

The Dead Sea Scrolls

Excerpted from *The Bible is True Here's Proof*

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At www.BibleProofBook.com

The Accuracy of the Old Testament

How about the Old Testament? Unlike the New Testament, the Old Testament was not written in one generation but over a much longer period of time (approximately between 1,500 BC to 400 BC).¹ However, it is also incredibly accurate. The Dead Sea Scrolls, for example, were discovered in eleven caves along the northwest shore of the Dead Sea between the years 1947 and 1956. Fragments of every book of the Hebrew canon (Old Testament) except for the book of Esther were found. The Dead Sea Scrolls were most likely written by the Essenes during the period from about 200 BC to 68 AD, and have revolutionized textual criticism of the Old Testament.

The supreme value of the Dead Sea Scrolls lies in the ability of biblical scholars to compare them with the Massoretic Hebrew texts of the tenth century AD. A close comparison of the Dead Sea manuscript of Isaiah with the Massoretic text (a 1,000 year time difference) revealed them to be extremely close in accuracy to each other. A comparison of Isaiah 53, for example, shows that only 17 letters differ from the Massoretic text. Ten of these are mere differences in spelling (like our "honor" and the English "honour") and produce no change in the meaning at all. Four more are very minor differences, such as the presence of the conjunction 'and' which are stylistic rather than substantive. The other three letters spell the Hebrew word for "light." This word was added to the text by someone after "he shall see" in verse 11 (see NIV). Out of 166 words in this chapter, only this one word is really in question, and it does not at all change the meaning of the passage. Biblical scholars tell us that this is typical of the whole manuscript of Isaiah.²

This is, no doubt, because of the process the Scribes used to translate their Holy Scriptures. When the Old Testament Scrolls were starting to get old and worn out the Jewish scribes would make new ones. As previously stated there are 24,000 original manuscript copies of the New Testament. The reason that we don't have more Old Testament Manuscripts is that after the Jews copied them from the old copy to the new copy, the old manuscript was destroyed. The scribes were very confident of their copies and after they were done, were held in higher authority than the original. To show you how meticulous they were when translating them, consider this: 1) They could only be copied onto the skins of kosher animals. 2) The copyist had to be in full Jewish dress while he was translating the manuscript. 3) If he was writing God's name and someone entered the room, the copyist couldn't even acknowledge them until he had finished writing the name of God. 4) Between each letter there had to be a space the exact width of a hair (no more, no less): if not the copyist had to throw away what he had done and start all over from the beginning. 5) Once the copying was completed, every letter was counted to be sure no errors were made. The copy was then given higher authority and the old document was destroyed.³

¹ See: When was the Bible written and who wrote it? <http://www.carm.org/Bible/Biblewhen.htm>.

² R. Laird Harris; *Can I Trust My Bible?*; Moody Press, 1963; pg 124; cited by J. Williams; *Are the Biblical Documents Reliable?* At <http://www.leaderu.com/orgs/probe/docs/bib-docu.html>

³ McDowell, *Evidence That Demands a Verdict*, pg 53.

So, just from the manuscript evidence and textual criticism alone, we can be confident that the Bible we hold in our hand today is an accurate representation of what happened thousands of years ago. But there is more; the writings from outside the Bible.

SOURCE

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