

Do the manuscript copies truly reflect the originals?

1. What is the Hebrew Canon (officially accepted list of books)?

The Hebrew Canon (24 books) is arranged by official position or status of writers.

- a) The Law (5 books): Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy
- b) The Prophets (8 books): Former Prophets: Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and Kings
Latter Prophets: Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and The Twelve
- c) The Writings (11 books): Poetical Books: Psalms, Proverbs, and Job
Five Rolls: Song of Songs, Ruth, Lamentations, Esther, and Ecclesiastes
Historical Books: Daniel, Ezra-Nehemiah, and Chronicles

The Christian Canon is based on the Latin Vulgate order, which arranged the Old Testament by topical order (Jerome AD 340-420). The differences are: Samuel, Kings, and Chronicles are divided into two books, The Twelve (minor prophets) are given their own books (Hos., Joel, Amos, Obad., Jon., Mic., Nah., Hab., Zeph., Hag., Zech., and Mal.), and Ezra-Nehemiah is separated. The Hebrew canon does not include the New Testament.

2. How do you know that the Bible is the Word of God? What Biblical or extra-Biblical evidence is there that establishes the Old Testament Canon? Study Matt 22:29; 26:54-56, Luke 11:51 and 24:44.

- a) Christ made several references to the Old Testament as sacred Scripture (Matt 22:29; 26:54, 56).
- b) Christ made a specific reference to the three divisions of the Jewish Old Testament Canon: the Law, the Prophets, and Psalms (the first book in the Writings [Luke 24:44]).
- c) Jesus referred to the whole Old Testament of the Hebrew Canon in Luke 11:51 as Abel (Gen 4:8) was the first innocent killed serving God and Zechariah was the last (2 Chron 24:20-21).
- d) Extra-Biblical authors acknowledge the existence of the three-section organization of the Hebrew Old Testament.

3. How would you prove that the New Testament is the Word of God? What tests do you submit other works of faith in order to discern if they are false or true?

- a) Internal Test of Reliability: 1) apostolic authorship recognizes the Lord's absolute authority, 2) the books were based on apostolic authority or approval, 3) eyewitness accounts, and 4) doctrinal consistency.
- b) External Evidence Test of Reliability: 1) direct disciples of the apostles (early church fathers) cite 36,000+ references from the New Testament, and 2) extrabiblical authors (i.e. Greek, Roman, Jewish historians, etc.) confirm the people of the New Testament.
- c) Bibliographic Evidence: 1) reliability of the textual transmission based on over 5,300 Greek manuscripts, over 10,000 Latin Vulgate manuscripts, and over 9,300 other early manuscripts. No other ancient document has anywhere near the 24,000+ copies of portions of the New Testament, and 2) the interval of time between original composition and earliest copy is negligibly small.

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4. Examine the following chart of ancient manuscripts. What do you notice? Can we trust that the translation of the New Testament is faithful to the original manuscript?

Ancient Manuscripts	Homer's Iliad	History of Thucydides	Aristotle's poetics	Caesar's history of the Gallic Wars	New Testament
When written	900 BC	450 BC	343 BC	58-50 BC	40-100 AD
Earliest copy	400 BC	900 AD	1100 AD	950 AD	125 AD
Time between copy and original	500 years	1350 years	1450 years	1000 years	25 years
Number of copies	643	8	5	10	24,000+
Textural corruption (words in doubt)	5%				½ %

Scholars today do not question the reliability of the copies of the ancient classics as representative of the originals; yet, many today do not consider the New Testament to a reliable document despite the overwhelming evidence to the contrary. Christians should be assured that there is no question that the Bible contains the authentic New Testament Text.

For more evidence to answer the skeptic, see Josh McDowell's book: [More Than A Carpenter](#).

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