



- Welcome and Introduction

The Bible—Lost in Translations?

After two thousand years, how do we know we have the original Bible?

1. A Common Myth

Translated from translations, which were translated from other translations...?

The New Testament preservation was UNLIKE the telephone game in at least four ways:

- It was passed on in writing, not in whispers.
 - Transmission went more than one direction, and these different traditions can be compared.
 - When copies were made, earliest versions were consulted.
 - Translations aren't made from other translations. They are made from early and best ancient manuscripts.
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2. Counterintuitive, but true: The more time passes, the MORE sure we can be about what the Bible said.

Why? More and older manuscripts keep being discovered.

- In 1611, when the King James Version was produced, those translators had 6 Greek manuscripts of the New Testament to work with. The oldest dated back to about 1000 C.E.
 - In 1881, when the Revised Version was produced, translators now had about 2,000 New Testament manuscripts to work with. The oldest dated back to the 4th century.
 - In 2005, when the New English Translation was produced, translators had about 5,700 New Testament Greek manuscripts. Now, the oldest manuscript dates back to 130 C.E.
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3. The Old Testament—a tradition of excellence in transmission.

The Quantity of available ancient Old Testament manuscripts...

- 6 Key Hebrew Manuscripts
- 100s of Dead Sea Scrolls Manuscripts
- 4th and 5th century Greek Translations of the OT
- Plus thousands of smaller sections and fragments

The Quality of available ancient Old Testament manuscripts...

a. Jewish scribes did their work with “the greatest imaginable reverence”.

If a mistake was made, the entire scroll was destroyed.

b. The Dead Sea Scrolls demonstrate the meticulous accuracy of their copying.

- Discovered in 1947 in Qumran, in caves along the Dead Sea.
- The Isaiah scroll (Isaiah A) was older than any copy of Isaiah we had to that time by 1,000 years.
- The differences between them could be compared.

“It is a matter of wonder that through something like a thousand years the text went through so little alteration. As I said in my first article on the scroll, ‘Herein lies its chief importance, supporting the fidelity of the Masoretic Tradition (the guild of devoted Jewish copyists—5th to 10th centuries C.E.)’”—**Millar Burrows, at that time, Professor Emeritus at Yale, and director of the Oriental Institute in Jerusalem.**

4. The New Testament—‘An embarrassment of riches’

A Comparison of Ancient Texts

Author	Date Written	Earliest Copy	Time Span	Number of Copies
Tacitus (Annals)	100-130 C.E.	850 C.E.	730 years	36
Thucydides	460-400 B.C.E.	1st century C.E.	400 years	188
Julius Caesar	50-58 B.C.E.	900 C.E.	940 years	251
New Testament	45-95 C.E.	115-130 C.E.	20-85 years	5,700

- 10-15 New Testament manuscripts are within **100 years** of the completion of the New Testament. (*Reinventing Jesus*, Edwin Komoszewski, M. James Sawyer, and Daniel Wallace. p.77)
- While Greek and Roman writings have many missing parts, there is some guesswork as to what filled those gaps in the originals. But, with thousands of manuscripts, we have **more than the New Testament**, not less. Discerning the original is choosing from what’s available, not guessing.
- There are many differences between these NT manuscripts, but the vast majority are easily spotted.
- Textual critics agree on over 99% of the text. (*Can We Trust the Gospels*, Mark Roberts, p.33)

Conclusion and Encouragement