

Is there anything that would lead us to believe the New Testament is more reliable than the texts of other major religions?

One of the most important things to keep in mind that when it comes to the New Testament was how quickly it was written in relation to the events it describes. Let's compare Christianity to Buddhism. The Buddha lived in the 6th century BC, but the Buddhist scriptures and the first biography of the Buddha weren't written until the 1st Century A.D.¹

In contrast the first Christian scriptures were written around or just after the year 50 A.D., about twenty years after the earthly ministry of Jesus. The last books of bible were written around 95 AD. The earliest Gospel was probably Mark, which was probably written around the year 70 AD. These dates are generally acknowledged even by non-Christian scholars who study the history of the bible. Some Christian scholars make strong arguments that some books were written even earlier than these dates. So the time span that passed between when Jesus walked on earth and when the New Testament was written is extremely brief.

In contrast many of the so called secret or lost Gospels, the documents that a big deal was made about in *The DaVinci Code* (and in other equally foolish books and articles that some people have written) were written at least 30 years later than anything that is contained in the New Testament, and sometimes as much as a century afterwards. 1st century documents can make the claim to have been written by those who personally knew Jesus, or who had been taught by these people. Clearly things written 150 years after Jesus walked the earth can't make the same claim. The *Gospel of Thomas* and the

¹ Strobel, Lee., *The Case For Christ*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1998), 87.

Gospel of Mary Magdalene, documents which some people have said give us a better understanding of early Christianity as it really was than do the books that were included in the New Testament, are actually 2nd century frauds which have no connection to those whose names they hijacked and abused by including them in the titles of these works. St. Paul's Letter to the Romans was written by St. Paul. St. Thomas had nothing to do with the so called *Gospel of Thomas*.

Additionally many of the books of the New Testament books made use of Christians hymns, creeds, prayers, sayings, and texts which existed prior to the books we now have being written.² This clearly shows that the New Testament reflects already existing Christian beliefs and practices. The New Testament was not written to tell people about Christ for the 1st time. It was written to provide further instruction to people who had already been taught, mostly by word of mouth, but partly through other Christian documents.

It seems impossible to believe that the New Testament authors could have just started to make stuff up about Jesus. It was too soon after his time of public ministry. There were too many people around who could have argued against their version of events if they had just made it up. If the Jesus they wrote about was different than the Jesus who actually existed they couldn't have gotten away with it. This is completely different than the situation with Buddhism where it took 600 years for things to be put into writing. That's enough time for a lot of things to be exaggerated and changed.

Let's also compare the New Testament to the Koran. Muhammad is dead. No one disputes that. So yes Muhammad taught things and claimed that God had revealed things to him. No one disputes that is what he did and what he claimed. But Muhammad didn't

² Ibid, 88, 228-231.

rise from the dead. No one even claims this occurred. So if Jesus was just a teacher his claims would be on the same level as those of Muhammad. But if Jesus was just a teacher, if like Muhammad he did not rise from the dead, people writing within no more than a few decades of his death would not have been able to make the claim that he had risen from the dead. It was too soon to make such a dramatic claim, they wouldn't have gotten away with it. So Muhammad and Jesus both taught. And their teachings were preserved during or very shortly after their lifetimes. But Muhammad is dead, and Jesus is not. So when it comes to whose claims to be God's messenger are more reliable there isn't much of a contest.