

[Slide # 1] **“Speak Lord, for your servant is listening” (1. Sam 3:10)**

[Slide # 2] **„The Origins of the Scriptures and the Formation of the Canon”**

The Scriptures = the Bible. The Canon has three meanings (from Ancient Greek). [1] Reed, [2] Measuring stick, [3] Rule. Our usage of the word “canon” comes from the third one – derived from ‘rule’ - set of authoritative books. See Gal 6:16.

(Andrew Steinmann, „*The Oracles of God*”, p. 14)

[Slide # 3] **„How did we get our Bible and have we got the right books?**

[Slide # 4] **Why are these questions important?**

Because of what we confess to be true, that is, the Unalterable Article II of the LCA constitution.

“We accept without reservation the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, as a whole and in all their parts, as the divinely inspired, written and inerrant Word of God, and as the only infallible source and norm for all matters of faith, doctrine, and life.”

These are heavy words. A lot of gravity. The *only* infallible source and norm for all matters of faith, doctrine and life. It includes everything. Our whole life. Marriage. Parenting. Education. Occupational callings. What we do with our God given possessions and money, etc. All of this has to be guided by the divinely inspired, written and inerrant Word of God.

We need to be as sure as possible that our trust is rightly placed. Ideally we should be able to explain why we believe that this has to be the case, that the Holy Scriptures are the Word of God, and truly are the only infallible source and norm.

[Slide # 5] **How are our Holy Scriptures unique?**

Let’s ask first, what gives us this trust that we can have the Bible as the only infallible source for everything? Is it inspiration? Inerrancy? Infallibility? Being the Word of God?

But then we need to ask ourselves – how do our Scriptures differ from other so called ‘holy writings’? What about the Koran? What about the Book of Mormon? They also are believed to be the inspired, inerrant word of God.

We can even quote the Koran: “It (the Koran) is an invincible book. Falsehood does not invade it neither from before it nor from behind it, a revelation from Allah Almighty, He be praised.” (Koran 41:41-42).

[Slide # 6] **Who is our God?**

To answer the question how are our Scriptures unique, we need to reflect first on how is our God unique? Who is our God? The answer is – He is the Lord of history: God who speaks and acts in history. He is not (disengaged?) from this world, from our lives, but intimately involved with

His creation. He is, indeed, the Lord of history. He knows what He is going to do and announces it already beforehand. Read Isaiah 42:9 „Behold, the former things have come to pass, and new things I now declare; before they spring forth I tell you of them.” Read also Is 44:7-8, Is 48:6-7, Amos 3:7, Is 45:19-21, 41:22-24.

[Slide # 7] **What is the Bible?**

Here we come to the uniqueness of the Bible. We can say that the Bible is God’s own testimony of what He has spoken and done. In history! Thus demonstrating that He, indeed, is in control over everything that happens. Or we can say that the Bible is the track record of promises kept and prophecies fulfilled. The Old Testament scholar Dr Robert Vasholz lists more than 50 prophecies/promises made, fulfilled and recorded in the Old Testament.

[Slide # 8] **What then are the authors of the Bible?**

We can say that they are God’s witnesses. Read Isaiah 43:10-12 “You are my witnesses...”

Read the New Testament authors. Luke 1:1-4, 24:48, Acts 1:8, especially 1 John 1:1-3 “That which was from the beginning, which we *have heard*, which we *have seen* with our eyes, which we *looked upon* and *have touched with our hands*, concerning the word of life--the life was made manifest, and *we have seen it*, and testify to it and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was made manifest to us-- that which *we have seen* and *heard* we proclaim also to you, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ.” Read also John 15:26-27 together with Acts 5:32. Also Acts 2:32, 3:15, 10:41.

[Slide # 9-12] **How do we today imagine the Bible?**

As a book. Neat, divided in chapters and verses. What was it like initially? As many separate documents. God-given revelations, recorded by God’s chosen prophets and apostles.

[Slide # 13] **How did we get our Bible? Have we got the right books?**

[Slide # 14] **Today I will argue that:**

[1] We know a lot about the origins of the Scriptures, both the Old and the New Testaments, [2] We know a lot about the formation of the Biblical canon, both the Old and the New Testaments, and we know that we have got the right books, and [3] We know that we have received the same message, the same words of the Lord, that were originally given to us.

[Slide # 15-16] **What is the Old Testament ?**

It is truly unique and amazing book. In fact, it is not simply a book, but a collection of 39 books. It’s true that some denominations have more books, but we also know why this is so: because

some of influential Christian leaders in the early church had no clear idea which Old Testament books were God given, and which were not. Unfortunately their position took over and other books were included among the God-inspired writings.

The Old Testament was written in two languages. Mostly in Ancient Hebrew, with a big part of the book of Daniel and the book of Ezra written in Aramaic.

[1] The OT covers a unique period of time, from before the creation of the world up to the 5th century BC. (By the way, the whole Bible uniquely covers the timespan from before the creation of the world till the end of the times and the New Creation.) The Old Testament includes the most important events from the very beginning (the Creation, the Fall, the call of Abraham, the Exodus, the exile to Babylon and return to the promised land, etc.) up to the 5th century BC.

[2] Unique authors. The Old Testament is written by more than 20 different authors during the period of 10 centuries, 1000 years. But the key uniqueness is that the Old Testament has its arch-Author, the Author behind all the human authors, God the Holy Spirit. “All Scripture is breathed out by God.” (2Ti 3:16) “For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.” (2Pe 1:21)

[3] Unique protagonists. Adam and Eve, first human beings. Noah and his family, the only people who survived the Flood. Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and his twelve sons. Moses, Joshua, Samuel, David, Solomon, etc. But what is the most important – God Yahweh Himself as the acting person in all the events described in the Old Testament.

[4] Unique worldview. Even though the OT was written during a period of 1000 years and by many different human authors, they all present the same consistent worldview. Radically different from all others. In the beginning there was this gracious God. He created and ordered all that exists and still preserves it today, being intimately involved with His creation. He created human beings in His image and likeness to be His representatives on earth. They turned away from their Creator and through the brokenness of their relationships sin and death came into this world. God Yahweh promised that He Himself in due time would redeem and restore the perfect goodness of His fallen creation.

[5] Unique purpose. The Scriptures “are able to make you *wise for salvation* through faith in Christ Jesus.” (2Ti 3:15). They are given for our instruction; read Rom 15:4 1 Cor. 10:1-2, 6.

[Slide # 17] Argument # 1: We know a lot about the origins of the Old Testament.

[Slide # 18] How did it begin?

The foundational event was the Exodus. It was something that has no analogy in the history of humanity (Deut. 4:32-39, 2.Sam 7:22-24). What was God’s purpose of doing it?

(1) To keep His promises to Abraham. Read Exodus 2:24.

(2) To reveal to the nations who is the true God. Read Exodus 7:3-5. “But I will harden Pharaoh’s heart, and though I multiply my signs and wonders in the land of Egypt, Pharaoh will not listen to you. Then I will lay my hand on Egypt and bring my hosts, my people the children of Israel, out of the land of Egypt by great acts of judgment. *The Egyptians shall know that I am*

the LORD, when I stretch out my hand against Egypt and bring out the people of Israel from among them.” (Exodus 7:3-5)

The message of the Exodus was very powerful. We can read what effect the Exodus had on the surrounding nations. Read Joshua 2, especially verses 8-11 about what the surrounding nations had heard about Yahweh’s deeds in Egypt. Read 1 Samuel 4, especially verses 7-10 to learn what the Philistines knew about the Exodus and the God Yahweh more than 4 centuries later, in the 11th century BC. Read Nehemiah 9:10 and Daniel 9:15 where they recognize that through the Exodus God Yahweh had made for Himself a name that was still well known in the surrounding nations in their time, namely, during the 6th and 5th centuries BC, 1000 years after the Exodus.

(3) To send Israel as God’s missionaries to the nations. “Now therefore, if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession among all peoples, for all the earth is mine; and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.” (Exodus 19:5-6) “Keep them [my commands] and do them, for that will be your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the peoples, who, when they hear all these statutes, will say, “Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.” For what great nation is there that has a god so near to it as the LORD our God is to us, whenever we call upon him? And what great nation is there, that has statutes and rules so righteous as all this law that I set before you today? (Deut. 4:6-8)

(4) To establish the authority of Moses and His writings. “And the LORD said to Moses, “Behold, I am coming to you in a thick cloud, that the people may hear when I speak with you, and *may also believe you forever.*” (Exodus 19:9) Read also Deut. 4:32-35.

We can read about the Exodus foretold in Gen 15:13-21. Then in the books of Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy Moses records how it happened. We know from these books that God Yahweh, the Creator of heaven and earth Himself commanded His servant Moses to write down what had happened, what Yahweh had done and what He had commanded to His chosen people Israel. As the result of the Exodus God Yahweh had made His name known to Israel, the Egyptians and the surrounding nations.

[Slide # 19] **How did Moses acquire all the information?**

The Bible testifies that Moses used different sources, both written and oral, and especially God Himself. We know that God spoke to Moses directly (Ex 33:8-10, Nu 12:7-8).

These sources are indicated in the Bible.

The Book of Generations of Adam (Gen 5:1). The sayings about Nimrod (Gen 10:9). The saying about the Mount of the Lord (Gen 22:14). The Tradition of the Sinew (Gen 32:32). The Statute of Joseph (Gen 47:26). The Song of Moses (Ex 15:1-18). The Song of Miriam (Ex 15:20-21). The Memorial for Joshua (Ex 17:14). The book of the Covenant (Ex 24:7). The table of the Testimony (Ex 24:12, 25:16). The Registration of Elders (Nu 11:26). The Book of the Wars of the Lord (Nu 21:14-15). The Song of the Well (Nu 21:27-30). The Book of the Law (Dt 29:21, 30:10, 31:26). Helper Joshua 24:13 may have assisted with compiling the sources and arranging all material.

It is interesting what we know about the culture of that time in the surrounding nations. Egyptians. They had huge libraries, that contained as much wisdom and knowledge as was available at that time. Moses was educated in all of it (Acts 7:22).

But particularly interesting is the story of the city-state Ebla in modern Syria. In the 1970s archaeologists lead by Giovanni Pettinato accidentally discovered Ebla's royal library with more than 16,000 clay tablets of various records. Among them: two language dictionaries, information about a math professor visiting in Ebla, catalogues of plants, manuals for scribes/priests, instructing them how to make quality copies, trade records with Sodom and Gomorrah, and also creation stories which begun with 'In the beginning God created heavens and earth...' We can learn from these records many things, and among them - that writing and copying were highly developed skills already 1000 years before Moses time.

Now what? All of this took place so, so, so long ago. Even if everything happen this way, how can we know that we have received the trustworthy writings from 3500 [!] years ago? Admit it, this is quite a long time.

[Slide # 20] What kind of event do we remember the best?

British scholar Richard Bauckham in his book "Jesus and Eyewitnesses" describes the latest insight from sociology and psychology focusing of what kind of events we tend to remember the best. He mentions three characteristics: [1] Unique character of the event, [2] Emotional significance of the event, [3] Regular retelling of the event. (Richard Bauckham, *Jesus and Eyewitnesses*, p. 341-346). Of course, this is simply common sense, but it is good to reflect on how these characteristics play out when it comes to the Bible.

[Slide # 21] Unique character of the event

We don't need to argue about the uniqueness of the Exodus. We already mentioned these quotes from the Bible. Egypt was devastated. Its army wrecked. Many Egyptians recognized God Yahweh to be the true God. The surrounding nations were in awe.

[Slide # 22] Emotional significance of the event

Besides of what happen in Egypt we need to add what happened at Mount Sinai.

"On the morning of the third day there were thunders and lightning and a thick cloud on the mountain and a very loud trumpet blast, so that all the people in the camp trembled. Then Moses brought the people out of the camp to meet God, and they took their stand at the foot of the mountain. Now Mount Sinai was wrapped in smoke because the LORD had descended on it in fire. The smoke of it went up like the smoke of a kiln, and the whole mountain trembled greatly. And as the sound of the trumpet grew louder and louder, Moses spoke, and God answered him in thunder." (Ex 19:16-19) "Now when all the people saw the thunder and the flashes of lightning and the sound of the trumpet and the mountain smoking, the people were afraid and trembled, and they stood far off and said to Moses, 'You speak to us, and we will listen; but do not let God speak to us, lest we die.'" (Ex 20:18-19). Read also Hebrews 12:18-21. Besides God Yahweh accompanied Israel during their travels days and nights. (Ex 13:21-22, Dt 1:33.) He also conversed regularly with Moses (Ex 33:8-10).

[Slide # 23] Regular retelling of the event

This probably is the most important element for our purposes. We can distinguish four activities which were done to help to preserve the words of the Lord Yahweh. They are [1] establishing Moses' authority [2] writing down God Yahweh's message, [3] copying it and [4] retelling and teaching it.

(1) Initially God Yahweh established *Moses' authority*. First, by sending him to the Israelites in Egypt with signs (Ex 4:1-9, 29-31), then by appearing on Mount Sinai. "And the LORD said to Moses, 'Behold, I am coming to you in a thick cloud, that the people may hear when I speak with you, and *may also believe you forever.*'" (Ex 19:9)

(2) Then He commanded Moses *to write down* His message. Read Ex 17:14, 24:4, 34:27, Nu 33:1-2, Dt 31:9 and 19. The fact that Moses wrote the first five books of the Old Testament is later confirmed by other Biblical authors. Read Jos 8:31-32, 23:6, 1.Kings 2:3, 2.Kings 14:6, 2. Chronicles 23:18, 25:4, 34:14, 35:12, Ezra 3:2, Neh. 8:1, 8:14, Dan 9:11, 9:13., etc. Also the New Testament confirms Moses authorship. Read Mt 8:4, 10:7, 8, 22:24, Mk 1:44, 7:19, 10:3-4, 12:26, Lk 2:22, 5:14, 16:29, 31, 20:28, 37, 24:27, John 1:45, 7:19, 22, 23, 8:5, etc. [!] There are a few passages which quite certainly were not written by Moses. See Nu 12:3 and Dt 32. Also some of the place names could have been corrected later.

It is also interesting to notice in the books of Moses that writing skills were common among Israelites. Read Ex 17:14, 39:30 Nu 3:1 5:23, 11:26, 33:1-2 Dt 6:9, 11:20, 17:18-19, 24:3, 27:3, 8, 31:19, 22, 24.

Once Moses had written his message, he commanded the Israelites to preserve it. Read Dt 31:24-26. As we can read it in 1 Sam 8 and as it is known from other sources as well, the most important documents often were kept in temples, that is, in the presence of God. (Vasholz Robert I., *The Old Testament Canon in the Old Testament Church: the Internal Rationale for Old Testament Canonicity*, The Edwin Mellen Press, Lewinston, 1990, p. 3-4)

(3) Then Moses commanded the Israelites to *copy* what he had written (Dt 17:18-19) and probably made several copies himself (Dt 31:9-13, 24), for he gave what he had written both to the priests and to the elders. Copies then had to be made by the priests, for the priests in the Ancient Near East where those who possessed the skills of copying. (Remember the story of Ebla's royal library).

(4) Then God Yahweh commanded the Israelites *to teach everything* that God had *done* and *commanded* to the next generations. Read Dt 6:6-7, Dt 7:18-19, Dt 11:18-20, Dt 31:11-13, Dt 16:12, Dt 24: 9,18, 24, Dt 4:34, Dt 4:3, Dt 4:9-12, 33-36, Dt 5:4, 22-26. The same applies to the celebration of the most important Jewish festival – the Passover. The point of this celebration was to remember what God Yahweh did for Israel in Egypt (Ex 12:14F).

Kings were supposed to read the Torah (the books of Moses) daily. The priests were commanded to read the Torah before the whole assembly of God's people. Parents were commanded to teach their children about God's words and God's deeds.

As we can see, probably God Yahweh was well aware of our contemporary sociological insights and utilized them all to ensure that His message was preserved and handed on to future generations.

[Slide # 24] **What was the result of these actions?**

Very high authority of Moses' writings right after His death. Joshua 1:7-8. They were stored in the Tabernacle and later in the Temple. (We can derive this conclusion from hints here and there in the Bible and from the later Jewish writings, more about it later discussing manuscripts.) The Torah, the books of Moses were used to evaluate other later prophesies (Dt 13, Dt 18). It served as a foundational framework, within which all the other prophesies had to fit, and which they couldn't contradict.

[Slide # 25] What is the 'principle of Moses'?

We can see that beginning with Moses God Yahweh established a paradigm for future prophesies. [1] God Himself chose and called Moses (and others after him). [2] God Himself confirmed Moses' authority (Ex 4:1-9, 29-31, 19:9) and the authority of His prophets, by performing signs and miracles through them, and [3] He did it before the eyes of many witnesses. Once God had confirmed the authority of a prophet [4] his writings could be considered to be the word of the Lord.

[Slide # 26] Does it apply to other books of the Old Testament?

We can't say for sure about all the books of the Old Testament, but there are clear examples of this principle of Moses being applied. We can see it when it comes to Samuel. Prophecy served as a sign to confirm that a prophet was indeed speaking on behalf of God Yahweh. (Dt 18:20-22) See 1 Sam 9:6. "Behold, there is a man of God in this city, and he is a man who is held in honour; all that he says comes true." (1Sa 9:6) Consider the case of Jeroboam. 1 Kings 13:1-5. Then 13:11 witnesses retell what had happened. The prophesy came to fulfilment as recorded in 2 Kings 23:16.

There is more support to this hypothesis. 1. Chronicles 29:29 "Now the acts of King David, from first to last, are written in the Chronicles of Samuel the seer, and in the Chronicles of Nathan the prophet, and in the Chronicles of Gad the seer." (1Ch 29:29) Read also: 2. Chronicles 9:29, 12:15, 13:22, 20:34, 32:32, 33:19, 1 Chronicles 29:29, 2. Chronicles 26:22. We can see that God Yahweh had already established the authority of those men by signs and miracles. Then their writings were perceived as coming from the Spirit of God. Inspired.

Besides, we know from the Bible that many prophets used to write down themselves the message they had received from the Lord. Read Isaiah 30:2, 8, Jer. 25:13, Jer. 29:1, Ez. 43:11, Dan 7:1, Hab. 2:2, Jer. 36:2, Jer. 36:28, 32.

In Daniel 9:2 the books of prophets are mentioned as a collection of writings. We can see that God given holy books were treated as a collection (a sort of canon) at least by Daniel's time.

We can read also the rebuke by the later prophets that the words of the earlier prophets are not obeyed. Read Jer. 7:25, 25:4, Ez. 38:17, Dan 9:6, 10, Ho. 6:5, 12:10. It means that the Israelites knew the writings of the earlier prophets.

[Slide # 27] What happened with God-given books?

They were kept in the tabernacle/the Temple (see 1 Sam 10:25), carefully preserved (read 1 Kings 8:56) and probably copied (see 2 Chronicles 17:9). We know from later times and later

sources that the holy books were kept in the Temple, and in the Temple they were also copied. (See slides about manuscripts).

It's highly possibly that these books were read in the gatherings of the faithful. It definitely took place at least beginning with the exile to Babylon, but it may have been a case also much earlier. At least there are such indications coming from recent archeologic discoveries.

We know that the holy books were copied and circulated widely. Example: prophet Daniel. He was in Babylon in 6th century. In Dan 9:2 we can read that Daniel read from the collection of holy writings, from the book of Jeremiah. The prophet Jeremiah lived only several decades before Daniel and wrote his book while in Jerusalem. Daniel already had the same book, as a part of a collection of the holy books in Babylon, just a little later. Obviously the book of Jeremiah already was treated as the word of the Lord by that time. (Steimann, Andrew E., *Daniel*, Concordia Commentary, St. Louis, 2008, p. 434.)

Sure we don't know too much about every book. Not much about Ester, Ruth or Job. But what we know helps us to see the contours of the process of the origins of the Scriptures.

[Slide # 28] Summary for the Argument # 1

[1] Writing of the Bible begun after the Exodus and Sinai by Yahweh's command, [2] God established Moses' authority, [3] Moses wrote what God commanded, [4] Books of Moses were stored and copied, and [5] Other books of the OT might have used the same 'Moses' principle'.

[Slide # 29] Argument # 2: We know a lot about the formation of the Old Testament canon.

[Slide # 30] When was the Old Testament canon finalized?

There are at least three hypothesis. One of them ties the formalization of the Old Testament canon with a council in Jamnia around 70BC. This one was quite popular even a few years ago. Now we know that there never was anything like a council in Jamnia, simply two rabbinic schools (Shammai and Hillel) debating about two books of the Old Testament (Song of Song and Ecclesiastes). Their question was 'do these two books 'defile hands' in the same way as all others?' What they meant was 'are they as holy as all others?' One of schools decides to say 'yes', but their position still wasn't conclusive for the debate, and it went on and on.

There are others who argue that the formalization of the canon took place even later, sometimes during the first centuries AD. They want to tie the formation of the canon with the existence of a formal list which contains the names of all holy books.

There are very good reasons to choose *the third position*, which argues that the canon of the Old Testament was actually finalized and fully formed sometimes between 5th or 4th century BC.

[Slide # 31] What is the evidence for the early canon?

It is important how we understand the canon. One option is as a list that contains books which are the norm for faith and life. Other option is a set of books which in practice are used as the norm for faith and life. For the second hypothesis, only a formal list makes the existence of the canon possible. For the third hypothesis a functional canon can exist even if we do not have a list which names all the books. This presentation holds to the third hypothesis, the early canon. The point is that a formal list can only *describe* those books which are God given, it doesn't define them, it can't add or subtract anything. On the other hand, the absence of such a list doesn't take away God-given authority from those books, which already have it.

So what evidence do we have for the early canon? Abundant. Remember that God spoke through His prophets. He Himself affirmed their authority and it happened before the eyes of eyewitnesses. Then these books were kept in the Temple.

There are four key pieces of evidence. First is the cessation of God's Spirit. Second is the Temple room for holy books. Third is the Qumran discoveries. Forth is the New Testament evidence.

In several places in the **Talmud** the formation of the Old Testament canon is tied to the cessation of the prophetic Spirit, after the latest books of the Old Testament (Haggai, Zachariah, Malachi) were written. Read Tosefta, Sotah 13.2; Babylonian Talmud, Sotah 48b, Sanhedrin 11a, Baba Bathra 12a; Seder Olam Rabb 30; Jerusalem Talmud, Taanith 2.1.

Roman historian Josephus (37-100AD) wrote that the prophetic spirit ceased soon after Israel returned from the exile in Babylon. Elsewhere he mentions that after the time of Persian king Artaxerxes (465-425BC) no one had added to or changed in the God-given books a single syllable. (Read Josephus, "*Against Apion*", I, 37-42, see also R. Vasholz, "*Old Testament Canon in the Old Testament Church*", p. 80).

Josephus also mentions that the Temple storage room was the place where the God-given books were kept and copied by professional scribes. It begun with Moses and with some interruptions continued till the destruction of the Temple in 70AD. He mentions that there were other books kept in the temple, but none of them were considered on par with the God-given books, for they were written after the Spirit had ceased. ("*Against Apion*" 37-43 paragraph, see also Steinmann "*The Oracles of God*", p. 113.)

According to Josephus the number of God-given books was 22. That matches with the Jewish canon of the Old Testament, where the 12 minor prophets are counted as one book. The books of Samuel, Kings and Chronicles are counted as single books, Ruth comes together with Judges, and Lamentations together with Jeremiah.

The Books of Maccabee's report that the prophetic Spirit had ceased shortly after the time of Nehemiah, that the God-given holy books were kept in the temple, and it was this collection in the temple that determined the boundaries of the canon. Read 1.Mac1:56-57, 2.Mac 2:14 about the ceasing of the Spirit. About the canon 1.Mac 4:46, 9:27, 14:41, 1.Mac 3:48, 12:9, 2.Mac 8:23, 15:9, 2.Mac 2:13-14. See also A. Steinmann "*Oracles of God*" p. 54-61 for detailed discussion.

The Book of Sirach from the early 2nd century quotes all the books of the Old Testament except Ruth. It also mentions the cessation of the Spirit in early Persian period, and the fact that what we now know as the Old Testament books were considered the norm for faith and life. See also A. Steinmann "*Oracles of God*" p. 49-50 for detailed discussion.

Qumran. One of documents found 4QMMT contains the list of Jewish holy books. It matches with the canon as we know it. Only the book of Esther was missing there.

The sum of this evidence tells us that there were no more prophets from God after the 5th century. The holy books were kept and copied in the Temple. The same canonical books which we have today were considered as God given already around the 5th or 4th century BC.

The New Testament authors. Jesus assumed that the canon is something everybody knew. See Mt 5:17-18, Mt 23:34-35. Especially John 5:39. He speaks about the Scriptures as a defined entity. Paul wrote about ‘the law and the prophets’ (Rom 3:21) assuming that his readers were familiar with this set of books, the canon. See also 2.Tim 3:15. The same is true with the other authors of the New Testament. See Luke 24:44, Acts. 28:23, John 1:45. It is quite obvious that the people of the New Testament knew exactly which books were God-given.

[Slide # 32] **Summary for the Argument # 2.**

[1] God’s Spirit ceased after the last books of the Old Testament were written, [2] All these books were stored and copied in the Temple, [3] Both Jews and Christians considered the Old Testament canon as completed long before AD.

[Slide # 33] **Arguments # 3: We know that we have received the same message, the same words of the Lord, that were originally given to us.**

[Slide # 34] **What do we know about copying?**

Remember the story of Ebla. Already 1000 years before the time of Moses they had manuals with guidelines how to make good copies. Already different schools of scribes tried to acquire the most important religious texts and to make them a part of their libraries. Even today we possess several examples when copies of ancient texts have been found separated by thousand years and still having exactly the same text. (See. Sasson, Jack, M., *Civilizations of the Ancient Near East*, Volumes III and IV, Hendrikson Publishers, Peabody, Massachusetts, 2006, in *Archives and Libraries of Ancient near East*, by J.A. Black and W.T.Tait, p. 2197-2211 (p.2205).

Moses and Israel came from Egypt, where both writing and copying was very well developed. That’s why the copying was entrusted to priests. We can assume they possessed the skills needed. As with all skills, also these ones were perfected as time went on. After the exile Nehemiah restored the storage room for holy books and gathered them all together in the Temple. It tells that there were copies of the holy books available elsewhere (See Dan 9:2).

After the exile the scribal tradition of *Soferim* was founded. The Talmud comments on it, saying that “they were called *Soferim*, for they counted all letters in the Torah”. (Babylonian Talmud, Kiddushim 30a. (Vasholz, *Old Testament Canon of the Old Testament Church*, p. 78.)

Did you know that Lev 13:9 is one of 11 verses in the Old Testament that begins and ends with the letter ‘n’? Did you know that 2.Kings 6:23 is one of 26 verses in the Old Testament, which contains all letters of Hebrew alphabet? There are hundreds such pieces of information gathered by the scribes.

We know that in the Temple the scribes kept the so-called Temple Scroll (or according to some sources, three of them), and all the copies made in the Temple were compared with the Temple Scroll/s to match it/them exactly. The scribes did it by counting the letters. The Temple Scroll/s might have been in the Temple since the temple of Solomon was built. (See Mishna Moed Katan 3.4. Tosefta (Quoted from R. Vasholz, *Old Testament Canon of the Old Testament Church*, p. 78) 1. Kings 8:6-8 – initially they put in the temple the ark, then also other things what were kept in the Tabernacle, perhaps also the holy books. (See R. Vasholz, *Old Testament Canon of the Old Testament Church*, p. 79).

Rabbi Meir is credited with the saying: “My son, be careful in your work, for your work is heavenly work, if you would omit or add even a single letter, the whole world would be destroyed.” (Vasholz, *Old Testament Canon of the Old Testament Church*, p. 70).

The tradition of Soferim continued till the 1st century AD, then was superseded by the tradition of Tannaim, from the 1st till the 4th centuries. From the 4th till the 6th century it was Amoraim. Then from the 6th onwards Masoretic tradition of copying. They introduced vowels into the Hebrew text, because the knowledge of Ancient Hebrew was withering and it became more and more challenging to pronounce the text of the Old Testament.

The most famous copyist/scribes were the families of Ben-Naftali and Ben-Asher. We have no remaining texts from Ben-Naftali, but it is told that only 8 [!] consonants differed in both traditions. Our oldest codices are Codex Aleppo ~ 925AD, and Codex Leningradensis from 1008AD.

We need to appreciate that copying was an art. All questions related to the process were carefully considered and discussed. Materials, ink, quality, spacing, line, size of letters, colons, etc. Scrolls could be up to 40m long and even longer. They were made from animal skins glued together. One section/fragment was pretty much like our A4 page. Each section contained 3-4 colons of text. If you had more than two *corrected* mistakes in one of the colons, that copy wasn't good enough for using in synagogues anymore. Among scribes there were those whose task was specifically spell checking and correction of mistakes.

We can see how carefully the scribes treated the text of the Old Testament. Besides, copying was quite a big business. In the synagogues there was a particular place where the scrolls of the Old Testament were kept. Like a little library. We know that in the first century AD there were around 400 synagogues in Jerusalem, and how many more were everywhere where Jews lived? They all needed the Old Testament to read on the Sabbath.

[Slide # 35-36] **What are our oldest manuscripts?**

Ben Asher - Codex Aleppo (10th century AD/ ~ 925AD), and Ben-Asher Codex Leningradensis (1008AD). This one is the earliest codex containing the whole Old Testament. This codex serves as a basis for our translations to English and other languages.

But, one may say, it is still 1500 [!] years later than the last books of the Old Testament. How can we trust that we still have today the same text of the Old Testament as the original? We'll see...

[Slide # 37] **What are our oldest manuscripts?**

Qumran Discoveries. Accidentally in 1947 a boy discovered a cave in Qumran. Later 10 more caves were discovered. Several hundred manuscripts were found in these 11 caves.

[Slide # 38] **Dead Sea Scrolls (Qumran)**

Among these scrolls there were around 200 scrolls containing the Old Testament books. All of them, except the book of Ester. Some of the manuscripts were dated to the 3rd century BC. That is only two centuries after the last books of the Old Testament were written. Now, instead of having 1500 years gap, we have 200 years gap between the originals and the earliest copies.

What about differences between these manuscripts and, let's say, Codex Leningradensis? Some say there are no differences, some say, there are a lot of differences. Both are correct. For example, the great Isaiah scroll and the book of Isaiah in Codex Leningradensis has 4500 [!] differences. How come? The spelling has changed, that's why. Otherwise the text is the same.

The Old Testament texts found in Qumran were of a different quality. Not all of them were copies made by professionals. But at the same time it showed how widespread this practice of copying the holy books was. A few years later manuscripts of the Old Testament were found also is Naval-Hever, Vadi-Muraba'at, Nahal-Se'elim. They all confirmed the same truth. We have received the same message, the same words of the Lord as were originally given to the prophets.

[Slide # 39] **How many OT manuscripts do we have today?**

As for today, we have more than 3000 Ancient Hebrew manuscripts of the OT, some of them as early as from the 3rd century BC and up to the 15th century when the printing press was invented. Besides more than 8000 Latin manuscripts, more than 1500 manuscripts in Ancient Greek, and more that 60 in Syriac.

[Slide # 40] **Summary for the Argument # 3**

[1] Books were carefully copied – as the Word of the Lord, [2] We have manuscripts as old as from the 3rd century BC, [3] The earliest manuscripts do not contain significant differences (in meaning) from later codices which are the basis for our Old Testament translations.

[Slide # 41] **Summary for the Old Testament**

[1] We know about the origin of the Old Testament, [2] We know about its writing, storying, copying, [3] We know about the formation of the Old Testament canon, and [4] We have so many manuscripts. Summary = we know that we have got the right Old Testament!

This helps to see why do we have such high regard for the Bible. Because it tells us about real event in real history, about the Triune God acting in our history. Of course, we can't prove the inerrancy of the Bible, that remains an article of faith, but knowing so much about the origins of the Bible gives us very good foundation to regard it as **the Word of God**.

[Slide # 42] ‘The Origin of the Scriptures and the Formation of the Canon’

[Slide # 43] **Part II: The New Testament**

[Slide # 44] **What is the New Testament?**

It is truly unique a book (a collection of 27 books). All books were written in Koine Greek, which was a vernacular of that time used widely in the Roman empire.

[1] Unique period of time – from the conception and birth of John the Baptist and Jesus Christ till the end of times, and the New Creation.

[2] Unique authors. The New Testament was written by 8 (or 9) authors, depending on who wrote the Hebrews, between the 40s-ties and 90s of the 1st century. All documents of the New Testament were written before the death of the last apostle John (~95AD). But the key uniqueness is that the New Testament has its arch-Author, the Author behind all human authors, i.e. God the Holy Spirit. (1.Thes 2:13)

[3] Unique protagonists. Most importantly - Jesus Christ, true God and true man and the disciples of Jesus Christ.

[4] Unique worldview. The New Testament worldview is consistent with the Old Testament worldview and describes the fulfilment of the Old Testament prophecies and promises (2Cor 1:20).

[5] Unique purpose. It is best summarized by the apostle John: “These are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.” (John 20:31)

[Slide # 45] **Today I will argue that:**

[1] We know a lot about the origins of the New Testament, [2] We know a lot about the formation of the New Testament canon, and [3] We know that we have received the same message, the same words of the Lord, that were originally given to us.

[Slide # 46] **Argument # 1: We know a lot about the origins of the New Testament**

[Slide # 47] **What kind of events we remember the best?**

According to the Richard Bauckham - [1] Unique, [2] Highly emotional, and [3] Frequently retold.

[Slide # 48] **How does this apply to the New Testament?**

Everything that happened with Jesus and everything that Jesus did falls into these categories. Beginning with the annunciation, conception and childhood, baptism and temptations, Jesus' public ministry with all the sign and miracles, then His sufferings, crucifixion and death, finally His resurrection and ascension to the Father. They all were unique events, highly emotional for people involved and by all means frequently retold.

[Slide # 49] **As the Creed says...**

'I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried; he descended into hell. On the third day he rose [again]; he ascended into heaven, seated at the right hand of God, the almighty Father, from where he will come to judge the living and the dead.'
(*The Apostles' Creed, II Article*)

[Slide # 50] **How do we know all of this?**

From the testimonies of eyewitnesses. If we can say that the Old Testament is to a great extent testimonies of eyewitnesses, then the New Testament even more. All authors of the Gospels were either eyewitnesses of what Jesus did (apostles in the case of Matthew and John and a disciple in the case of Mark, who also happen to be Peter's translator in Rome) or gathered their information from the eyewitnesses (Luke 1:1-4).

The same with the authors of other NT writings: Paul, Peter, James, Jude and Luke. Besides, the New Testament writings contain many explicit assertions that they are the account of eyewitnesses. Read Luke 1:1-4, 24:48 Acts 1:8, 2:32, 5:32 10:39, John 19:35, 21:24, 2.Pet 1:16, 1 Co 15:5-8, etc.

Read this! How beautiful are these words?! "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we looked upon and have touched with our hands, concerning the word of life - the life was made manifest, and we have seen it, and testify to it and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was made manifest to us - that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ."
(1John 1:1-3)

This is also important for our understanding of our mission. It is to witness about what God has done in history. It is not about teaching principles for a better life, but testifying about God's acts in history, about what He has done for you.

Besides, what is interesting, the New Testament message is also confirmed by Roman and Greek historians, among them - Thallus, Gaius Plinius Secundus, Cornelius Tacitus, Josephus Flavius, and a few more. Read more in Van Voorst, Robert, *Jesus Outside the New Testament: an Introduction to Ancient Evidence*, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 2000.

[Slide # 51] **What were they testifying about?**

About the Gospel, the Gospel event, or we can say about the Christ event. What does the word 'gospel' mean? It is not a literary genre. The meaning of this word comes both from the Old

Testament and from the secular culture of that time. In the Old Testament it meant a report, a news about something good that has happened, e.g. a victory.

We also have a document called “The Gospel of Caesar Augustus”. What is it? When Caesar Augustus became Roman emperor, he announced to everybody that his reign had begun. Good news! At least for him. People may have liked it or not, it didn’t change the fact that the new reign had begun. The same is true about the Christ event, about the Gospel of Jesus Christ. It is about something that happened, something that forever changed the course of history, the new reign has begun and all authority is given to the Son of God, Jesus Christ.

We may ask, how many Gospels do we have? The answer is - there is only one Gospel. There are these four accounts of the same Gospel, produced by the four evangelists. That’s why the four gospels were never titled “Matthews’ gospel,” or “Mark’s gospel,” but instead, “The Gospel according to Matthew”, “The Gospel according to Mark”, etc. What about other NT writings? They all are about the Gospel. They explain the implications of the Christ event for us.

[Slide # 52] Argument # 2: We know a lot about the formation of the New Testament canon

[Slide # 53] Which were the earliest documents of the New Testament?

It may appear that the New Testament documents are arranged beginning with the earliest and them moving to the latter. If fact, Paul’s letters are the earliest documents of the New Testament.

How many of Paul’s letters do we have? Thirteen. Maybe also Hebrews, maybe not. But how many were there in the beginning? We know of at least three more. Two more were written to the Corinthians, one to the Laodiceans, and perhaps there were more. So the big question is – have we got the right ones?

[Slide # 54] How were letters written?

Often authors used qualified scribes to write their letters. This was a case also with Paul. At least occasionally. See for example Rom 16:22, similarly also 1 Co 16:21 may indicate that someone else wrote the letter.

In the 1st century both letters and the Gospels were written not for reading, but for oral performance. That’s why messengers had a key role. For they could deliver the right emphasis and emotions of the author, not simply words on papyrus.

What do we do when we write something important? We keep copies. The same was true also in the 1st century. We know from the examples of Seneca and Cicero, that this is what the authors used to do. The same is probably true concerning Paul. In 2 Tim 4:13 he asks Timothy to bring him book of ‘membranas’. He could be talking about a collection of his own letters.

The main point is this, - it is even very probable that the apostle Paul himself put together his own collection / selection of his letters, which later became known as one codex.

[Slide # 55] What testimonies do we have regarding Paul's letters?

First, there are the testimonies from the early Church Fathers. Thus Clement of Rome writing to Christians in Corinth around 95AD mentions "Paul's letter" (singular) and then quotes from it. But when he quotes from this "Paul's letter" he actually quotes from 8 different letters. Similarly Ignatius (circa 110AD), Papius (circa 130AD), Polycarpus (early 2nd century) in their works quoted those letters of Paul which we today have in our New Testament. Justin Martyr (circa 150AD) mentioned that Paul's letters are read in the Divine Service.

We also have testimonies from early manuscripts. All manuscripts of Paul's letters that we possess today, we have only in the form of codices (e.g. P46). This again indicates that Paul's letters were known and copied as one set, as thirteen letters of the apostle Paul.

[Slide # 56] Summary on canonicity of Paul's letters:

[1] Paul begun his ministry a few years after Jesus' resurrection, [2] God confirmed Paul's authority before many eyewitnesses (remember 'Moses' principle', and read Acts 19:11-12, 2 Co 12:12), [3] Letters were written between the 40s and 60s AD, [4] They became authoritative right away (read 2 Pet 3:16), [5] they were well known by the end of the 1st century (possibly as a codex), [6] Testimonies from early manuscripts confirm that Paul's letters were known only as a set, as a codex.

[Slide # 57] How did we get the Gospels?

All four gospels were written by the apostles (Matthew and John), or according to their message (Mark from Peter, and Luke from Paul and many other eyewitnesses, possibly the apostles and Jesus' family). Why were the Gospels written? To bring the message to 'all nations'. Towards the end of their lives the apostles wrote down their testimonies so that the Gospel could reach those whom they couldn't reach physically.

It is believed that all the Gospel were written between the 40s and 95AD. As the last one the Gospel according John (some argue that John may have been written much earlier). There is the ongoing debate concerning which of the Gospels was written first, which second, etc. Recently a good argument was made that the gospel according Matthew could be the earliest of all, possibly even before Paul's letters.

[Slide # 58] Why these four Gospels?

What about other 'gospels'? There is this myth that initially there were literary dozens of gospels and then the 'evil church' did its power-games and got rid of those which she didn't like and kept only a few which fitted with her own position.

This is such a ... nice story. The fact is that these four were known to the Church all over the place already by the beginning of the 2nd century. Besides, they appeared all together as one codex, called "Mega Biblion" (Big Book). These four were being read in the Divine Services at least since the beginning of the second century. These and not others.

[Slide # 59] Testimonies from Early Church Fathers

Testimonies from the early Church Fathers are persuasive. Clement, Bishop of Rome (95AD) in his letter to Christians in Corinth quotes three canonical Gospels. Ignatius (110AD) quotes all four Gospels, Papius (130AD) quotes four. Justin Martyr around 160AD wrote a 'Harmony' of the three synoptic gospels (Matthew, Mark and Luke). His student Tatian (170AD) dared to write a harmony of four gospels called the 'Diatessaron,' which means 'through four'. We can see that they tried to combine the message of the *four* canonical Gospels, not of five, or ten or fifteen.

Already from the first centuries we have gospels translated into other languages as well. Which gospels? The same four canonical ones. At the end of the 2nd century three of the Church Fathers, namely, Irenaeus of Lyons (France), Clement of Alexandria (Egypt) and Serapion of Antioch (Syria) in their writings spoke about the four apostolic gospels which had been *received*. Irenaeus knew Polycarp, who had personally known the apostle John. It is rather likely that Irenaeus could have known exactly which Gospels were written by the apostles.

[Slide # 60] Testimonies from manuscripts themselves

All Gospel manuscripts are codices. It supports the testimony of Church Fathers that the four canonical gospels were known from at least the beginning of the 2nd century as one set, as one codex. Besides, there are no manuscripts where there would be any other 'gospel' included together with the four ones.

[Slide # 61] What then about these other 'gospels'?

Are there are other gospels? Is there a conspiracy? There are authors and media which desire to make it appear like there are some evil forces at work who have hidden the truth from us. Dan Brown's "Da Vinci Code" did a 'great' job to promote this idea.

The fact is that the Church has always known about these other so called 'gospels'. They are described and refuted already in works of Early Church Fathers.

[Slide # 62] What about these 'other gospels'?

What are they? Myths? No, they are real. But they have nothing to do with the Gospel of Christ. These are a few things that we need to remember about these others. [1] They were written much later, more that hundred years after the four canonical gospels. [2] They were not written by the apostles, or even their disciples. They were not even written by Christians! They were written by a totally different religious group called Gnostics. [3] Gnostics and their so called 'gospels' and other writings represent a fundamentally different worldview, where this world is created by some kind of lower level evil god, where the whole creation is evil, and doesn't matter much, and where salvation is achieved by obtaining particular 'gnosis' which means knowledge. Christ is simple a messenger who brings us 'gnosis'. There is no resurrection of the body, nor a New Creation, for everything material is evil. [4] These Gnostic 'gospels' never appeared together with the four gospels, only with other Gnostic writings. Nor did the Four Gospels ever appear among the Gnostic ones. They simply belonged to different religious groups. Thus there is

nothing hidden, nothing mysterious, no conspiracies, only historical facts distorted by people who desire to make a name (or money) for themselves.

[Slide # 63] Summary on the canonicity of the Four Gospels

They all were written by the apostles, or people very close to the apostles. They all were written between the 40s and 90s AD. They all were authoritative right away, read in the Divine Service. They were well known as a set/codex of the four gospel (“Mega Biblion”) already in the beginning of the second century. Also, the Early Church Fathers unanimously testify about these four gospels as *received* from the apostles.

[Slide # 64] What about the other New Testament writings?

It is clear that the majority of the New Testament, that is, the Four Gospels and the Paul’s letters, were authoritative for the Church already from the very beginning. What about the others? Already before the end of the 2nd century also Acts, 1 Peter and 1 John were quoted as authoritative writings by the whole Church. Hebrews appeared together with Paul’s letter in the Eastern church, but not in the West. The rest of the New Testament, i.e. James, 2 Peter, 2 and 3 John, Jude, and Revelation were accepted and quoted locally, but not universally. By the 4th century they gradually made their way into the canon, but were never considered equivalent in authority with the Gospels and Paul’s letters.

[Slide # 65-66] Summary for the Argument # 2

[1] Paul’s letters were perceived as the Scriptures already in the 1st century and read in the Service, [2] The Four Gospels were perceived as the Scriptures and read in the Service in the beginning of the 2nd century, [3] Acts, 1 Peter, 1 John, Hebrews were perceived as authoritative by the end of the 2nd century. These all together make up more than 90% of the New Testament.

Other writings of the New Testament were known only locally, but were not accepted by the whole Church. By the 4th century the canon was mostly established, even if we don’t know of any formal list of the canonical book before 357AD. There was never a council or any formal decision that would set the boundaries for the New Testament canon. No one could give the authority to some books that didn’t have it already from the beginning.

[Slide # 67] Arguments # 3: We know that we have received the same message, the same words of the Lord, that were originally given to us

[Slide # 68] What are our earliest New Testament manuscripts?

It is possible that recently discovered fragments of the gospel according Mark could be dated from the 1st century. The official confirmation is yet to come. But we have several manuscripts from the 2nd century, and many from the 3rd century.

In Oxyrhynchus (Egypt) archaeologists discovered old library records that indicated that the life cycle of a library manuscript could vary from 150 to 400 years. If the New Testament documents were written in the second part of the 1st century, the originals may have been around at least till the beginning of the 3rd century, and we have manuscripts from the 2nd century. Theoretically, they could have been copied from the originals. Nice though.

[Slide # 69] **How many New Testament manuscripts do we have?**

So, so many! Ancient Greek – more than 5, 800. Latin – more than 10,000. Coptic, Syriac, Armenian, Georgian, Arabic – all together taken – more than 10,000. In addition there are the New Testament quotes in writings of Early Church Fathers. Today more than 1,000,000 of them have already been systematized. Even if we suddenly lost the whole New Testament, all its manuscripts, we could easily recover the whole text of the New Testament from these quotes.

[Slide # 70] **What about the differences in these manuscripts?**

Are there differences? O, yes! More than 400,000 differences. And this with ~ 138,000 words of the New Testament. That's one perspective. But there is another one. There are more than 2.600.000 pages of the New Testament text. That makes one difference per six pages of the text. But even this is not that important. More importantly, there are different kind of differences.

[Slide # 71] **What are these differences?**

The first group and the largest one is spelling differences and spelling mistakes. For example, in Greek to help to pronounce the text sometimes the letter 'n' is attached at the end of a word. Some scribes did it, some didn't, that's why so many differences. Another example, in 1 The 2:7 instead of *nēpioi* one manuscript has *hippoi*. This changes the meaning from "we were *gentle* among you" to "we were *horses* among you". Guess, which one was the original?

The second largest group is little differences. The presence or absence of articles (explain – most lay people won't know what an article is), differences in the sequence of words (in Greek the sequence of words doesn't change the meaning of the sentence). Often Jesus' titles differ. For example in the same place in different manuscripts you can have "Jesus", "Jesus Christ," "Lord Jesus Christ," etc.

The third group is meaningful, but dubious differences. For example when in some manuscripts instead of "Christ" suddenly we have "God".

The fourth group is meaningful and plausible differences. These make less than 1% of all differences. For example, you can have different grammatical forms, which change the meaning of the phrase, e.g. from "we have peace" to "we would have peace".

There really are only two passages which create serious challenges. These are John 7:53-8:11 and Mark 16:9-20. John's passage appears in different manuscripts in different places. Mark's passage is not present in any of the earliest manuscripts. In fact, we have three different endings appearing in different manuscripts. Even as we are used to have these passages in our Bible, it is also true that their absence wouldn't change anything in our teaching.

Craig Evans put it this way: “There are 20,000 lines in the New Testament, only 40 of them can be doubted, but none of these 40 contain any important teaching.”

[Slide # 72] **What else can we say about the NT manuscripts?**

Most of the New Testament manuscripts were copied by professional scribes. This was a rather difficult task. That’s why we have different funny remarks left on these manuscripts. For example, ‘I feel weird today, don’t know what has happened to me’, or ‘Thanks God, the end of the book.’

Bruce Metzger was one of the leading scholars on the New Testament manuscripts. He spent more than 50 years studying and working with the New Testament manuscripts. At the end of his life in an interview with Lee Strobel he said. “My work has increased the basis of my personal faith, to see the firmness with which these documents have come down to us, with a multiplicity of copies, some of which are very, very ancient. I have asked question all my life, I have dug into the text, I have studied this thoroughly, and today I know with confidence that my trust in Christ has been well placed. Very well placed!” (See Lee Strobel, *The Case for the Real Jesus*, Zondervan, 1998, p. 93.)

[Slide # 73] **Summary for the Argument # 3**

[1] The New Testament documents were carefully copied by professional scribes, [2] We have manuscripts as old as from the 2nd century BC, [3] There are no significant differences in the manuscripts that would challenge any of our teachings.

[Slide # 74] **Summary for the New Testament**

[1] We know about the origin of the New Testament, [2] We know about the formation of the New Testament canon, and [3] We have so many manuscripts.

We can be sure, we know that we have got the right New Testament.

[Slide # 75] **Why is the Bible our only source and norm?**

It is not simply because we use words like ‘inspired’, ‘inerrant’, ‘infallible’, and ‘the word of God’. Others can and do use the same expressions when talking about their scriptures.

The Bible has this authority because it testifies about what the true God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, has done and spoken in history for us. Because the Bible speaks about real events, not imaginary.

Its authority comes from the living God, from Jesus Christ, through whose life, death and resurrection the Father fulfilled His promise of salvation and will fulfil His promise to restore the whole creation.

As we saw today, we know so much about the origin of the Bible and about the formation of the canon that we can be sure our trust is well placed. **Very well placed!**

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