The Bible – Part 4
Josh McDowell

I. Introduction.

    A. All is contained in the marvelous Bible.

    B. Review: there is more evidence for the historical reliability of the New Testament than any other book.

II. The reliability of the Old Testament.

    A. There are hardly as many Old Testament manuscripts as there are New Testament manuscripts.

        1. The lack of manuscripts of the Old Testament in no way denies its accuracy.

        2. The way that the Jewish people treated the Old Testament gives evidence as to why we can trust the documents that we currently have.

    B. The oldest copy of the Old Testament is two thousand years removed from the first copy.

    C. Nevertheless, the professional nature of Scripture transcription guaranteed its accuracy. (Ezra 7:6)

        1. They took a special scroll from an animal skin - the animal had to be a clean and specially prepared.

        2. There was a specially prepared type of ink.

        3. The scribes were alone in a room and they had to be ceremonially dressed.

        4. The copies were checked and double checked.

        5. There had to be the distance of a hair between each consonant.

        6. Over a million consonants had to be transcribed letter by letter and not from memory by larger chunks.

        7. There was great reverence exercised when the name of God was written - even attention given to a king was withheld until God's name was written.

        8. The scribes were so committed to transcribing the Scriptures that they could tell the center word of the book of Isaiah and had consonants counted.

        9. If a manuscript had more than three mistakes it would be discarded.

10. The manuscripts with errors were buried in a Ginitsa. Scholars have since unearthed them and claimed that the Old Testament had errors only to realize that they dug up those manuscripts that even the Jews recognized as having errors.

11. When finished they would count every consonant they could in order to determine the accuracy. This is why we do not have a lot of copies, but the copies we do have is good.

D. The discovery of Robert Dick Wilson.

1. There are twenty nine names of kings in the Old Testament that have also been discovered on monuments going back to their times. Only three of the consonants are in question throughout four thousand years of transcribing their names.

2. This includes ten different countries, and twenty nine different kings, all spelled right and in the exact chronological order.

3. Compared to the librarian at Alexandria - there are many misspellings and variances in references.

4. The same is true with Ptolemy, who drew up a register of eighteen kings of Babylon.

5. There is no other comparison to the Old Testament scribes in history as far as accuracy goes.

E. The discovery of Qumran.

1. Copies of the Old Testament were found dating to the times of Christ and earlier.

2. The comparison to the manuscript that had previously been the earliest copy of the Old Testament was nothing short of miraculous to the newfound copies that were transcribed a thousand years earlier.

III. Conclusion.

A. For more read *Evidence that Demands a Verdict.*

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STUDY GUIDE

Part 1: *What do you see?*

1. Describe the process that an Old Testament scribe went through in copying the Scriptures. What about this process was important for preserving the original copies?

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2. Describe the discovery of Robert Dick Wilson.

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3. What importance did the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls have concerning the transmission of the Old Testament?

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Part 2: *What do you think?*

1. Why does the lack of manuscript evidence in respect to the New Testament not compromise its validity?

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2. How did the discovery of Ginitsas actually validate the testimony of the Old Testament in contrast to scholars' earlier conclusions that they put the manuscript reliability in doubt?

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3. What in your opinion is the strongest evidence for the Old Testament's validity?

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Part 3: What will you do?

1. What key points will you bring up in defending the reliability of our Old Testament? How will you defend them?

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2. How should we treat the Word of God in light of the reverence in which the scribes treated the Old Testament?

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3. An understanding of the reliability of the Old Testament is only the beginning. What work have you done in studying the Old Testament already? Where will you go from here? Develop a plan.

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