

- I. We can know the words of the Old Testament Part 3
- a. Review: Last two lessons we saw a total of nine reasons why we can know the original words of the Old Testament
    - i. Reason #1: God's Word says the Word of God will endure forever
    - ii. Reason #2: The Old Testament was written down.
    - iii. Reason #3: Temple officials were intentional in checking the manuscripts
    - iv. Reason #4: *Masora Finalis*
    - v. Reason #5: Jesus affirms the words of the Scriptures will endure
    - vi. Reason #6: *Masora Parva*
    - vii. Reason #7: Dead Sea Scroll
    - viii. Reason #8: Oldest Hebrew Witness
    - ix. Reason #9: Other language translations
  - b. Purpose: In this session we shall consider more reasons why we can believe why we can know the actual words of the Old Testament so that we will have faith in God's Word being God's Word.
  - c. Reason #10: Testimony in Scripture of God's providence in preserving God's Word:
    - i. Josiah's incident: *"Then Hilkiyah the high priest said to Shaphan the scribe, 'I have found the book of the law in the house of the Lord.' And Hilkiyah gave the book to Shaphan who read it. 9 Shaphan the scribe came to the king and brought back word to the king and said, 'Your servants have emptied out the money that was found in the house, and have delivered it into the hand of the workmen who have the oversight of the house of the Lord.' 10 Moreover, Shaphan the scribe told the king saying, 'Hilkiyah the priest has given me a book.' And Shaphan read it in the presence of the king. 11 When the king heard the words of the book of the law, he tore his clothes. 12 Then the king commanded Hilkiyah the priest, Ahikam the son of Shaphan, Achbor the son of Micaiah, Shaphan the scribe, and Asaiah the king's servant saying, 13 'Go, inquire of the Lord for me and the people and all Judah concerning the words of this book that has been found, for great is the wrath of the Lord that burns against us, because our fathers have not listened to the words of this book, to do according to all that is written concerning us.'"* (2 Kings 22:8-13)
      1. Josiah became a king at 8 years old (2 Kings 22:1).
      2. He reign sometime between 641/640 to 610/609 BC.
      3. He was one of the godlier kings in Judah's history.
      4. Because of sinful kings and the people's idolatry there was a neglect of God's Word.
      5. Here in this passage it record that the High priest "Hilkiyah" found the "the book of the law in the house of the Lord." (v.8)
      6. The book of the law would have referred to the laws of Moses, the first five books in the Bible.
      7. Hilkiyah tells this to the scribe "Shaphan" and "Shaphan" read the "book of the law in the presence of the king" (v.10b)
      8. The King reacted in repentance in verses 11-13.
        - a. Note the king "tore his clothes," a sign of grief. There's a place for godly grief.
        - b. Note there's an acknowledgment of sins when Josiah said why His people deserves God's great wrath: "because our fathers have not listened to the words of this book, to do according to all that is written concerning us" (v.13b)
      9. Note how in God's providence the Word of God providentially was found.

10. Also this was not something invented in the 7<sup>th</sup> Century since today we can still see in our reading of the Laws of Moses that it uses older words from the second millennium BC, Egyptian loan words and old customs from the time period of the second millennium.<sup>1</sup>
- ii. Jehoiakim's incident: (**Jeremiah 36**)
  1. Jeremiah dictated God's word to Baruch who wrote it down: "*Then Jeremiah called Baruch the son of Neriah, and Baruch wrote on a scroll at the dictation of Jeremiah all the words of the Lord which He had spoken to him.*" (v.4)
  2. Jeremiah commanded Baruch to read this to various officials in **verses 5-7**.
  3. Baruch obeyed and the account of the scroll being read various times are recorded in **verses 8-22**.
  4. But the king had the scroll burned instead: "*When Jehudi had read three or four columns, the king cut it with a scribe's knife and threw it into the fire that was in the brazier, until all the scroll was consumed in the fire that was in the brazier.*" (v.23)
  5. Yet God still restored what was able to have Jeremiah restored what was written in the first scroll unto another scroll
    - a. "*Then the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah after the king had burned the scroll and the words which Baruch had written at the dictation of Jeremiah, saying, 28 "Take again another scroll and write on it all the former words that were on the first scroll which Jehoiakim the king of Judah burned."* (v.27-28)
    - b. "*Then Jeremiah took another scroll and gave it to Baruch the son of Neriah, the scribe, and he wrote on it at the dictation of Jeremiah all the words of the book which Jehoiakim king of Judah had burned in the fire; and many [l]similar words were added to them.*" (v.33)
- iii. Summary: Whether due to people's passive neglect or intentional destruction of the Scripture, we see here testimonies of God still being able to providentially preserve the written content of God's Word in Old Testament era.
- d. Reason #11: Other Scribal Practices to Preserve the Text
  - i. We have already considered certain scribal practices that helped preserved God's Word in the Old Testament such as how Temple officials were intentional in checking the manuscripts (reason #3), the *Masora Finalis* (reason #4) and the *Masora Parva* (reason #6).
  - ii. Yet there's still more details of the meticulous rules to ensure the Old Testament text is preserved:<sup>2</sup>
    1. Only parchments from clean animals were allowed; these were to be joined together with thread from clean animals.
    2. Each written column of the scroll was to have no fewer than forty-eight lines and no more than sixty lines whose breadth must consist of thirty letters.
    3. The pages were first to be lined, from which the letters were to be suspended.

<sup>1</sup> A good resource on this would be Josh McDowell, *Evidence That Demands a Verdict Volume 2* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson).

<sup>2</sup> The list below is verbatim from Paul Wegner, "Has the Old Testament Text Been Hopelessly Corrupted?" in *In Defense of the Bible* (Nashville, TN: B&H Academic), 125.

4. No word or letter was to be written from memory.
  5. The scribe must wash himself entirely and be in full Jewish dress before beginning to copy the scroll.
  6. He could not write the name Yahweh with a newly dipped brush, nor take notice of anyone, even a king, while writing this sacred name.
- iii. These practices indicate:
1. How serious the Scribes were to copy God's Word.
  2. Attention to details in the transmission.
  3. Uniformity of manuscripts so that if things are not uniform then one is even more careful in looking at the text.
- e. Reason #12: Amount of Old Testament Manuscripts compared to other ancient writings
- i. How many Old Testament manuscripts?
    1. According to Wikipedia: "The first list of the Old Testament manuscripts in Hebrew, made by Benjamin Kennicott (1776–1780) and published by Oxford, listed 615 manuscripts from libraries in England and on the Continent.[3] Giovanni de Rossi (1784–1788) published a list of 731 manuscripts."<sup>3</sup>
    2. Since the late 1700s there's also been much more scrolls discovered such as the Dead Sea Scroll which last lesson we noted at least 221 texts and fragments from the Old Testament have been found.<sup>4</sup>
    3. Let us give an extremely low count of a thousand manuscripts for the Old Testament.
    4. Why is this important? The more manuscripts the more we can do textual criticism to find out the original. Textual Criticism will be discussed more below.
    5. Analogy: Remember the grocery lists example we have been using in lesson 1 and 2? It is better to reconstruct what's the original shopping list from more copies of the original list rather than less copies of the shopping list.
  - ii. Other literature
    1. "Plato's work (Tetralogies) has 210 (previously 7) manuscripts dated 1200 years from the events, written 427-347 B.C., with the earliest copy dated A.D. 900."<sup>5</sup>
    2. "Pliny the Elder (Natural History) has 200 (previously 7) manuscripts, dated 900 years from the events, written A.D. 23-79, with the earliest copy dated A.D. 1000."<sup>6</sup>
    3. *The Art of Warfare* by Sun Pin
      - a. I recently was reading an English translation of a Chinese ancient book called *The Art of Warfare* by Sun Pin (not to be confused with Sun Tzu's *Art of War*) and read an interesting question directed to the strategy scholar Sun Pin: "The two armies have drawn their battle lines and are ready for contest. Our provisions are in short supply and our infantry cannot be

<sup>3</sup> Source: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_Hebrew\\_Bible\\_manuscripts](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_Hebrew_Bible_manuscripts)

<sup>4</sup> Mark Rooker, "The Transmission and Textual Criticism of the Old Testament" in *The World and the Word: An Introduction to the Old Testament* (Nashville, B&H Publishing), Kindle Locations 4051-4052.

<sup>5</sup> Source: <https://truthfaithandreason.com/case-making-101-how-does-the-bible-compare-to-other-ancient-documents/>

<sup>6</sup> Source: <https://truthfaithandreason.com/case-making-101-how-does-the-bible-compare-to-other-ancient-documents/>

relied upon. Even though we launch an all-out assault, the enemy still outnumbers us ten to one. How should we attack him?”<sup>7</sup>

- b. What would be the answer to such a difficult question? I was excited to read Sun Pin’s reply: “Sun Pin replied, ‘To attack an enemy under these conditions, if he is already...’”<sup>8</sup>
  - c. I was disappointed to read the book’s footnote for here that a bamboo strip is missing here (approximately 35 characters)!<sup>9</sup> There is not enough copies of this classical work to reconstruct what it says here.
  - d. Yet this reveals how different the OT manuscript witnesses are compared to other ancient writings!
4. Notice in the examples given the amount of manuscripts is either a problem concerning the amount of copies or date gaps, or the amount of surviving copies is less than that of the Old Testament.
- iii. The conclusion
1. The Old Testament has a lot more witnesses.
  2. According to Josh McDowell in terms of his evaluation of the whole Bible compared to Ancient Classical writings: “Of just the known 5,800+ Greek New Testament manuscripts, there are more than 2.6 million pages! That equates to one mile of New Testament manuscripts (and 2.5 miles for the entire Bible), compared with an average four feet of manuscript by the average classical writer. Combining both the Old and New Testament, we have more than 66,000 manuscripts and scrolls that speak to the validity of Scripture!”<sup>10</sup>
  3. Analogy: Remember the grocery lists example we have been using in lesson 1 and 2? An example of a Haplography would be if someone meant to write “Cream Cheese” forgot to write “Cheese” and just wrote “Cream” as an item because earlier in the list there was the term “Cheese” as one of the item.
- f. Reason #13: The Field of Textual Criticism
- i. Remember what textual criticism is; recall the definition in lesson 1: “The primary goal of textual criticism has traditionally been to establish the actual text that the author wrote, so far as this is possible.”<sup>11</sup>
  - ii. Mark Rooker gives a helpful summary: “The process of textual criticism involves three steps: listing variants, evaluating variants, and explaining variants.”<sup>12</sup>
  - iii. There are two kinds of errors: Intentional and Unintentional errors.
  - iv. According to Mark Rooker, in terms of the Old Testament “the unintentional errors are the primary concern of textual criticism. These errors have arisen in the process of transmission through a mistake by a scribe.”<sup>13</sup>

---

<sup>7</sup> Sun Pin, *The Art of Warfare* (New York, NY: Ballantine Books), 206.

<sup>8</sup> Sun Pin, *The Art of Warfare* (New York, NY: Ballantine Books), 206.

<sup>9</sup> Sun Pin, *The Art of Warfare* (New York, NY: Ballantine Books), 322-323.

<sup>10</sup> Source: <https://www.josh.org/manuscript-validate-old-testament/>

<sup>11</sup> Graeme Bird, *Pointing at the Past: From Formula to Performance in Homeric Poetics* (Washington, DC: Center for Hellenic Studies), chapter 1. Accessed at <https://chs.harvard.edu/CHS/article/display/4742.1-textual-criticism-as-applied-to-biblical-and-classical-texts>.

<sup>12</sup> Mark Rooker, “The Transmission and Textual Criticism of the Old Testament” in *The World and the Word: An Introduction to the Old Testament* (Nashville, B&H Publishing), Kindle Locations 4273-4274.

<sup>13</sup> Mark Rooker, “The Transmission and Textual Criticism of the Old Testament” in *The World and the Word: An Introduction to the Old Testament* (Nashville, B&H Publishing), Kindle Locations 4248-4249.

- v. Knowing the types of errors scribes can make in copying manuscripts can help us better to solve what is the wordings of the original text.
- vi. Type of Error #1: Haplography
  1. Definition: “Haplography occurs when a copyist fails to repeat a letter, a group of letters in a word or a whole word, writing the letter, letters, or words only once.”<sup>14</sup>
  2. Analogy: An example of a Haplography from the every day world of groceries would be if someone meant to write “Cream Cheese” they forgot to write “Cheese” and just wrote “Cream” as an item because earlier in the list there was the term “Cheese” as one of the item.
- vii. Type of Error #2: Dittography
  1. Definition: “Dittography is the antithesis to haplography where the letter, series of letters, or words, was written twice when it should have been written only once.”<sup>15</sup>
  2. Analogy: An example of a Haplography would be if someone meant to write “Cream Cheese” and wrote “Cream Cream Cheese” (Cream 2X).
- viii. Type of Error #3: Metathesis
  1. Definition: “Metathesis occurs when letters have been erroneously exchanged.”<sup>16</sup>
  2. Letters that are similar in shape were sometimes confused in the copying of manuscripts.<sup>17</sup>
  3. Analogy: An example of a Metathesis would be if someone meant to write “milk” and wrote “silk” instead.

---

<sup>14</sup> Mark Rooker, “The Transmission and Textual Criticism of the Old Testament” in *The World and the Word: An Introduction to the Old Testament* (Nashville, B&H Publishing), Kindle Locations 4258-4259.

<sup>15</sup> Mark Rooker, “The Transmission and Textual Criticism of the Old Testament” in *The World and the Word: An Introduction to the Old Testament* (Nashville, B&H Publishing), Kindle Locations 4264-4265.

<sup>16</sup> Mark Rooker, “The Transmission and Textual Criticism of the Old Testament” in *The World and the Word: An Introduction to the Old Testament* (Nashville, B&H Publishing), Kindle Location 4268.

<sup>17</sup> Mark Rooker, “The Transmission and Textual Criticism of the Old Testament” in *The World and the Word: An Introduction to the Old Testament* (Nashville, B&H Publishing), Kindle Location 4251.