

How can we trust the Bible if we don't have the original manuscripts?

We of those arguments that is often raised by unbelievers about the validity of the scriptures is the level of accuracy that we currently have since we do not currently have the original documents.

1. Why might we suspect a certain amount of inaccuracy?

Deuteronomy **17:18**
Colossians **4:15-16**

Proverbs **25:1**
Genesis **2:16-17** cmp Genesis **3:2-3**

There are a couple of reasons to suspect that what we have in the scriptures is not 100% accurate with respect to the originals. The first reason is to understand that what we have in regards to the scriptures are copies of copies of copies. It is not unlikely to expect that when a copy is made that some words, letters, or even phrases may be left out, repeated, or exchanged. The second reason to suspect that there may be some inaccuracies is that we live in a fallen world. In a fallen world, it would not be inconceivable to believe that people, whether ignorantly or maliciously, will change the text of the copy they are making. It could be a person's attempt to clarify a point or to soften or remove a point that the copiest does not like about the scriptures.

2. What can we look for that indicates accuracy?

Amos **3:3**
Mark **14:56**
Romans **4:1-3**

Matthew **18:19**
Acts **5:38-40**; **15:14-15**
Matthew **4:1-4**

One of the ways to evaluate the accuracy of the scriptures is to consider the degree of agreement that we have between the copies and between the different sections of the scriptures. We can also understand the level of accuracy existing in the scriptures can be identified by the degree that Jesus and Paul relied on what the scriptures said.

3. What safeguards are in place to ensure that what we have is accurate?

Isaiah **55:11**
2 Peter **1:19-21**

2 Kings **22:8-13**
Jeremiah **36:27-29**

It is important to remember that the scriptures are not the work of men but the work of God. Because it was God who directed the writing of the scriptures it is also God who has promised to protect them and ensure their continuance. Even when the scriptures were essentially lost for a short period of time, God ensured that they would be found once again. Because there are many, many copies of the scriptures, the accuracy can also be checked by comparing the various copies.

4. What are the type of differences that are known to exist?

Joshua **7:24-26** – Achan or Achor?
Jeremiah **29:3** cmp Jeremiah **29:21** – Nebuchadnezzar or Nebuchadrezzar
Acts **19:4** – Greek has Jesus and Christ Jesus
2 Corinthians **4:5** – Greek has Jesus Christ and Christ Jesus
1 Timothy **3:16** – Greek has he and God

The majority of the differences have to do with differences in spelling and differences in word order. There are also differences between the use of pronouns versus nouns (he vs God). While these changes are real, they really do not change any doctrine or belief of the Christian faith.

5. Why might God have allowed such modifications to take place?
Judges **2:22**

One of the reasons that God may have allowed such minor modifications to the original texts to take place is to test the people to see whether they will trust and follow after God or after their own thoughts.