

DEFENDABLE FAITH - ANSWERING TOUGH QUESTIONS ABOUT CHRISTIANITY

Is the Bible Reliable? - The Way God Preserved Scripture

1. The Bible is reliable because it is from God.
2. The Bible is reliable because its books were selected with virtual unanimity by the _____ of God because those books clearly demonstrated divine authorship.
3. The Bible is reliable because it was supernaturally preserved by God.

What is the evidence that the Bible was supernaturally preserved by God?

THE _____ CONTROLLED THE PRESERVATION OF THE FRAGILE COPIES OF SCRIPTURE.

- Definition of manuscript - a _____ copy
- Copying a book of the Bible by hand would be difficult and _____. So why were many copies of the biblical books made?
 - Due to the _____ and power of the original (the autograph).
 - Due to the perishable nature of the materials. The oldest manuscripts were on papyrus, an ancient _____ that did not weather well or last long. Ancient papyrus manuscripts have only survived where they were protected in an exceedingly dry climate.
 - Due to the need for the message to be _____ into other languages.
- Today we have discovered more than _____ complete or partial copies of the New Testament books.
- Old Testament manuscripts number in the _____ rather than in the thousands as do those of the New Testament.
 - The reason for this is the increased passage of time and the destruction of _____ and the captivity of Israel and Judah by Assyria and Babylon respectively.
 - A second reason is actually the result of the _____ the Jews had for the scrolls of sacred Scripture. As a scroll aged and was damaged by use, it was carefully copied (details above). The damaged scroll was then retired to a Gheniza, a storage room attached to a synagogue, where they perished totally from neglect or were _____ to make room for others.

- However, the number of O.T. manuscripts still greatly exceeds the number of manuscripts of any other ancient literary work, and they are sufficient in number and extent to verify that the text we have in our Christian Bibles is a _____ copy of the originals.

THE _____ OF THE OLD TESTAMENT COPYISTS

- **From the days of the completion of the O.T., the Jews had three primary groups who were given the responsibility of custodial care of the Scriptures.**
 - The first of these were the Sopherim (_____), of which Ezra was one. Their ministry lasted from around 400 B.C. to just after A.D. 100.
 - The second group of custodians were the _____, who diligently cared for the sacred text from A.D. 100 to A.D. 500. The Talmudists had an extensive list of rules to which they strictly adhered for the copying of the O.T. books, including how the parchments (animal _____) had to be prepared and a specific recipe for the ink. Some of the rules that helped preserve the accuracy of the text are as follows:
 - “An _____ copy must be the exemplar, from which the transcriber ought not in the least deviate.
 - No word or letter, not even a yod (the smallest Hebrew letter), must be written from memory, the scribe not having looked at the codex before him...
 - Between every consonant the space of a hair or thread must intervene;
 - Between every new section, the breadth of nine consonants;
 - Between every book, three lines.
 - The copyist must sit in full Jewish dress,
 - Wash his whole body,
 - Must not begin to write the name of _____ with a pen newly dipped in ink,
 - And should a king address him while writing that name he must take no notice of him.”
 - The third group of scholars charged with the preservation of the sacred text of the Old Testament were the _____. They cared for the Scriptures between A.D. 500 and A.D. 950. They made two great contributions to the preservation of the O.T. Scriptures.
 - They continued the exceedingly diligent care of the Sopherim and Talmudists in the copying to the ancient text.
 - They devised a complicated system to safeguard the text from scribal slips.
 - For example, they counted the number of times each _____ of the alphabet occurs in each book. When the copy was complete, if the count did not match, the copy was considered defective and was destroyed.
 - They identified the _____ letter of the Pentateuch and the middle letter of the entire Old Testament. New copies were checked to be sure they matched.
 - These are only examples of many “countings” which they employed so that they were absolutely certain that when a copy passed their

examination, it was _____ to the exemplar being copied. Thus the ancient text was accurately preserved.

- The second contribution of the Masoretes was to add _____ points to the consonants that made up the Hebrew text of the O.T.
 - Prior to this time, the O.T. text consisted only of _____. The vowel sounds were remembered, just as we remember the melody of a song when we read the words, although no musical notes are written.
 - Persecution and dispersal of the Jewish population in the world was causing some of this traditional memory to fade. The Masoretes preserved the traditional _____ by adding small dots or tiny lines below or above the consonants to serve as vowel sounds.

The reason we can have such confidence that the words in our Old Testaments today are the same as the Holy Spirit inspired Moses and the prophets to write so many years ago, is because God provided copyists who were diligent to the _____ to produce faithful copies of the sacred text.

This is why the manuscript of Isaiah copied around 200 B.C. and found with the Dead Sea Scrolls matched the previous oldest manuscript of Isaiah copied around 1,000 A.D. Nothing significant changed in over _____ years!

THE MULTITUDE OF NEW TESTAMENT MANUSCRIPTS

- Today we have discovered more than 24,000 complete or partial copies of the New Testament books.
- Most of the Greek manuscripts discovered are only separated from the date of the writing of the autograph by _____ years. Some of the copies date to less than _____ years from the original.
- See the following chart taken from McDowell, *New Evidence that Demands a Verdict*.

AUTHOR	BOOK	DATE WRITTEN	EARLIEST COPIES	TIME GAP IN YRS	NO. OF COPIES
Homer	<i>Iliad</i>	800 BC	400 BC	400	643
Herodotus	<i>History</i>	480-425 BC	AD 900	1,325	8
Thucydides	<i>History</i>	460-400 BC	AD 900	1,300	8
Plato		400 BC	AD 900	1,300	7
Caesar	<i>Gallic Wars</i>	100-44 BC	AD 900	956	10
Tacitus	<i>Annals</i>	AD 100	AD 1100	1,000	20
Greek New Testament		AD 50-100	114 fragments 200 books 250 most of NT 325 all of NT	50 100 150 225	5,366

- **Some of the experts sum up the importance of this evidence from such a multitude of manuscripts.**
 - F.F. Bruce says, “There is no body of _____ literature in the world which enjoys such a wealth of good textual attestation as the New Testament.”
 - John W. Montgomery wrote, “To be skeptical of the resultant text of the New Testament books is to allow all of classical antiquity to slip into _____, for no documents of the ancient period are so well attested bibliographically as the New Testament.
- **God used a _____ methodology for the preservation of the New Testament text than He did with the groups of copyists of the Old Testament.**
 - Although the clear evidence is that copies of N.T. books were done carefully and not carelessly, the N.T. books were copied in a far less _____ manor.
 - This was primarily because there was not a single cultural system such as Judaism to control the process. Churches were _____. They often cooperated together, but they were not controlled by a central authority until centuries later, and even then, not all were controlled.
 - Therefore the copying to the N.T. books was not given to a single group. A multitude of different _____ spread over several continents, and with no contact with each other, copied the manuscripts and sent them out. In turn, these manuscripts were copied, and those copies were copied again, and so on.
 - The consequence was two-fold:
 - Tens of thousands of manuscripts were copied. This is one reason we have found such a multitude of manuscripts. For us to find over 24,000, many times that number must have been produced!
 - This informal process allowed _____ error to be introduced into some of the manuscript copies. A scribe might misspell or omit a word. That error would then be reproduced in the copies that followed it. A copyist might unthinkingly _____ the word Lord for God.
 - The miracle of God’s preservation of the N.T. is that God used the multiplicity of manuscripts of the N.T. to preserve the accurate _____ of His Word in spite of scribal errors.
 - When critics say that there are more than 200,000 variant readings in the N.T., they are telling the _____. But consider the following:
 - That means that if you take any two of the 24,000+ manuscripts and compare them, there would be an average of ___ points of difference between the two. Many of these differences would be as insignificant as the spelling of a _____.
 - One might reasonably ask, “But how do you know which one is right?” And the answer is that you _____ each of them to the other 24,000+ manuscripts.
 - When you do so, and scholars have done these comparisons carefully over the years, it is in most cases very easy to tell what the _____ reading is.

- In fact, because there are ways to _____ the manuscripts, scholars can often tell at what point a particular copying error was introduced and what line of manuscripts was affected by it. Thus they can go to another line unaffected by that particular mistake and determine the _____ reading.
- An entire discipline developed that was devoted to the study and comparison of the ancient New Testament manuscripts called _____ criticism. Do not confuse textual criticism with some more liberal and destructive types of criticism such as form criticism. Textual criticism is based upon a _____ for the text and attempts through the careful study of the manuscripts to know what the _____ autograph said at any point of variation in the copies.
- The result of such careful study across the years is that _____ we can be virtually certain of the _____ of every part of the text of Holy Scriptures. Although we do not possess any of the autographs, we know what every one of them said!

As A.T. Robertson said many years ago, any areas of concern amount to less than one _____ thousandth of the text, and none of these alter the _____ of the Scriptures.