

The Reliability of the Bible

Biblical Transmission and Translation

How does American Culture teach us to relate to authority?

Discuss with the people around you

The Reliability of the Bible is a Question of Authority

Can I trust the Christian Bible?

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Spiritual Question

- Does the Bible contain information that I need to know to live a good life?

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Spiritual Question

- Does the Bible contain information that I need to know to live a good life?

Historical Question

- Is the Bible a historically reliable document, accurately conveying information about the past?

The Spiritual Question is ultimately the more significant question, but we aren't going to spend our time answering that question today.

Cheat Sheet Answer: Did Jesus truly rise from the dead?

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The Spiritual Question goes through the Historical Question

The Historical Question in Three Parts

1. Is the information in the Bible faithful to the events that occurred?
2. Has the information in the Bible been faithfully transferred from the original authors to us?
3. Has the information in the Bible been faithfully translated from the original writings to us?

The Historical Question in Three Parts

1. Is the information in the Bible faithful to the events that occurred?

- **William Lane Craig – Reliability of the Bible**

2. Has the information in the Bible been faithfully transferred from the original authors to us?

3. Has the information in the Bible been faithfully translated from the original writings to us?

- **The Bible Project videos: History of Bible Translation and Choosing a Bible Translation**

Has the information in the Bible been faithfully transferred from the original authors to us?

Transmission of the Biblical texts

1. Copying of the Biblical texts
2. Selection of the Biblical Canon

Copying of the Old and New Testament

Old Testament manuscripts are about Quality over Quantity

- The meticulous preservation of the biblical text was heavily invested in by the Jewish community because the biblical text was essential to their community identity
- Oldest Manuscripts prior to 1947 were from between 895 AD and 1008 AD
- Dead Sea Scrolls (DSS)– The latest date for manuscripts in the DSS is 68 AD and the earliest biblical texts from the 3rd century BC

New Testament manuscripts are about Quantity and Quality

- The rapid copying of the text in widespread regions led to textual families of varying quality and quantity because of the early Church's desire to share the texts
- Over 5000 manuscripts of the New Testament plus many other sources
- Hand-written copies between 100-1400 years following the events

What do Manuscripts Look Like?



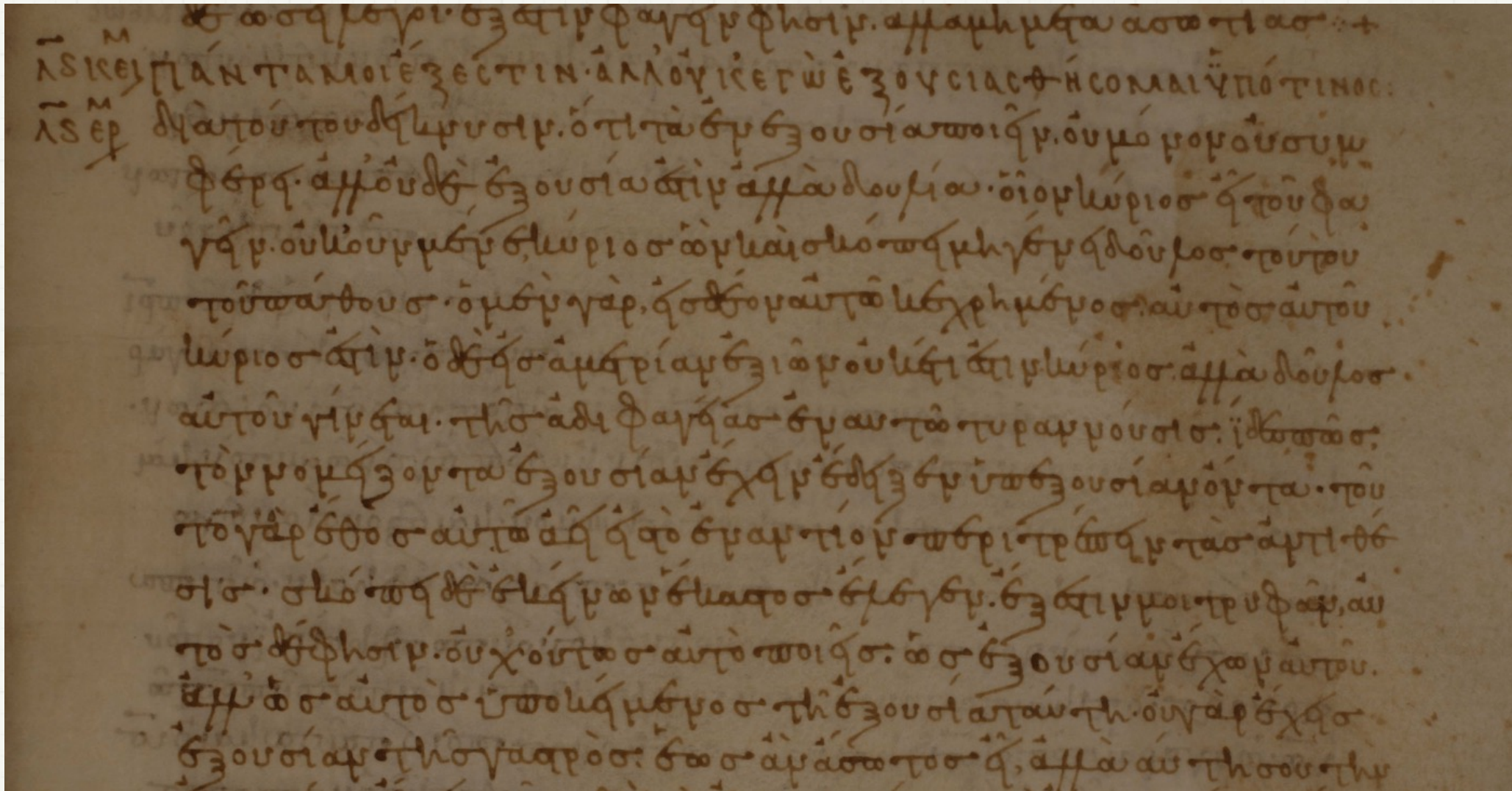
What do Manuscripts Look Like?

ΟΥΔΕΝΑ ΙΝΑ ΟΛ
ΠΕΝ ΣΗΜΑ ΝΟ
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ΚΑ ΕΙΤΕ

ΚΑΙ ΕΝ ΤΟΥΤΩ ΧΑΙΡ
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ΤΕ ΥΕΣΘΑΙ ΠΙΝΑ ΕΙΤΕ
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ΜΗ ΔΕΝΙ ΨΠΟΤΩΝ
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ΕΝ ΔΕΙΣ ΕΙΣ ΑΠΩΝ
ΑΣ ΨΜΩΝ ΔΕ ΣΩΤΗ
ΡΙΑΣ ΚΑΙ ΤΟΥΤΟ ΑΠ

What do Manuscripts Look Like?



What happens when differences occur?

There are likely around 400,000 variants between the New Testament manuscripts (there are 138,000 words in the NT).

Textual Criticism – The process of evaluating variants to determine the most likely reading of the original document

- Basic Principle: “Choose the reading that best explains the origin of the others.” –Bruce Metzger, *The Text of the New Testament*, p207
- 99.8% of variants (differences in the text) are inconsequential on the sense or meaning of the text or are impossible to read as original (spelling differences, late changes, etc.)
- Uncertain readings must be dealt with using External and Internal evidence to determine the original readings

No textual variants challenge the essential beliefs of Christianity

Canonization of the New Testament

The word “Canon” refers to the standard set of books used by the Jewish or Christian community to differentiate biblical texts from non-biblical texts

Creating the New Testament Canon was about the Christian community formally recognizing the writings that were considered authoritative by the Christian community

- The writings were originally spread all over the Mediterranean and it took time for the Christian communities to coordinate these writings
- The first list with all 27 books of the New Testament was written in 367 AD
- There is virtually no disagreement among branches of Christianity about the NT

Standards for New Testament Canon

1. Did the person know Jesus, or were they writing for someone who did?
2. Was the writing accepted by the Christian community as authoritative
3. Was the writing consistent with the other authoritative texts?

Reading Resource: Bruce Metzger – *Canon of the New Testament*

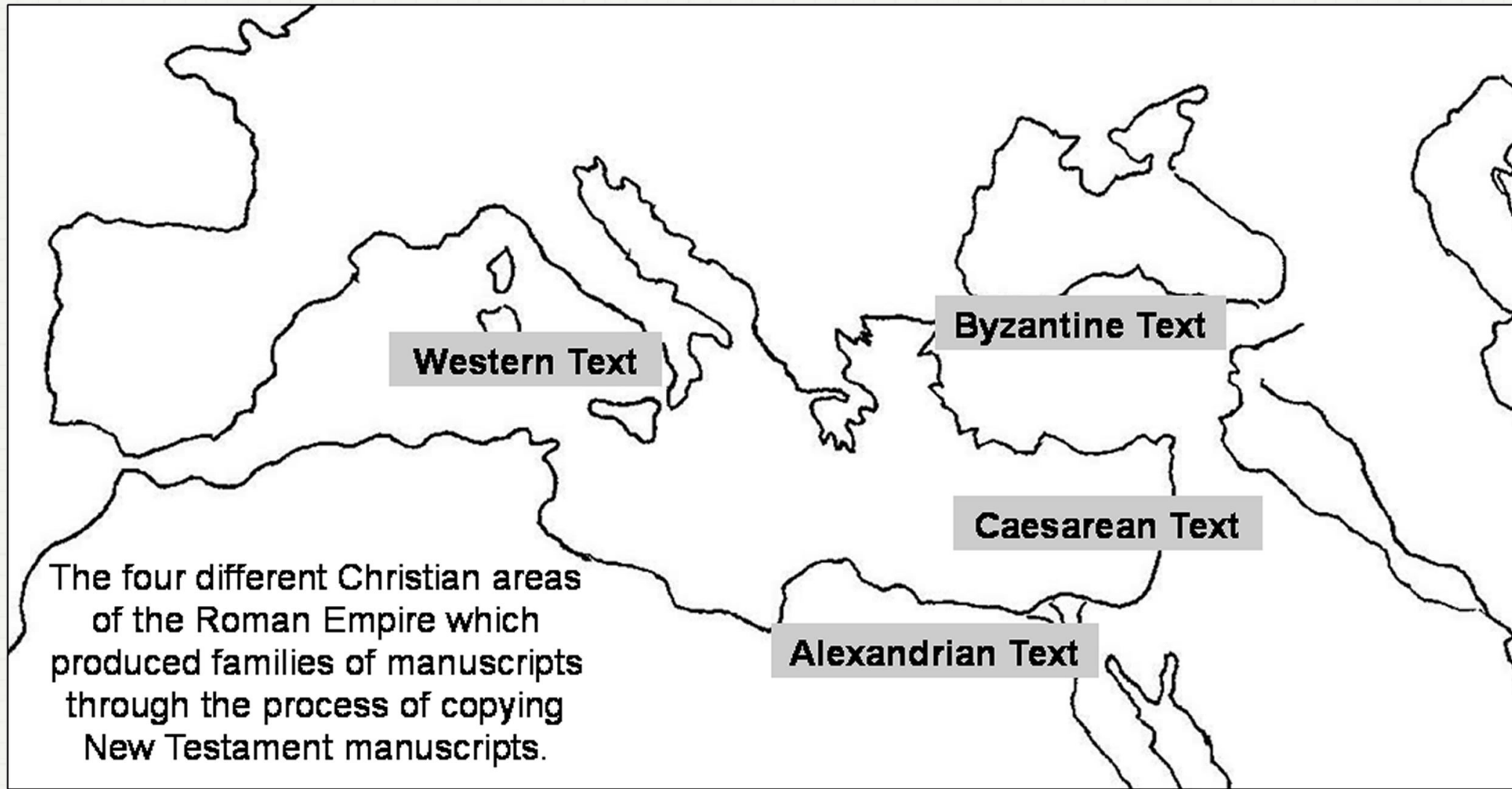
Canonization of the Old Testament

The canonization of the Old Testament is more complex because it involves the Jewish and Christian communities

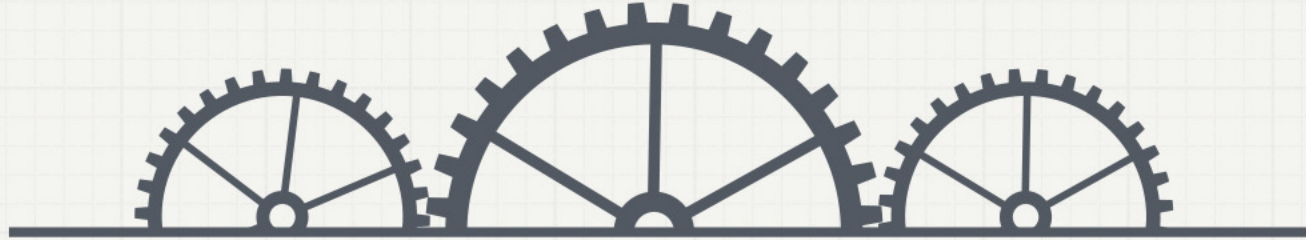
- Around the time of the canonization of the New Testament, the canon of the Old Testament was developing
 1. Some argued that the Greek translation of the OT (the Septuagint or LXX) should be used as the standard for the OT (i.e., Augustine)
 2. Some argued that the Deuterocanonical books in the Septuagint were not treated as scripture by the Jewish community and should not be treated as scripture by Christians (i.e., Jerome)
- During the Reformation, the Roman Catholic Church declared position 1 to be true, while the Protestants declared position 2 to be true
- There is a wider variety of positions on the Old Testament in the Orthodox branch of the Christian community

Questions?!

Textual families Map



- https://www.generationword.com/nt_maps/3_map_of_text_types.jpg



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