  - ◆ hundreds of witnesses for every book
3. Latin (10,000+!), Coptic, Syriac, Georgian, Gothic, Ethiopic, Armenian (probably 15,000 in all)
4. Ancient disciples: multitude of NT quotes

# Quality of NT MSS

- One MS near end of 1<sup>st</sup> Century
- Eighteen MSS from 2<sup>nd</sup> Century
- Sixty-four MSS from 3<sup>rd</sup> Century
- Forty-eight MSS from 4<sup>th</sup> Century

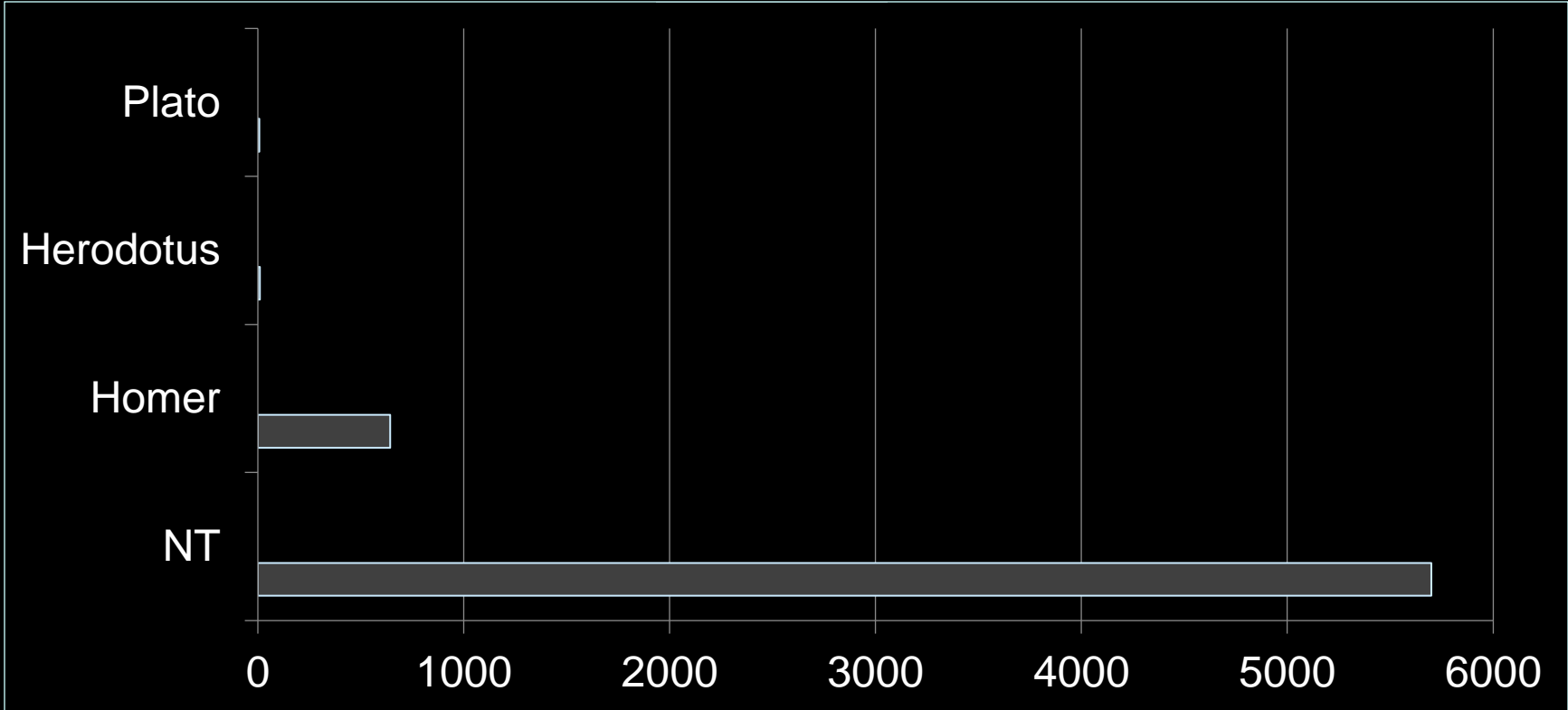
[131 MSS within 300 years of composition]

Average Greek/Latin author has  
NOTHING within 300 years.

Total for most usually averages  
less than 20, probably below 12.



# NT Compared to Other Ancient Documents



# Not the 'Telephone Game'

## Transmission of NT MSS

- Handed down in writing, not by mouth
- Multiple lines of text, not one
- Text critics don't rely only on last person in each line
- Early writers comment on text as it is transmitted
- Not told only once by a person

# Illustration

- P<sup>75</sup> and codex B: very strong agreement
- P<sup>75</sup> is 100-150 years older than B
- Yet P<sup>75</sup> is not an ancestor of B
- B copied from earlier common ancestor related to both
- Combination of these MSS goes back to early 2<sup>nd</sup> Century

# Codex Vaticanus (B)



c. AD 350

p75



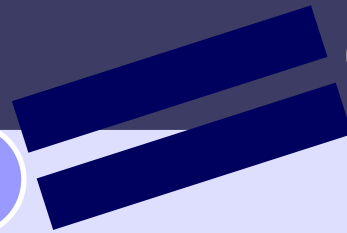
c. AD 175-225

# Early Textual Evidence (B) and P<sup>75</sup>

Early AD  
100s!



P<sup>75</sup>



Codex B  
(AD 350)



# What about Mk.1:41?

- A few MSS mention Jesus' **anger**; multitude of others, **compassion**
- Mk.3:5 undeniably speaks of His anger
- So what?
  - It is not radical to see Jesus angry
  - Ro.1<sup>18</sup> For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness

# What about Mt.24:36?

“But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven \* but My Father only”

- Some MSS lack *nor the Son*
- Mark 13:32 definitely includes them
- Cannot assert that Mt.24 changes NT view of Jesus if Mark contains same idea
- Ehrman does not consider Lord's humiliation, Ph.2:5-11

Jesus accepted man's limitations of time, space, and knowledge to be fully human

# 1 Jn.5:7-8?

<sup>7</sup> For there are three that testify [in heaven: the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit; and these three are one.] <sup>8</sup> the Spirit and the water and the blood; and these three agree.

- Appeared first in 1522
- Just because one passage does not teach a doctrine does not mean the NT does not teach it (e.g.: Mt.3; 28)

Not a single truth is at stake  
with Bart Ehrman's "proof"



# Mark 16

- Almost impossible that Mk.16:8 is original ending of Mark: “...*for they were afraid.*”
- Suppose BE is right? Are we left without evidence of His resurrection? No!
  - Matthew, Luke, John, 1 Co.15 . . .

# Did Matthew, Mark, Luke believe Jesus is God?

## Test case: Matthew

Worshipped, 2:11  
Words, 7:24  
Forgiveness, 9:2-6  
Lord of Sab., 12:8  
Son of David, 12:23;  
21:9; 14:33  
Son of God, 16:16;  
27:43, 54

Son of Man, Dn.7  
(Mt.26:64-66)  
(Mt.25:31-32, Son of  
Man is Judge of all)  
David's Lord  
(22:41-46)  
All authority,  
heaven/earth 28:18

# Illustration

Coconut pie recipe

Perfect / lost

Copy 1: Daughter

1 misspelling

Copy 2: G-Daughter

+ Transposition

3: friend

4: friend

+ Two “ands”

5: friend

6: friend

+ “pie” omitted

More copies = more mistakes

Closer to original = fewer mistakes

More copies = easier to correct errors

‘Different’ mistakes allow for certainty

# Mere differences do not constitute a contradiction

- Holocaust

Poisonous gas

Shot with guns

- Plane crash

Engine on fire

Engine quit

But both events did occur