

# COLD-CASE CHRISTIANITY

A HOMICIDE DETECTIVE INVESTIGATES THE CLAIMS OF THE GOSPELS

J. WARNER WALLACE

J. Warner Wallace is a cold-case homicide detective who never lost a case that was brought to trial. He was also an atheist who used his detective skills to investigate the claims of Christianity. Through his investigation, he became a Christian. He is now a Christian apologist – someone who defends the truths of the Christian faith.

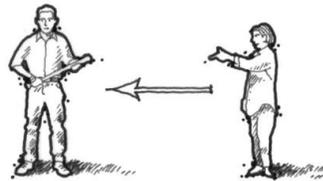
**Cold-Case Homicides** Murders that have gone unsolved so long that the case has gone cold. Generally years go by and witnesses might no longer be alive!

**But there is no limit on being tried for murder. So, the detectives have to put together the evidence to try to figure out who was the killer.**

**Two type of evidence:**

## Direct Evidence

An Eyewitness Is 100% Certain She Can Identify the Suspect



## Indirect or circumstantial

The eye witnesses are no longer alive or no one saw the person do it. So, you have to put all of the clue together to say: It is probable? Is it reasonable that this is true?

Imagine seeing muddy boot prints on a new rug.

Your three-year old son is asked if he did it. He says, “No.” But you see:

1. Muddy rubber boots that your child wears
2. The boot prints are the same size as the boots.
3. His pants have mud all over them.
4. The towel in the bathroom is muddy with handprints his size.



Is it possible that the didn't do it? Yes, it is “possible.” However, **is it probable and reasonable** that he left muddy boot prints given the evidence? Yes.

## Can you trust the Gospel writers?

Were the writers of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John reliable eyewitnesses? Here are four main things to consider if an account is trustworthy.

### 1. WERE THEY PRESENT?

- A. Were they really eye witnesses?
- B. Did they write closer to the time of Jesus or farther away? The closer to the date, the less someone can change the evidence.

### 2. WERE THEY CORROBORATED?

- A. Is there internal agreement?
  - i. Do the writers agree with the details or do they contradict each other?
- B. Are there other sources that can verify, corroborate, what the Gospel writers wrote?
  - i. Ancient Jewish sources?
  - ii. Ancient Roman or other sources?
  - iii. Archeology?

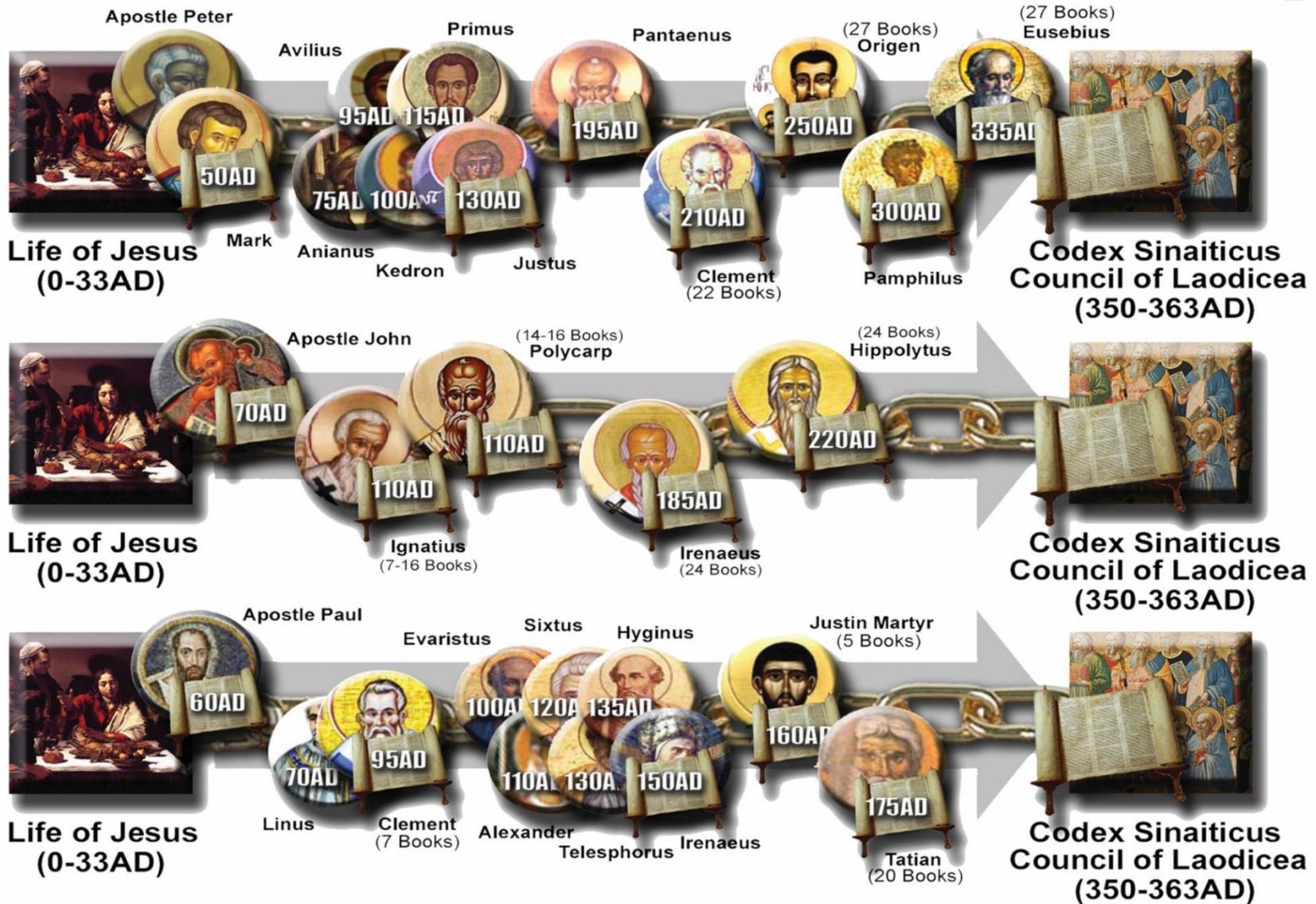
### 3. WERE THEY ACCURATE?

- A. How were they copied?
  - i. How many copies do we have?
  - ii. How early (close to the date of Jesus) were the copies?
- B. Did the stories change over time?
  - i. Is there a “chain” of custody?

### 4. WERE THEY BIASED?

- A. Did the gospel writers lie or cheat? Did they change the evidence to gain something?  
According to Wallace, everyone has three basic motives to lie or cheat
  - i. Financial Greed (did they writers get rich? No.)
  - ii. Sexual or Relational Desire (Did they do it to get girlfriends? No)
  - iii. Pursuit of Power (Did they get power? No. In fact they were jailed and in some cases killed.)

# The New Testament Chain of Custody



From J. Warner Wallace's book, **Cold-Case Christianity: A Homicide Detective Investigates the Claims of the Gospels**

**Historical Reliability: The closer a manuscript is written to the actual event, and the closer copies of the manuscripts are the actual event, the more historically trustworthy they are.**

### Timeline of Ancient Manuscripts

Authors/Works	Recorded	Dates of Mss.	Time Span	Copies Survived
Caesar	100–44 B.C.	A.D. 900	1,000 YRS	10
Livy	59 B.C.–A.D. 17	A.D. 300	400 YRS	27
Plato	427–347 B.C.	A.D. 900	1,200 YRS	7
Tacitus ( <i>Annals</i> )	A.D. 56–120	A.D. 800	900 YRS	3
Pliny the Younger ( <i>History</i> )	A.D. 61–113	A.D. 850	750 YRS	7
Thucydides ( <i>History</i> )	460–400 B.C.	A.D. 100	600 YRS	20
Suetonius ( <i>De Vita Caesarum</i> )	A.D. 69–140	A.D. 800	900 YRS	200+
Herodotus ( <i>History</i> )	484–425 B.C.	A.D. 100	600 YRS	75
Sophocles	496–406 B.C.	A.D. 1000	1,400 YRS	193
Catullus	54 B.C.	A.D. 1550	1,600 YRS	3
Euripides	480–406 B.C.	A.D. 1100	1,500 YRS	9

Authors/Works	Recorded	Dates of Mss.	Time Span	Copies Survived
Demosthenes	383–322 B.C.	A.D. 1100	1,300 YRS	200
Aristotle	384–322 B.C.	A.D. 1100	1,400 YRS	40
Aristophanes	450–385 B.C.	A.D. 900	1,200 YRS	10
Homer	900 B.C.	400 B.C.	500 YRS	643
New Testament	A.D. 35–100	A.D. 100–150	5–30 YRS	5,700

*\*New Testament copies include (1) fragments, (2) some incomplete copies of the NT, (3) the complete NT, which are all in Greek. Another 10,000+ manuscripts exist in Latin plus more than one million quotations from the church fathers.*

