How Reliable is the Bible we have Today?
Definitions

- Autograph – the original writings of Moses or Paul in their handwriting
- Manuscript – a copy of a writing in the original language
- Version – a translation from the original language into another language, e.g. “New International Version” or “King James Version”
Do any autographs of Biblical writings exist today?

• No
Are our English versions translated from copies of copies of copies of copies?

• Yes
So the reliability of the Scriptures depends on how accurately the manuscripts were copied?

• Yes
Do we have any way of assessing how accurately the manuscripts were copied?

• Yes
How reliably were Old Testament manuscripts copied?

- The oldest existing complete manuscripts of the OT were copied by Jewish scribes called Masoretes about 900-1000 AD

- These manuscripts are the basis of the Masoretic text (MT) from which every OT version is translated
QUMRAN CAVES

- Cave

- Copper Scroll giving lists of hidden treasures

- Temple Scroll and Psalm Scroll

- Two Isaiah scrolls; major deposit of sectarian works (Manual of Discipline, the War Scroll, Messianic Rule); commentaries on Habakkuk

- Major deposit of manuscripts; fragments of over 400 works, including pieces of every Old Testament book except Esther; fragments of Apocryphal and Pseudepigraphal books

QUMRAN AND THE DEAD SEA SCROLLS

- City

- Site of several caves where Dead Sea Scrolls were discovered

- Area enlarged above

- Khirbet Qumran
- Ain Feshkha
- Middin
- Secacah
- Kibbet Mird
- Ras Feshkha
- Nibsharka
- Khirbet Mazin
- Khirbet Mazar
- W. Qumran
- W. Kidron
- W. Makkuk
- W. Qilt
- W. Nasariyyat
- Jordan R.

Jerusalem
Bethlehem
Herodium
Beth-Marah
Judean Wilderness
Ain Ghuweir
Dead Sea Scrolls
Dead Sea Scrolls

- Discovered in 1947
- Included many manuscripts of Old Testament books
- Two nearly complete scrolls of Isaiah
- Dating from 200 BC
Isaiah

Masoretic Text

Us

Moses

1200 years older!
How similar were the texts?

- One scroll had only a few minor variations
- The other had more variations but still very insignificant
Isaiah 40:31 (DSS)

Scroll B: “But those who wait on the LORD Shall renew their strength; They shall mount up with wings like eagles, They shall run and not be weary, They shall walk and not faint.”

Scroll A: “But those who wait on the LORD Shall renew their strength; They shall mount up with wings like eagles, They shall run and not be weary, They shall walk and not fly.”
En-Gedi Scroll

• Discovered around 1970
• A charred ancient scroll
• Dates from about 75 AD
En-Gedi Scroll
En-Gedi Scroll

- Discovered around 1970
- A charred ancient scroll
- Dates from about 75 AD
- It contains the first two chapters of Leviticus
En-Gedi Scroll

Moses

Old Testament written

Jesus

Leviticus

Masoretic Text

Us

925 years older!
En-Gedi Scroll

- Discovered around 1970
- A charred ancient scroll
- Dates from about 75 AD
- It contains the first two chapters of Leviticus
- It is letter for letter identical to the text used to translate our Bibles!
How reliable are the New Testament manuscripts?

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Date Written</th>
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How Reliable are the Old and New Testament Scriptures?

As reliable as God the Father and Jesus Christ
Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away.

MATTHEW 24:35
Since you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit in sincere love of the brethren, love one another fervently with a pure heart, having been born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever, because
“All flesh is as grass,
And all the glory of man as the flower of
the grass.
The grass withers,
And its flower falls away,
But the word of the LORD endures
forever.”

1 PETER 1:22–25
Now this is the word which by the gospel was preached to you.
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