

After making my post yesterday about the bogus apologetic claims being made about the existence of a copy of Mark from the first century, I remembered I had posted on the matter some years ago on the blog. I looked it up, and found a set of reflections on a closely related topic: what difference *would* a first century copy of Mark make, if it doesn't make the difference these breathless apologists are making? Here is what I said at the time, at the beginning of 2015 (I've edited the post slightly here for its new context).

I personally think that there are no shenanigans going on when Dan Wallace and Craig Evans tell us that a fragment of the Gospel of Mark has been found and that it can, with reasonable certainty, be dated to the late first century. I'm not saying that I know they are right. Far from it. In fact, one of the most disconcerting things about this claim is that they are not making the papyrus available so real experts can study it and let us know what it really is and to what period it can be dated. But let's suppose that once it is published - now the date is no longer 2012, as originally stated, or 2015 as stated last week, but 2017 or later, for reasons no one will explain - it turns out to be a very early fragment of the Gospel of Mark. The question no one seems to be asking is: What difference will it make?

There seems to be a widely held sense that it will be one of the greatest finds of modern times and will somehow revolutionize our understanding of the manuscript tradition of the New Testament. Will it?

My sense from everything that has been said is that ...

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