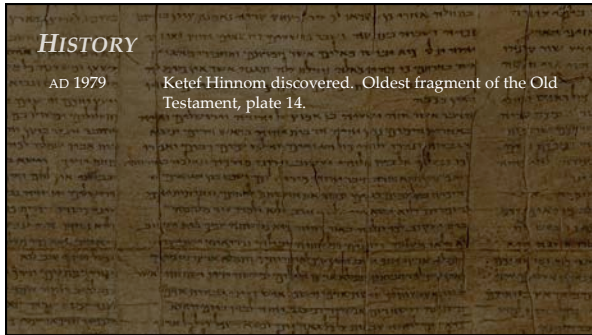




OVERVIEW OF OLD TESTAMENT TEXTUAL TRANSMISSION

HISTORY	
430 BC	Old Testament completed primarily in Hebrew and Aramaic on clay tablets, papyrus, animal skin, metal, and wax.
400-200 BC	Sopherim scribal school (Ezra) restored the oral and written tradition lost during the exile, including the Midrash and Talmud.
300 BC-AD 500	Talmudic Era. Production of synagogue rolls and private copies.
200 BC - 0	Zugoth scribal school continues the textual tradition.
150 BC	Septuagint (LXX) completed.

HISTORY	
0 - AD 300	Tannaim preserve the text through the Mishnah, Tosefta, Baraihot, and the Midrash.
AD 500-950	Masoretes. During this period these scholars gave the OT its final form (Masoretic Text). Birth of OT textual criticism.
AD 900	Old Testament text division and versification becomes standard. Aleppo Codex.
AD 1008	Leningrad Codex. Oldest manuscript of the complete OT; basis for the BHS edition.
AD 1947	Dead Sea Scrolls discovered (approx 1,000 texts), confirms the integrity of the Masoretic Text.







HISTORY

AD 70 New Testament (minus Revelation) written in uncial letters using papyrus and parchment

PAPYRI & PARCHMENT

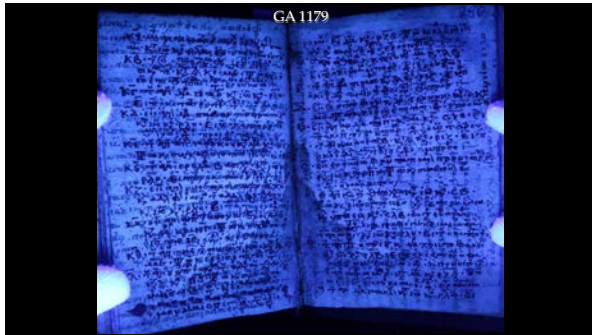
Papyrus is a plant that grows primarily in northern Egypt, along the Nile. Strips of fiber from the plant would be peeled away and laid vertically side by side, then strips would be placed horizontally across the vertical fibers. After being pressed together the combined fibers formed a sort of paper. Papyrus has been used for millennia, but is not very strong, so the papyri manuscripts we have remaining are mostly fragments and are extremely fragile.

Parchment, or vellum, is scraped animal skin . . . much more durable than papyrus. Sometimes the vellum would be dipped in a purple dye then have gold and silver letters written on them, usually for royalty or wealthy patrons. Parchment is known to have curly edges and wormholes.

UNCIALS & PALIMPSESTS

Uncials are all capital letters. These carefully produced letters are mostly written *scriptio continua*, or without any word breaks or punctuation, other than abbreviations such as *nomina sacra*.

A palimpsest is a used parchment manuscript which contents have been scraped away, then new contents are written over the scraped skin. Of the 250 uncial mss, 52 are palimpsests.



HISTORY

- AD 70 New Testament (minus Revelation) written in uncial letters using papyrus and parchment
- AD circa 90 Church Fathers (1 Clement, Ignatius, Polycarp)
- AD circa 100 Codex form of book invented, probably by the early church
- AD 50-140 Didache written
- AD 100 Oldest known manuscript (P⁵²)



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AD 120-130	Formation of the Alexandrian and Western text-types.

ALEXANDRIAN AND WESTERN TEXT-TYPES

Alexandrian texts are characterized by careful copying and shorter, more difficult readings. Although this type is associated with Alexandria in northern Egypt, some of its most important mss did not originate there, such as **N**, **A**, & **B** (Daniel B. Wallace, *TC Class Notes*, 65-66).

Western texts are characterized by scribal liberty. Words or clauses are frequently changed for emphasis. Codex Bezae (D) is the foremost Western text. The text-type earned its name by the wide circulation of its mss in the north, Africa, Italy, and Gaul (Daniel B. Wallace, *TC Class Notes*, 67-68).

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AD 50-140	Didache written
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AD 120-130	Formation of the Alexandrian and Western text-types.
AD 200-250	Formation of the Caesarean text-type

CAESAREAN TEXT-TYPE

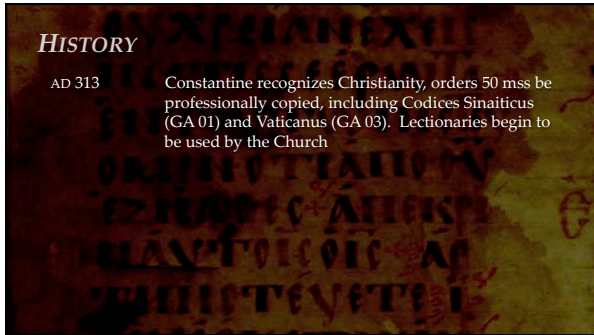
The Caesarean text most likely originated in Alexandria but was brought to Caesarea by the Church Father Origen. This text-type only shows up in the gospels and is characterized by a mixture of Alexandrian and Western forms. The mss that support the Caesarean text are θ , family 1 & family 13, including 1709 (Bruce Metzger, *The Text of the New Testament*, 214-15).

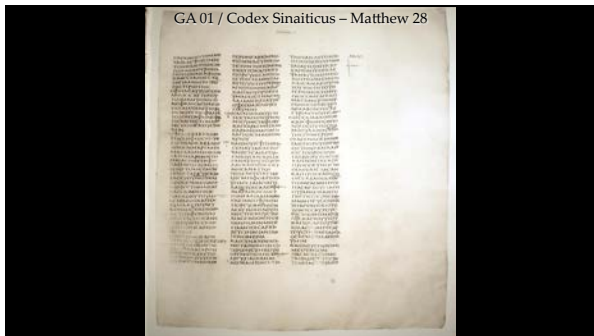
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AD 100	Oldest known manuscript (P ⁵²)
AD 120-130	Formation of the Alexandrian and Western text-types.
AD 200-250	Formation of the Caesarean text-type
AD 300-330	Formation of the Byzantine text-type

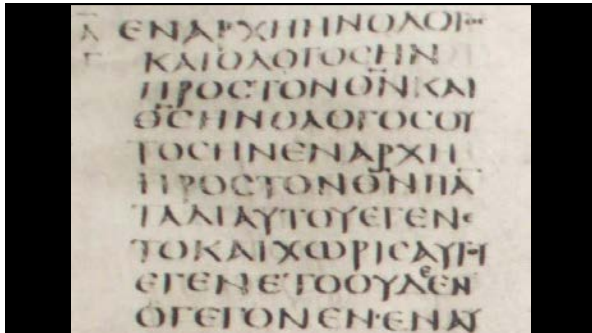
BYZANTINE TEXT-TYPE

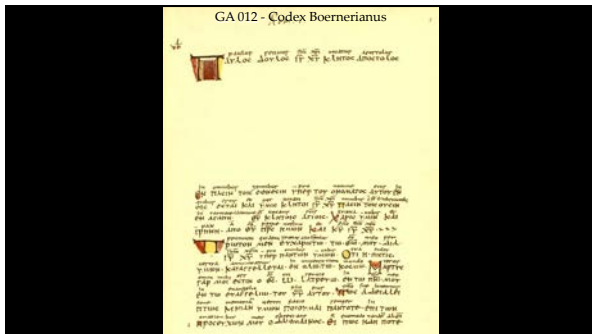
This text-type is also called the Majority Text. Though widely distributed, the Byzantine text derived its name from Constantinople (or Byzantium), the source of its distribution and the birthplace of Byzantine Greek (which marked the end of *koine* Greek). The Greek Orthodox Church went to great lengths to ensure the preservation of these mss over the centuries. It is characterized by smoother, longer readings that are meant to be read out loud to an audience (Daniel B. Wallace, *TC Class Notes*, 70).











HISTORY

AD 313	Constantine recognizes Christianity, orders 50 mss be professionally copied, including Codices Sinaiticus (GA 01) and Vaticanus (GA 03). Lectionaries begin to be used by the Church
AD 383	Jerome revises the Old Latin version of the four Gospels, later called the Vulgate
AD 800	Minuscule letters replace uncials in standard Greek writing
AD 1400	Paper replaces parchment as the primary material for writing
AD 1440	Johann Gutenberg invents the printing press

HISTORY

AD 1453 Muslims invade and conquer Byzantium

MUSLIM INVASION OF BYZANTIUM

Muslims invade and conquer Byzantium, renaming the city Istanbul. During the invasion, Greek Orthodox priests take off to Eastern Europe with a large cache of mss, preserving them by stashing them in fortresses, monasteries, and churches all over the place, making the Greek text available to people in Europe for the first time. Prior to this the Biblical text available to people was in Latin (called the "Vulgate"), but the unchurched did not know Latin and the Roman Catholic Church did nothing to remedy this. However, when these Greek texts arrived in Europe they allowed Martin Luther to translate the Biblical text directly from the original language into German, allowing a literate man to read the text really for the first time. These texts incited the Catholic Reformation and birthed the Renaissance, renewing interest in intellect and arts all across Europe.

HISTORY

AD 1453 Muslims invade and conquer Byzantium

AD 1458 Ancient Greek offered for the first time as a course in a University . . . University of Paris

AD 1516 Desiderius Erasmus publishes the first Greek New Testament / Latin diglot, primarily from a few late Byzantine manuscripts. Altogether Erasmus' Greek New Testament went through 5 editions . . . later called the *Textus Receptus*

AD 1611 King James Version of the English Bible. Based on Erasmus' Greek / Latin edition

HISTORY

AD 1908 Casper Rene Gregory begins assigning official numbers to mss, a system further developed by Kurt Aland. These later become known as Gregory-Aland numbers (GA)

AD 1994 2nd Edition of the Kurzgefasste Liste published

AD 2007 5752 total extant (not destroyed or lost) Greek NT manuscripts . . .
 Papyri: 118
 Uncials: 318
 Minuscules: 2880
 Lectionaries: 2436

NEW TESTAMENT WITNESSES

Greek Manuscripts 5,700+
 Latin Manuscripts 10,000+
 Other ancient versions 10,000-15,000
 Church Father quotations 1,000,000+
 Compared to other Ancient Documents:

History	Oldest MSS	Number Surviving
Livy (59 BC - AD 17)	4 th Century AD	27
Tacitus (AD 56-120)	9 th Century AD	3
Suetonius (AD 69-140)	9 th Century AD	200+
Thucydides (460-400 BC)	1 st Century AD	20
Herodotus (484-425 BC)	1 st Century AD	75

WHAT ABOUT TRANSLATIONS?

1. Based on the critical editions: Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia 4th ed., United Bible Societies 4th ed., Nestle-Aland 28th ed.
2. Typically done in committees.
3. Translated for various audiences / purposes.
4. Has to do with style, not reliability.

IS THE TEXT CORRUPTED?

There are 140,000 words in the Greek New Testament
There are at least 400,000 textual variants in the Greek New Testament.

- 99% of textual variants make no difference at all . . . such as spelling differences or minor scribal errors (haplography, dittography, metathesis, etc.)
- Approximately ¼ of 1% could viably affect the meaning of the text, but *no* essential truth is impacted by *any* variant . . . ie. Rev 13:18, John 7:53-8:11.

IS THE TEXT CORRUPTED?

“Essential Christian beliefs are not affected by textual variants in the manuscript tradition of the New Testament.”

Bart Ehrman, Appendix to *Misquoting Jesus*

IS THE TEXT CORRUPTED?

2 Attitudes to Avoid:

1. Absolute certainty
2. Total despair

2 Questions to Answer:

1. How certain are we about the wording of the NT?
2. What issues are at stake?

DID NICEA DEIFY JESUS?

Witnesses that reference Jesus' deity prior to the 4th Century:

- John 1:1 "the Word was God."
- John 20:28 "my Lord and my God."
- Romans 9:5 "the Messiah, who is God over all."
- Hebrews 1:8 "Your throne, O God, will last forever and ever."
- 2 Peter 1:1 "our God and Savior, Jesus Christ."

I am trying here to prevent anyone from saying the really foolish thing that people often say about him: "I'm ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher, but I don't accept his claim to be God." That is the one thing we must not say. A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic – on a level with the man who says he is a poached egg – or else he would be the Devil of hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God; or else a madman or something worse. You can shut him up for a fool, you can spit at him and kill him as a demon; or you can fall at his feet and call him Lord and God. But let us not come with any patronizing nonsense about his being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to.

C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*

The Center for the Study of New Testament Manuscripts
www.csntm.org

Dr. Daniel B. Wallace
www.danielbwallace.com

iTunes U: Center for the Study of New Testament Manuscripts

Debate between Dr. Daniel B. Wallace and Dr. Bart Ehrman is available for purchase (DVD) at www.csntm.org.

ANSWERING THE TOUGH ONES IS SCRIPTURE RELIABLE?



Challenge

How can someone know Scripture is reliable?

Response

The Five Ps:

1. **Profession** – Scripture claims to be inspired by God, written by men who were moved by the Holy Spirit to communicate the written word of God.
 - 2 Timothy 3:16
 - 2 Peter 1:20-21
2. **Production** – A work composed of 66 books written in three different languages by approximately 40 authors over a span of 1,500 years concerning hundreds of stories and topics but united by one theme: Jesus.

Criteria used to discover the authority of specific books (ABCD):

Author – Was the book written by a prophet, apostle, or someone who represented an apostle?

Belief – Does the book accurately reflect orthodoxy, convict and edify the Church?

Consistent – Is the book consistent with the rest of Scripture and the apostolic teaching?

Distribution – Was the book widely accepted and circulated by the Church?

3. **Preservation** – No other work in antiquity even comes close to the amount of manuscript evidence we have for both the Old and New Testaments.

Old Testament: Masoretic textual tradition, Leningrad Codex, Dead Sea Scrolls (1947).

New Testament:

Greek NT Manuscripts	5,700+
Latin Manuscripts	10,000+
Versions	10,000-15,000
Church Father Quotations	1,000,000+

The New Testament compared to other ancient works:

Author	Oldest MS	Number Surviving
Plato (427-347 BC)	AD 900	7
Sophocles (496-406 BC)	AD 1000	193
Aristotle (384-322 BC)	AD 1100	49
Homer (900 BC)	400 BC	643
Livy (59 BC – AD 17)	4 th Century AD	27
Tacitus (AD 56-120)	9 th Century AD	3
Suetonius (AD 69-140)	9 th Century AD	200+
Thucydides (460-400 BC)	1 st Century AD	20
Herodotus (484-425 BC)	1 st Century AD	75

4. **Prophecy** – There are over forty messianic prophecies in the Old Testament. Louis Lapidès, an expert on Messianic prophecy, said “the probability of just eight prophecies being fulfilled is one chance in one hundred billion billion. That number is millions of times greater than the total number of people who have ever walked the planet.” Jesus fulfilled them all.
5. **Personal Testimony** – Someone’s personal experience with the living, active written word of God (Heb 4:12).

**ANSWERING THE TOUGH ONES
"ON THE APOCRYPHA"**



Why does the church rarely mention the Apocrypha? If they were not meant to be included in the Bible, why were some of the books found among the Dead Sea Scrolls? I'm torn between two worlds as I can find good arguments for and against it being included.

Thanks for your questions . . . they are good ones. Regarding why the church rarely makes mention of the Apocrypha, it's probably because the apocryphal books are not considered on the same authoritative level as the sixty-six books of the Bible. Typically if someone wants to know more about the composition of Scripture most churches offer equipping classes that cover topics like this.

To address your second question regarding the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls it may be helpful to give a brief summary regarding what the Apocrypha is and where it came from. Around the year 430 BCE the prophet / teacher Ezra compiled the last books of the Old Testament (*Chronicles, Ezra-Nehemiah*), and his scribal school synthesized the thirty-nine books of the Old Testament (twenty-two books in Hebrew). From this point on these books were considered authoritative because they belonged to the successive line of inspired prophecy from Moses to Ezra. Starting around 200 BCE, Israel found itself caught in the middle of a power struggle between Egypt and Syria that ended with multiple abuses, including the loss of religious freedom. From this time up to the break in the Common Era, pseudepigraphal (false name) works and the books of the Apocrypha were written with strong messianic overtones, including the apocryphal books found in the Catholic bible. Around this same time the Jewish community living in Alexandria, Egypt was translating the books of the Old Testament from Hebrew into the new international language, common Greek (*koine*). Because the Jewish community in Egypt was not as strict regarding the canon of the Old Testament as Palestinian Jews, some of these apocryphal / pseudepigraphal books began to be added to the Greek version of the Old Testament, called the Septuagint (after the seventy or so scholars that completed the translation). Though the Septuagint was widely used, including the New Testament writers, it was widely accepted that a distinction existed between the twenty-two books of the Hebrew Old Testament and the apocryphal books that were added to the Greek translation later.

Beginning in the 383rd year of the Common Era the scholar Jerome was commissioned to revise the Old Latin version of Scripture into the Latin Vulgate (or common tongue). He used Hebrew texts to translate the Old Testament and therefore (very purposefully) omitted the apocryphal literature, since it only existed in the Greek text, or Septuagint. He recognized the distinction between the authoritative books of the Old Testament and the apocryphal books, that while the Apocrypha could be edifying to read, no apocryphal book should be the basis of doctrine. This distinction was recognized for a while, until during the Middle Ages an Old Latin version of the Apocrypha was added to the Latin Vulgate. Then, in response to Martin Luther and other reformers, the Council of Trent met in 1546 CE and determined that the sixty-six books of the Latin Vulgate *plus* the Apocrypha was authoritative Scripture. This decision ignored established, widespread acceptance of the authoritative books and was largely an attempt to defend corrupt practices such as the sale of indulgences using vague

references to the baptism of the dead in the Apocrypha. The Catholic Church realized its error and corrected the mistake in 1869 CE at the First Vatican Council, where it reinstated Jerome's distinction of the sixty-six authoritative books and the secondary books of the Apocrypha, which are used for edification only.

In 1947 CE approximately one thousand scrolls and fragments were discovered in the area around Qumran near the northwest shore of the Dead Sea. Around six hundred of these texts are from the twenty-two books of the Hebrew Scripture. The rest are apocryphal, pseudepigraphal, and liturgical. However, as is shown below, just because the apocryphal books were copied and used alongside the Hebrew Scripture does not mean they are recognized on the same level as those authoritative books.

I hope this helps to satisfy your questions. Please let me know if you have further questions, I would be happy to continue to interact with you about this. If you'd like to read deeper into this subject I recommend F. F. Bruce's book *The Canon of Scripture*.

In Christ,
Nathan C. Wagnon

ANSWERING THE TOUGH ONES "ON THE CANON"



If one believes in the inspiration of the writing of Scripture, would he also have to believe, at least to a certain degree, in the compilation of it?

Under the direction of the Holy Spirit, every book in the Scripture was authoritative when the author penned it. The process of canonization did not seek to impart authority to the books in Scripture, it sought to recognize which ones were already authoritative, so the process was one of discovery, not determination. Even the qualifications used to discover authority (such as apostolic origin, church acceptance, doctrinal orthodoxy, practical accuracy, etc.) were tools to ascertain what was canonical and what was not. Although there was minor disagreement among the church fathers regarding which books were canonical, during the first couple of centuries after the common era break the authoritative books began to prove themselves, so that the third Council of Carthage in AD 397 (the first council to confirm the sixty-six books of the canon plus the Apocrypha; see the handout on the Apocrypha) was more of a formality, or seal of approval regarding the books that best met the criteria and had distinguished themselves over time. The canon as a whole is not more authoritative than any one of its parts; however, the canon is incomplete without each of its parts. In other words, each book needs the others in order to be the complete canon, but authority is not imparted on a book because it is in the canon, it is in the canon because it is authoritative. While I hope this information is helpful, ultimately this issue comes down to faith. Just as one must have faith that God guided the writing of Scripture, he must also have faith that He guided the process of compiling the Scripture. Just know that this faith is not "blind," there is substantial historical evidence that points to God's hand in both the writing and compilation of Scripture.

Who were the people who assembled the sixty-six books of our Bible and did they have an agenda as they decided what was in and what was out?

This is an important question. You have to remember that the church in the first three centuries looked drastically different than it does today. Under Roman rule the early church suffered a significant amount of brutality and persecution, anything from being mutilated by animals to serving as a nightlight (they were burned on posts to provide light) to crucifixion to social ostracizing to loss of material goods. The early church took its faith extremely serious (since it cost them so much), unlike many nominal Christians today. Now, there were definitely nominal Christians in the early church as well, but they were fewer and farther between, and usually abandoned their faith within a short period of time, or they changed their doctrine slightly to accommodate their lifestyle, something not unlike what is happening today. Anyway, the early church was faced with various heretical groups, so it responded by vigorously defending established orthodoxy. Men like Clement, Polycarp, Justin Martyr, Ignatius, Eusebius, Iraneaus, Athanasius, Augustine, and many more defended the core tenants of the Christian faith, some even dying for their stand against those who would compromise the integrity of the message. These were the men who preserved the message for hundreds of years so that when Constantine became emperor in the fourth century and the persecutions

began to subside, many of the councils and synods met to confirm what these men had fought so hard to preserve. One might argue that these doctrines and the canon might have been officially confirmed much earlier had it not been for the persecution that kept the church suppressed, but that's hypothetical. The discovery of the authoritative books was both concrete and fluid. I mean, the vast majority of the canon was universally accepted as authoritative (concrete), while a handful of books (including the Apocrypha) were disputed (fluid). It should be noted, though, that neither accepting nor rejecting the disputed books changed any central Christian doctrine.

I realize that this process was not simplistic nor naïve, and I recognize that many of the men who fought against heresies and threats against Christianity in the first couple of centuries did not always agree exactly as to which books were authoritative, but over time the sixty-six books began to distinguish themselves and were ultimately confirmed as canonical without reservation. Some might say that these guys were on a power trip or were trying to deceive people into believing something that isn't true, but an informed understanding of the history of the early church does not allow for this. There were too many people involved over too long a time period for someone to go on a power trip and pull off tricking everyone. It's much safer to say that this process was divinely orchestrated. I can't fully understand that, but that is where the evidence leads.

On a personal note, at times I am struck with questions regarding the authenticity or reliability of certain aspects of Christianity. I think one of the things that really helps me is to take it back to faith. When I do, I find that every time the evidence is considered, it would actually take more faith to reject these aspects than accept them. I find myself backed in a corner and frustrated because I can't really get my arms around every aspect of these issues, and yet I have learned to live with the tension.

A resource you might want to check out is *The Canon of Scripture* by F.F. Bruce. You also might want to reference 2 Timothy 3:16, Colossians 4:16, 2 Peter 3:15-16, and 1 Timothy 5:18.

If you have any questions or want to discuss this further just let me know.

Nathan C. Wagon

**ANSWERING THE TOUGH ONES
"ON THE HISTORICAL GAP"**



We are having trouble reconciling the potential 60+ year gap between Jesus' resurrection and the first known surviving manuscript, thinking that 60+ years is a lot of time between the supposed act in history and the historical record. Some think that is a lot of time for "stories" to be made up into what is now understood as the gospel.

The historical event of Jesus' life and resurrection occurred sometime between 4 BC and AD 33. The earliest extant (surviving) witness to this account was a papyrus fragment of John 18:31-33 (r) and 18:37-38 (v) titled P⁵², dated to the turn of the first century. That leaves an approximate 65-year gap (as you pointed out) between the actual historical event and the earliest surviving written account of that event. However, the fragment is definitely a copy (and probably a copy of a copy and so forth) of the original, which would have been written on a scroll (the codex form of writing was invented later in the first century) sometime previous . . . obviously a copy does not precede the original. A solid case can be made that Mark's Gospel was composed during the reign of Claudius (AD 41-54) and that he drew heavily on the eyewitness testimony of Peter, according to the early church father Papias, a disciple of John (Eusebius recorded Papias' testimony in *Hist. Eccl.* 3.39.15). If Mark's Gospel was written no later than the mid 50s then really the gap you are talking about is approximately 20 years, not 60.

The natural question follows, *how reliable is the oral transmission of the historical account during the decades following Jesus' death and resurrection?* I do not, however, believe that the assumption of oral transmission only prior to the Gospels should automatically be granted. As Eddy & Boyd have pointed out, "One must beware of the all-too-common caricature of 'oral peasant culture' and its supposedly simplistic, nonliterary, isolated 'little tradition.'" In fact, there is epigraphic evidence that literacy in the ancient world was more widespread than is often believed. On top of that it is understood that literacy among the Jews was treated as a trained virtue, so common people could interact with the Torah and prophets, a discipline central both to an individual Jew's identity and also the identity of the nation. While not all of Jesus' disciples were "learned" (Acts 4:13, this term should be taken in a similar way we use it today . . . meaning the men received no advanced education), it is highly probable that all received a standard Jewish education in a local synagogue, where reading and writing were essential. This would explain the existence of Q, a pre-gospel collection of sayings and teachings of Jesus compiled in the first few decades of the early church. Though this collection did not survive by itself, it is generally accepted that it (along with Mark) was a source for Matthew and Luke, who wrote their accounts decades after the resurrection. In that sense, it did survive in these two Gospels.

Even if we ignored all evidence to the contrary and granted that the early Christians were totally illiterate and transmitted the historical account of Jesus orally until the Gospels were penned, we still find ourselves on solid ground. The conclusions of anthropological studies conducted on orally dominant cultures show a general historical reliability regarding the transmission of a narrative over time. Evidence shows that if tradents (people entrusted with passing along stories) did not tell a story accurately they would be corrected by their audience, who generally knew the narrative

framework that made up the story. Regarding primitive Christianity these traditions were no doubt the apostles and other witnesses to the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. It was their responsibility to pass along the teachings and sayings of Jesus faithfully to the community of early believers. One could argue that the primitive oral transmission is strong evidence of the reliability of the historical account because the teachings and stories were told in community, where there existed a natural system of checks and balances. The fact that four Gospels that essentially contain the same narrative framework concerning Jesus were produced out of, then circulated among a community of eyewitnesses, people willing to give their lives to defend the validity of the text, is evidence of an historically strong oral tradition among the primitive church. Not to mention the fact that this remarkable story of a miracle working God / man arose out of the least likely community . . . people who staunchly believed that God is one. The most natural explanation for the widely accepted oral tradition among eyewitnesses belonging to a people least likely to produce "fairy tales" about God, is that a historical figure named Jesus made outstanding claims, performed amazing works, was crucified then resurrected, and that these people saw that happen.

Based on what I've laid out above it is most probable that both written and oral narratives regarding Jesus' life and teaching were transmitted by eyewitnesses very early on and were used as a kind of "pre-Gospel reference" until the Gospels were produced and widely circulated (see 1 Cor 15:3-6). Frankly, there is too much evidence to the contrary to assume that illiterate peasants circulated legendary stories of a mythical Jesus that grew into fantastic tales of a miracle working deity. Considering the facts this assumption is simply not rooted in history.

I attempted to give a general reply to your question. There is so much regarding this question that I did not say, as indicated by comments like "evidence shows," "a solid case can be made," and "it is generally accepted." If you'd like to dig deeper I strongly encourage it. A great place to start is with Eddy & Boyd's *The Jesus Legend: A Case for the Historical Reliability of the Synoptic Jesus Tradition*, especially chapter six, "Ancient Literacy and Oral Tradition." If you have any more questions or need help with something, just let me know.

Praying,
Nathan C. Wagon