



- **We do not have to prove the reliability of our Scriptures, but we do have overwhelming support in the various methods for testing the historicity, authenticity and reliability of ancient documents.**

The reliability of the OT manuscripts

- To establish the **reliability** of the OT manuscripts one must look at three things: **the amount of manuscripts, the dating of them, and their accuracy.**

Their abundance

- As early as the 1700s Benjamin Kennicott published 615 OT manuscripts, and a few years later Giovanni de Rossi published 731 manuscripts. Furthermore, beginning around 1890 around ten thousand manuscripts were discovered in Cairo Geniza. In addition to these manuscripts, more were discovered in the caves by the Dead Sea at Qumran in 1947, also known as the Dead Sea Scrolls. The largest collection of manuscripts in the world, the Second Firkowitch Collection in Leningrad, contains 1,582 items of Bible and Masora (manuscripts from the 6th-9th century AD) text, plus twelve hundred Hebrew fragments (Norman Geisler, Systematic Theology, vol. 1, p. 439).

Their dates

- Most of the OT manuscripts in our possession are dated between A.D. 800-1100 (Geisler, p. 439). However, due to the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls, dating as far back as the third century B.C., the accuracy of these later manuscripts has been attested.

Their accuracy

- In evaluating the evidence there is both internal and external evidence. The Dead Sea Scrolls provide the best external evidence and show that the later manuscripts that we possess were in fact preserved through close to 1,000 years. We can be confident that the texts from the Dead Sea Scrolls were used to transmit the text that is found in the later documents. Comparative studies have been made and the results reveal a word-for-word identity in some 95% of the text (Geisler, p. 441). Due to the help of the Septuagint (also known as the LXX), we can also cross-check the accuracy of the transmission of the texts. Through internal evidence we can view the duplicate passages we have in the OT (i.e. Isaiah 36-39 and 2 Kings 18-20; Jeremiah 52 and 2 Kings 25, and others) and realize that they are accurate as well.