

# DEFENDABLE FAITH - ANSWERING TOUGH QUESTIONS ABOUT CHRISTIANITY

## Is the Bible Reliable? - The Canon of Scripture

Introduction: We have seen that the books of the Bible were written over a period of at least \_\_\_\_\_ years.

The term “canon” means “a \_\_\_\_\_ of authority.” The Canon of Scripture means an authoritative list of the writings that constitute the Scriptures. We will study how the Canon of Scripture was formed in four parts:

- The Old Testament
- The Old Testament Apocrypha (considered canonical by the Roman Catholic Church)
- The New Testament
- The New Testament Apocrypha

### FIVE TESTS TO BE INCLUDED IN THE CANON

1. **Was the book written by a \_\_\_\_\_ of God?** A prophet is one who proclaims the Word of the Lord.
2. **Was the writer confirmed by acts of God?** Did God signify that the writer was speaking for the Almighty by the performing of miracles?
3. **Does the writing tell the \_\_\_\_\_ about God?** Because God does not contradict Himself, this means that the message must be consistent with everything else in the Canon of Scripture. **Hebrews 6:18 NKJV ... it is impossible for God to lie...**
4. **Does the writing convey the power of God? Does God use the message of the book to transform lives?**
5. **Was it accepted by the \_\_\_\_\_ of God?** There was no ecclesiastical authority to dictate the Canon for either the Old or New Testament. The people of God, led by the Spirit of God, applied the above tests, and agreed that they should be part of the Canon.

Josh McDowell offers the following helpful chart in New Evidence that Demands a Verdict.

INCORRECT VIEW	CORRECT VIEW
The Church <u>Determines</u> the Canon	The Church _____ the Canon
The Church is <u>Mother</u> of Canon	The Church is Child of Canon
The Church is <u>Magistrate</u> of Canon	The Church is Minister of Canon
The Church is <u>Regulator</u> of Canon	The Church is Recognizer of Canon
The Church is <u>Judge</u> of Canon	The Church is _____ of Canon
The Church is <u>Master</u> of Canon	The Church is Servant of Canon

## THE OLD TESTAMENT

- **The final books**
  - The last books written that were to become a part of the Old Testament were \_\_\_\_\_ (written around 450 B.C.) and Chronicles, all one book (written around 400 B.C.)
  - These final books appear with the rest of the Old Testament books in the Septuagint, which is a \_\_\_\_\_ translation of the recognized Hebrew Bible. The Septuagint was composed between 250 and 150 B.C.
  - Therefore, we can know that the list of books accepted as the Holy Scriptures was \_\_\_\_\_ prior to this time.
- **The Christian Old Testament differs from the Hebrew Canon only in the following ways:**
  - We \_\_\_\_\_ Samuel, Kings, Chronicles, and Ezra-Nehemiah into two books each while the Hebrew Bible treated each as one.
  - The Christian Old Testament lists each of the Minor Prophets as a \_\_\_\_\_ book; the Hebrew Bible calls the collection of all of them “The Twelve.”
  - The \_\_\_\_\_ of the books is different. The Hebrew Bible consisted of three groupings: the Law, the Prophets, and the Writings. The Christian Bible takes a topical arrangement.

The important thing to note is that the \_\_\_\_\_ of the Christian Old Testament is \_\_\_\_\_ to the Hebrew Bible, recognized as the Word of God by the people of God and called among themselves “The Holy Scriptures” at least 150 years before the coming of Christ!

- **When the Son of God came to earth, He gave clear witness that the Hebrew Canon was the very \_\_\_\_\_ of God.**
  - While Jesus disputed many things with the Pharisees, He never disputed what they considered to be the \_\_\_\_\_. In fact, Jesus often referred them to the Scriptures.

Matthew 19:3-6 NKJV 3 The Pharisees also came to Him, testing Him, and saying to Him, “Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for *just* any reason?” 4 And He answered and said to them, “Have you not read that He who made *them* at the beginning ‘made them male and female,’ 5 and said, ‘For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh’ ? 6 So then, they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate.”

- Jesus not only extensively quoted from the Old Testament Scriptures, He referred to its \_\_\_\_\_ as the very Word of God.

Matthew 22:31-32 NKJV 31 But concerning the resurrection of the dead, have you not read what was spoken to you by God, saying, 32 ‘I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob’ ? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living.”

- Jesus demonstrated that \_\_\_\_\_ of the Old Testament was the authoritative Word of God in His words concerning it after the resurrection.

Luke 24:44 NKJV Then He said to them, “These *are* the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and *the* Prophets and *the* Psalms concerning Me.”

Jesus’ reference to the Psalms was synonymous with the Writings. Thus He said, “The \_\_\_\_\_ of the Hebrew Bible: the Law, the Prophets, and the Writings, all testify of Me.”

- **The New Testament bears witness to the \_\_\_\_\_ Testament as the Word of God.**
  - Between Jesus and the New Testament writers, \_\_\_\_\_ book of the Old Testament except one (Esther) is quoted in the New Testament.
  - These quotes are offered as \_\_\_\_\_ and from God, and they are offered hundreds of times.
- **Finally, the Council of Jamnia, a meeting of a group of \_\_\_\_\_ in Jaffa in 90 A.D. affirmed the Hebrew Canon.**

- This body did not meet because the Canon was considered to be in \_\_\_\_\_.
- The primary meeting of the council was to question whether certain books: Esther, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon, and Ezekiel should have ever been \_\_\_\_\_ as part of the Canon. The council, however, made no attempt to remove any of the books from the now long recognized Canon of the Hebrew Bible.
- Some \_\_\_\_\_ of the Scriptures will try to say that the Old Testament Canon was not finalized until the Council of Jamnia, but this is simply not true. The council did not make, or even finalize the Canon. As the above details, the Canon of the Hebrew Scriptures had been closed for nearly 500 years before the council met and had been routinely accepted as such for at least 250 years.

## THE APOCRYPHA

- **What is the Old Testament Apocrypha?**
  - The writings now labeled the OT Apocrypha were written in the final two centuries before Christ came, 200 years \_\_\_\_\_ the last of the books of the Hebrew Canon.
  - They were never considered as part of the Scriptures by the \_\_\_\_\_. They never used them like the Scriptures or referred to them as Scripture.
- **The reasons that these writings were treated so differently than the Scriptural books were**
  - They contained historical and geographical inaccuracies.
  - They taught doctrines and practices that \_\_\_\_\_ Scripture.
  - They lacked the “Thus said the Lord” and the clear fingerprint of the Holy Spirit.
  - Even the Council of Jamnia did not \_\_\_\_\_ these books as canonical.
- **Jesus and the New Testament writers \_\_\_\_\_ quote the Apocrypha.**
- **Jerome, a scholar in the early days of the Roman Catholic Church (4th century A.D.) \_\_\_\_\_ the Apocrypha.**
- **Even the Catholic Church did not recognize the Apocrypha as canonical until \_\_\_\_\_ A.D., at the council of Trent, and then in a very divisive manner.**
- **The founders of the \_\_\_\_\_ did not regard the Apocrypha as a part of the Canon of Scripture.**

## THE NEW TESTAMENT

- **Tests for inclusion in the New Testament Canon**
  - \_\_\_\_\_ - 2 Timothy 3:16 NKJV All Scripture *is* given by inspiration of God, and *is* profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness,
  - \_\_\_\_\_ **Approval** - because Jesus said to the apostles in John 14:25-26 NKJV 25 “These things I have spoken to you while being present with you. 26 But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you.
- **Process of formation of the canon**
  - Because of the evidence of inspiration, verified primarily through apostolic approval, the New Testament churches began to \_\_\_\_\_, in addition to Old Testament Scripture, copies of the gospels, Acts, and epistles (letters) from the apostles to the churches and individuals.
  - That these were recognized as \_\_\_\_\_ even during the lives of the apostles is verified by 2 Peter 3:15-16 NKJV 15 “and consider *that* the longsuffering of our Lord *is* salvation—as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given to him, has written to you, 16 as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which untaught and unstable *people* twist to their own destruction, as *they* do also the rest of the Scriptures.
  - The church \_\_\_\_\_, pastors of churches after the age of the apostles, quoted from the books that we now call the New Testament, often using the phrase “it is written” which was reserved to introduce a passage from the Holy Scriptures.
  - They also began to write \_\_\_\_\_ of what books should be considered part of the Scripture. They did this in part to counter heretics who sought to corrupt New Testament doctrine and practice by endorsing spurious books.
  - A key point to observe, however, is that the church fathers wrote descriptively of what the \_\_\_\_\_ recognized as being inspired by God and bearing apostolic approval. They were careful not to write prescriptively, as if appointing themselves as ones in authority to determine which books were canonical.
  - The twenty-seven books of the New Testament were collected and used by Christian churches for \_\_\_\_\_ years before the Synod of Hippo, a meeting of many of the pastors of Christian churches, agreed together that those twenty-seven books comprised the finished canon of the New Testament. (393 A.D.)

## THE NEW TESTAMENT APOCRYPHA

- **What are these writings?**
  - These are writings that were generated between 70 and \_\_\_\_\_ A.D., that often used some biblical name or the name of one of the early church fathers in order to gain acceptance.
  - The names attached to these works were often \_\_\_\_\_. Some of these books include
    - The Acts of Paul and Thecla
    - Epistle to the Laodiceans
    - The Gospel According to the Hebrews
    - The Apocalypse of Peter
    - The Seven Epistles of Ignatious
- **Why were they not included in the New Testament?**
  - None of them enjoyed more than temporary or local recognition.
  - They did not have \_\_\_\_\_ approval.
  - No major listing of canonical books includes them.