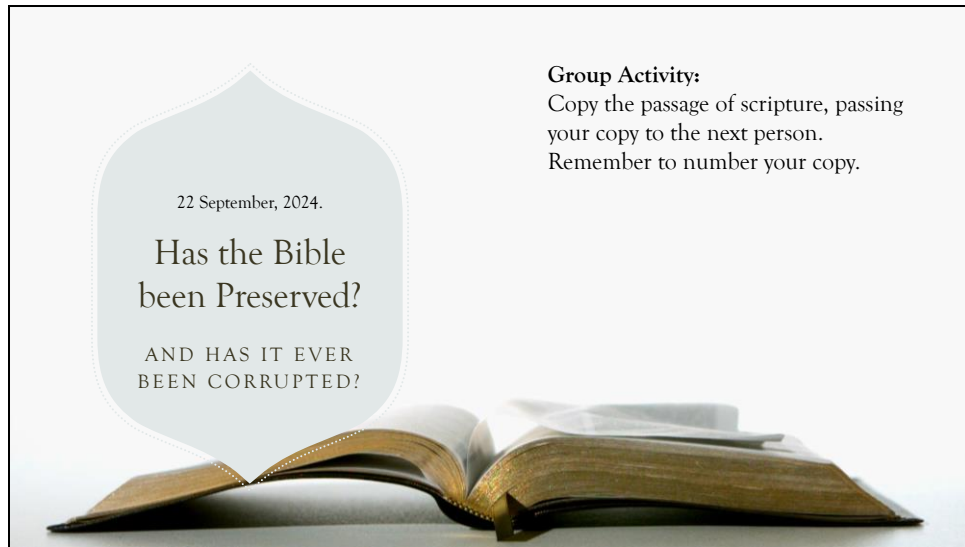


Slide 1



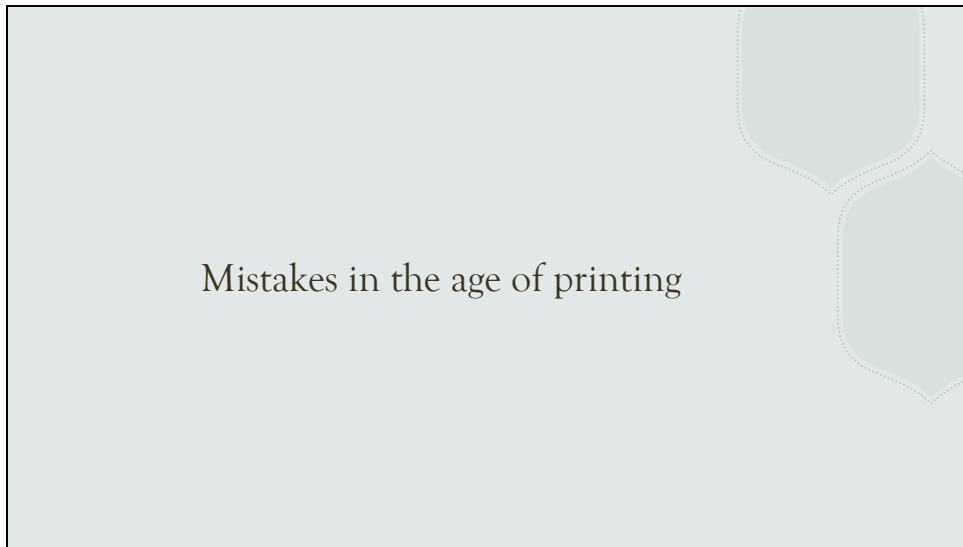
22 September, 2024.

Has the Bible
been Preserved?

AND HAS IT EVER
BEEN CORRUPTED?

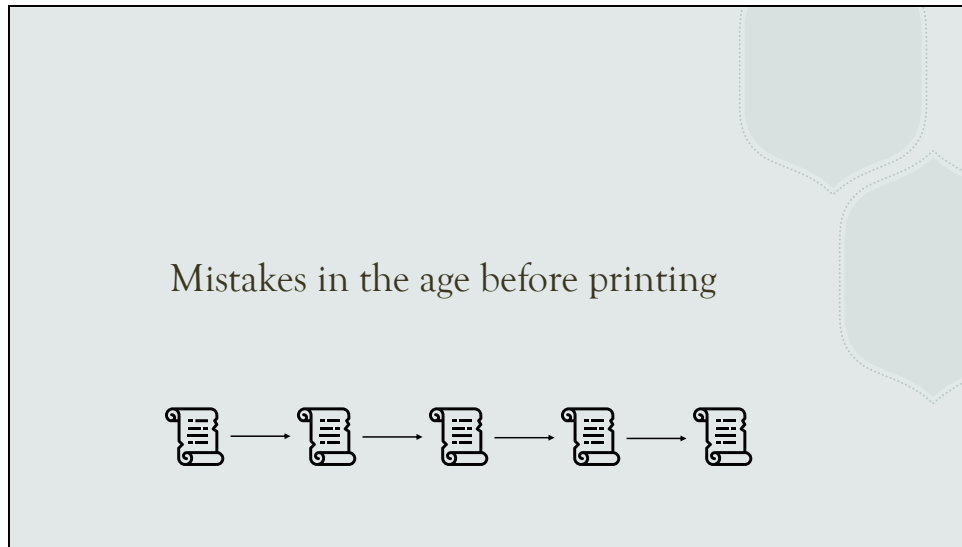
Group Activity:
Copy the passage of scripture, passing
your copy to the next person.
Remember to number your copy.

Slide 2



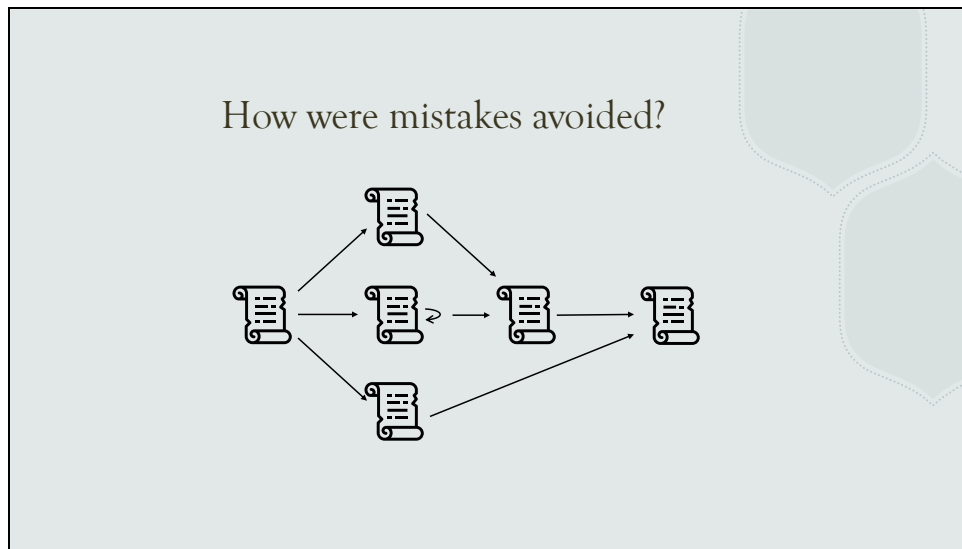
- Sometimes mistakes happened in printed bibles. For example, the "wicked" bible had a misprint which read "thou shalt commit adultery".
- But there were so many printers printing the Bible that mistakes become easily spotted. If a mistake is made it is easy to trace because the mistake is preserved accurately in many copies of a printed edition.

Slide 3



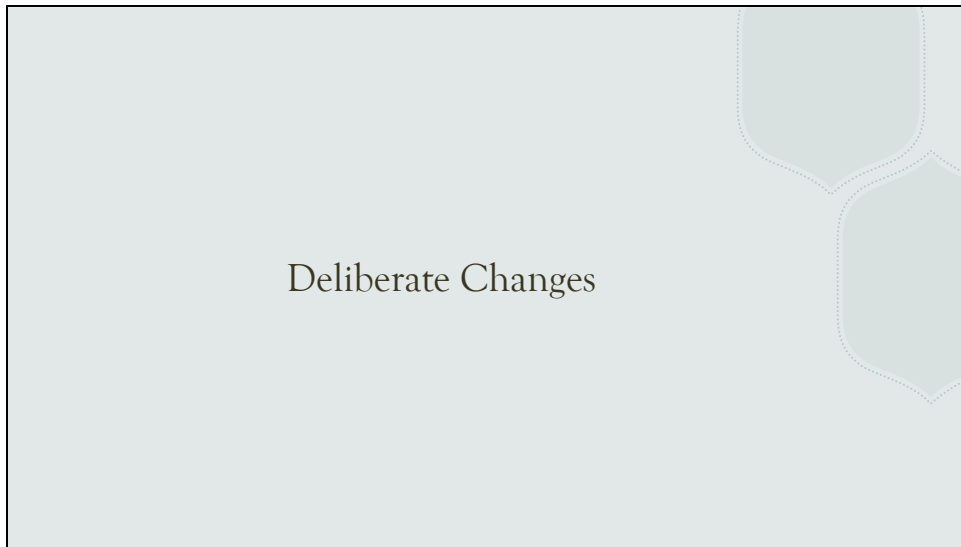
- The original manuscripts of the Bible were copied by hand. Those copies were copied and so on. This creates opportunity for mistakes and alterations that are perpetuated for a long time.
- Scribes had to hear or read, then memorise and write manuscripts. They could make lots of mistakes. For example:
 - Reading mistakes. e.g. Jumping lines.
 - Hearing mistakes. e.g. Mishearing words, losing concentration.
 - In ancient "scriptoriums", one person would slowly read a manuscript at the front, while several scribes made a new manuscript by writing what they heard.
 - Memorisation mistakes. e.g. Harmonisation; misremembering from a parallel passage; subconsciously rewording something in your head according to changing grammar.
 - Writing mistakes. e.g. skipping words, spelling mistakes
 - writing is slower than thinking;
 - Environment. Copyists had a very tough job, working sometimes in uncomfortable positions (ancient drawings show them balancing manuscripts on their knees), or in low light. They worked long hours and sometimes had strict bosses (we have a record of penalties that were given in one of the ancient monasteries). They could become tired and this would increase the chance of mistakes.

Slide 4



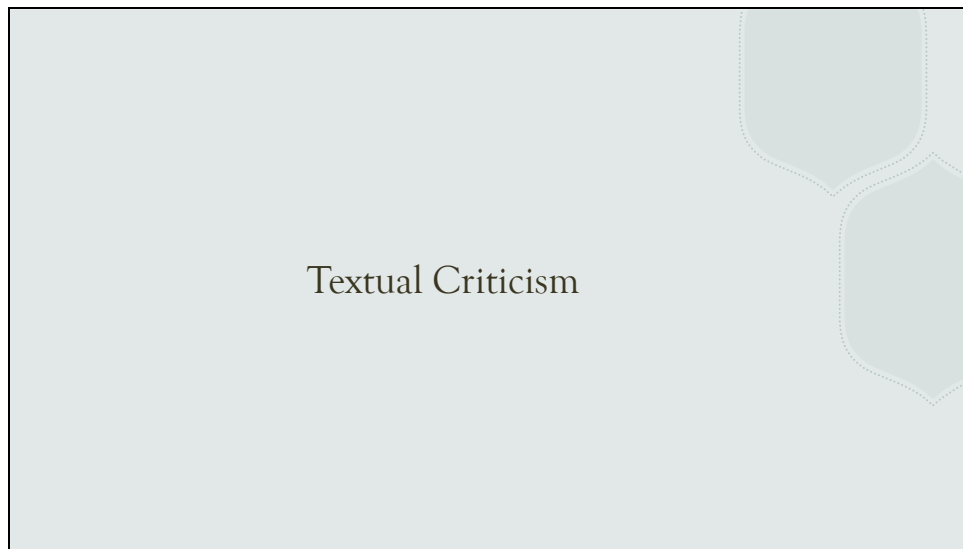
- Ancient scribes were not oblivious to the human mistakes that we have been describing. They cared about doing a good job and they took steps to ensure accuracy.
- Each copy was not just copied once (like Chinese whispers), but manuscripts were copied multiple times and distributed.
- Careful selection of the exemplar. The scribes didn't just copy any manuscript. They looked for the oldest or "best" copy available. Nor would they limit themselves to one copy. They could consult multiple copies.
- Corrections. Scribes checked over their own manuscripts for errors. Sometimes they had a boss who checked it as well (as in a scriptorium). Even later copyists would check over manuscripts and weren't afraid to make corrections in the margin or in the text if they felt there was a mistake. They may not have always got it right, but we can actually see the layers of corrections in our modern analysis.

Slide 5



- Corrections are a type of deliberate change.
- But what about changes made by the scribe's preference?
- If these exist, they are extremely rare and when they are made they are usually well-intentioned (helping the reader) rather than malicious (trying to twist the meaning of scripture)
- History tells us that many people have attempted to corrupt scripture to further their own agenda, but I am not aware of any clear case where this exists in the manuscripts we have. We will look at some alleged examples in the NT next week.
- People have suggested that old testament books were edited with extra explanatory notes being added. These may have originally been in the margin and eventually been inserted into the text. But this is somewhat subjective. We do not often see hard evidence of this in the manuscripts available.
- There is an ancient Jewish tradition that tells us of perhaps 18 places (or some very small number) where the scribes of the old testament felt uncomfortable with the wording of scripture and changed it to be more reverent, e.g. Habakkuk 1:12
- While people have certainly attempted to manipulate the bible from the beginning to their agenda, the scriptures have never been solely controlled by a single institution with the power to change all the copies. This is particularly true for the new testament.

Slide 6



- We have thousands of copies of the Bible, and they contain hundreds of thousands of various and changes. What do we do with that?
- Textual Criticism investigates the evidence available and tries to reconstruct the original text of the Bible, one passage at a time.
- Textual Critics asks questions like: How early is this manuscript? How many manuscripts say A and how many say B? Where do the manuscripts come from? Does the manuscript have a reputation for being high quality? How could the mistake/change have happened?
- Not a modern invention. There was an ancient awareness of textual issues and a primitive form of textual criticism among early Christian writers.
- Notes in your bible. Most modern editions of bible contains footnotes to make you aware of any "significant" differences, but in reality, even these difference are usually inconsequential for the typical bible student.