

Reference: VARIOUS

Church: GRACE

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## Which books are included in the Bible?

Purpose: To show how we came to have the Bible as it is today. To point out the errors of some in this regard.

### 1. Introduction

How is it we have 39 books in the OT?

What tests would we apply to an OT book before including it?

What about the Apocrypha?

How is it we have 27 books in the NT?

What tests would we apply to an NT book before including it?

What about all the other writings of the period?

When was the canon of Scripture completed?

Was the formation of our Bible just an accident?

Is this something the church decided?

These are Important questions

Rome accepts the Apocrypha on equal footing with Scriptures

Pronounces a curse on those who reject it

Rome also claims to have created the Bible through its own

authority

Critics seek to reduce the Bible to a bunch of fraudulent texts

Then they say they are still important

They are not Scripture inherently but subjectively, they claim

How will we answer them?

### 2. The Word, "Canon"

Canon comes from Greek word meaning "reed" which was a measuring rod. This led to the meaning "the list of standard books".

### 3. The Tests for canonicity

Inspiration is the test – if it's not inspired, it shouldn't be in

How can we know if a book is inspired?

Five tests have been applied historically

### 3.1. **Does the book claim inspiration?**

### 3.2. **Was it written by a man of God?**

Looked at this last week

God chooses vessels through whom to bring revelation

Apostles or prophets – attested by God

At periods of new revelation, often vindicated by outstanding miracles

### 3.3. **Was it authentic (not a forgery)?**

### 3.4. **Was it used & accepted by God's people?**

### 3.5. **Was it the living word?**

Hebrews 4:12 For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

Was this a book that was anointed by the Spirit

Was it used of Him to bring about sanctification

We will see these themes emerge as we consider the OT and the NT

## 4. The Old Testament

Quote from Josephus (Pache)

### 4.1. **The OT Canon**

#### 4.1.1. The testimony of the OT Scriptures

History inscribed by Moses in a book

Exodus 17:14 Then the Lord said to Moses, "Write this in a book as a memorial and recite it to Joshua, that I will utterly blot out the memory of Amalek from under heaven."

Ten commandments written on stone

Statutes written in the book of the covenant

Whole law placed by ark in Holy of Holies: Deut 31:24-26

Moses anticipated these words would be copied and used



Romans 1:1 Paul, a bond-servant of Christ Jesus, called as an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God,

Luke – close associate of Paul

Mark – of Peter

James & Jude – brothers of Christ

James – leader of church in Jerusalem and closely linked with apostles

Galatians 1:19 But I did not see any other of the apostles except James, the Lord's brother.

Jude – regarded as an apostle in the early church (strictly inaccurate but shows close association)

It is clear that NT writings were seen as Scripture even before the NT was closed.

Peter calls Paul's writing Scripture:

2 Peter 3:14-16 Therefore, beloved, since you look for these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, spotless and blameless, 15 and regard the patience of our Lord as salvation; just as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given him, wrote to you, 16 as also in all his letters, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which the untaught and unstable distort, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures, to their own destruction.

Paul quotes from Luke as Scripture

1 Timothy 5:18 For the Scripture says, "You shall not muzzle the ox while he is threshing," and "The laborer is worthy of his wages."

Luke 10:7 Stay in that house, eating and drinking what they give you; for the laborer is worthy of his wages. Do not keep moving from house to house.

Writers knew they were writing Scripture

The books speak with an authority and accuracy unknown in other writings

Revelation 1:14-19 His head and His hair were white like white wool, like snow; and His eyes were like a flame of fire. 15 His feet were like burnished bronze, when it has been made to glow in a furnace, and His voice was like the sound of many waters. 16 In His right hand He held seven stars, and out of His mouth came a sharp two-edged sword; and His face was like the sun shining in its strength. 17 When I saw Him, I fell at His feet like a dead man. And He placed His right hand on me, saying, "Do not be afraid; I am the first and the last, 18 and the living One; and I was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of death and of Hades. 19 Therefore write the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which will take place after these things.

Early church leaders quickly accepted their place alongside the OT Scriptures

(Quote from Brian Edwards – Polycarp, Origen etc. page 169)

First list – Muratorian Canon – 2<sup>nd</sup> century

Contains most books in our NT but based on a damaged doc and may miss some for this reason

Those missed were never doubted for canonicity

AD 95 – Clement quotes Matthew as Scripture

Polycarp quotes from Scriptures & refers to NT texts like Ephesians

Within 20 years of death of John, much of NT circulated and eagerly read in churches

Colossians 4:16 When this letter is read among you, have it also read in the church of the Laodiceans; and you, for your part read my letter that is coming from Laodicea.

Accepted as equal in authority to OT.

No book accepted and then thrown out

Some did take a little longer to come to full acceptance

Early church writers accepted the scriptures

Finally listed & arranged as we have them - Council of Carthage 397

Didn't decide upon the NT – recognized the acceptance in the church during the previous 300 years

## 5.2. *Extra Biblical writings of NT times*

Lots of them

Quickly rejected by the early church using the tests above.

Strong stand against them by early leaders

Much claimed to come from apostles – showed this was a touchstone of true Scripture.

2 Thessalonians 2:1-2 Now we request you, brethren, with regard to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, 2 that you not be quickly shaken from your composure or be disturbed either by a spirit or a message or a letter as if from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come.

Contents decidedly inferior

Some helpful books (e.g. epistle of Barnabas)

Do not claim scriptural authority to themselves.

## 6. Conclusions

Important to see here that the church did not create the canon

Rather, it recognized it. – See how 5 tests have been satisfied here

Scripture is its own witness here – by content and by claim

No great controversy over the books at the time – only recently