

Dear Jason,

Thank you for once again writing us at Christian Questions Radio. In your last response to us you indicated that if the New Testament writers did not all die as martyrs, then the writers were not reliable.

We believe that whether or not the writers died as martyrs has no bearing on the reliability of their writings. The fact that all of them had the holy spirit and either knew Jesus personally or knew and worked with the apostles, who did know Jesus personally, does.

Mark, the writer of the second Gospel, although not an apostle, is thought to have been a member of the same family of the apostles James and John. Mark's Gospel is the story of Jesus as told to him by the Apostle Peter. After an earlier separation, Mark appears in Rome with the Apostle Paul (Colossians 4:10; Philemon 24). Four or five years later, Paul, just before martyrdom, asks for Mark to come to him (2 Timothy 4:11). Thus, it seems that Mark, in his later years, became one of Paul's intimate and beloved helpers.

Luke, the writer of the third Gospel, is mentioned only three times in the New Testament; Colossians 4:14, where he is called the "Beloved Physician," Philemon 24, where he is called Paul's "Fellow-Worker"; and 2 Timothy 4:11, indicating that he was with Paul in the dark hours of approaching martyrdom. In all three passages mention is made of Mark, indicating that Mark and Luke were companion workers.

The Apostle John was one of the three inner circle disciples, along with his brother James and also Peter. John was recognized as the closest to Jesus. Five times he is spoken of as the disciple "Whom Jesus loved" (John 13:23; 19:26; 20:2; 21:7, 20). He must have been a man of rare qualities of character to thus attract the companionship of Jesus. John lived to a great age and wrote not only his Gospel, but also three letters and the Book of Revelation.

You drew the conclusion that if the writers of the New Testament were not martyred for their beliefs, then their writings are unreliable. We believe that conclusion is erroneous. First of all, we do not know how some of them even died. In fact, all of them may have been martyred, including the Apostle John. We simply do not have reliable evidence. Secondly, and more importantly, all of the writers had the holy spirit and were either apostles who knew Jesus personally or were co-workers with the apostles. This level of connection is important, as it eliminates faulty interpretations due to an account being passed on from person to person to person. All the New Testament writers sacrificed their old natures, worked diligently and devoted the remainder of their lives in the promulgation of the truth and in establishing new Christian churches.

Are the writings of the New Testament authors reliable? We believe they are very reliable and worthy of sincere study. We hope we have answered your question.

Sincerely,
Christian Questions Radio