

**Church History**  
**Lesson 7 - Canonization - The Recognition of Writings Inspired By God**

**1. The Word of God and Inspiration**

- 1.1. We often speak of the Bible as God's inspired Word. What do we mean by the phrases 'the Word of God' and 'inspired'?
- 1.2. The various uses of the phrase 'the Word of God'
  - 1.2.1. Jesus
    - 1.2.1.1. John 1:1,14 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God... The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.
    - 1.2.1.2. Revelation 19:13 He is dressed in a robe dipped in blood, and his name is the Word of God.
    - 1.2.1.3. Hebrews 1:1–3 In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, <sup>2</sup>but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe. <sup>3</sup> The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven.
    - 1.2.1.4. Jesus is THE Word of God, upon which all senses of the phrase are based. All other senses of the Word of God flow from Him, through Him, and point to Him!
  - 1.2.2. God's direct speech
    - 1.2.2.1. Genesis 1:3 And God said, "Let there be light," and there was light.
    - 1.2.2.2. Psalms 33:6 By the word of the LORD were the heavens made, their starry host by the breath of his mouth.
    - 1.2.2.3. This refers to God's speech, which may or may not have been recorded for future generations to read. Many of these verbalizations by God were intended for a single occasion or a single person and therefore were not recorded for the benefit of future generation.
  - 1.2.3. God's word through humans
    - 1.2.3.1. Jeremiah 1:4–5 The word of the LORD came to me, saying, <sup>5</sup> "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I set you apart; I appointed you as a prophet to the nations."
    - 1.2.3.2. Joel 1:1 The word of the LORD that came to Joel son of Pethuel.

#### 1.2.4. God's written word

1.2.4.1. Exodus 24:4 Moses then wrote down everything the LORD had said.

1.2.4.2. Jeremiah 36:4 So Jeremiah called Baruch son of Neriah, and while Jeremiah dictated all the words the LORD had spoken to him, Baruch wrote them on the scroll.

1.2.4.3. Matthew 15:4–6 For God said, 'Honor your father and mother' and 'Anyone who curses his father or mother must be put to death.'<sup>5</sup> But you say that if a man says to his father or mother, 'Whatever help you might otherwise have received from me is a gift devoted to God,'<sup>6</sup> he is not to 'honor his father' with it. Thus you nullify the word of God for the sake of your tradition.

1.2.4.4. In this sense of the phrase, the word of God is given to certain individuals who then pass this message on to others. It is then written down because it is God's Word, not just for a single individual or single time, but for all people to read, learn from, and apply to their own lives.

1.2.5. Today we will be looking at this fourth sense - God's Word given through certain people that were written down for others to read. To do this, we must understand the biblical concept of inspiration.

### 1.3. Inspiration

#### 1.3.1. Definition

1.3.1.1. Inspiration refers to the work of God where the Holy Spirit spoke through human authors to give us authoritative and inerrant Scripture.

1.3.1.2. By inspiration of Scripture we mean that supernatural influence of the Holy Spirit upon the Scripture writers which rendered their writings an accurate record of the revelation or which resulted in what they wrote actually being the Word of God. – Millard Erickson, Christian Theology, 199.

#### 1.3.2. The Bible is inspired by God

1.3.2.1. Inspiration is not like poetic inspiration.

1.3.2.2. 2 Timothy 3:16 **All Scripture is God-breathed** and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness

1.3.2.2.1. θεόπνευστος - literally 'God breathed' or 'God-inspired' - sometimes translated as 'inspired.'

1.3.2.3. 2 Peter 1:20–21 Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation.<sup>21</sup> For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but **men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.**

1.3.2.4. 2 Samuel 23:2 **"The Spirit of the LORD spoke through me;** his word was on my tongue."

- 1.3.2.5. Mark 12:36 **David himself, speaking by the Holy Spirit,** declared: “The Lord said to my Lord: “Sit at my right hand until I put your enemies under your feet.””
- 1.3.2.6. Hebrews 3:7 So, as the Holy Spirit says: “Today, if you hear his voice...”
- 1.3.3. The Divine and human side of Scripture - Scripture is **God’s Word Through Men.**
  - 1.3.3.1. 2 Peter 1:20–21 Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet’s own interpretation. <sup>21</sup> For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but **men spoke from God** as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.
  - 1.3.3.2. 2 Samuel 23:2 “The **Spirit of the LORD spoke through me; his word** was on **my tongue.**
  - 1.3.3.3. Mark 12:36 **David himself, speaking by the Holy Spirit,** declared: “The Lord said to my Lord: “Sit at my right hand until I put your enemies under your feet.””
- 1.3.4. Key points to understand regarding inspiration
  - 1.3.4.1. Inspiration includes both the authors (2 Peter 1:20-21) and what they wrote (2 Timothy 3:16).
    - 1.3.4.1.1. 2 Peter 1:20–21 Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet’s own interpretation. <sup>21</sup> For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but **men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.**
    - 1.3.4.1.2. 2 Timothy 3:16 All **Scripture is God-breathed** and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness..
  - 1.3.4.2. God is the ultimate author, but speaks through men.
  - 1.3.4.3. The Bible is written in real human language, following human standards of communication and literary conventions (poetry, proverb, etc).
  - 1.3.4.4. Human authors of Scripture exhibit variation in style, vocabulary, genre, and literary competence.
  - 1.3.4.5. This means that God did not “dictate” Scripture – He spoke through real people prepared for task.

- 1.3.4.6. Human authors of Scripture often did research and used other sources.
  - 1.3.4.6.1. Luke 1:1–4 Many have undertaken to draw up an account of the things that have been fulfilled among us, <sup>2</sup> just as they were handed down to us by those who from the first were eyewitnesses and servants of the word. <sup>3</sup> Therefore, since I myself have carefully investigated everything from the beginning, it seemed good also to me to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, <sup>4</sup> so that you may know the certainty of the things you have been taught.
- 1.3.4.7. God sometimes even used later editors to complete the writing, but their additions are still fully God’s Word.
  - 1.3.4.7.1. Numbers 12:3 (Now Moses was a very humble man, more humble than anyone else on the face of the earth.)
  - 1.3.4.7.2. Deuteronomy 34:6–10 He buried him in Moab, in the valley opposite Beth Peor, but to this day no one knows where his grave is.... <sup>10</sup> Since then, no prophet has risen in Israel like Moses, whom the LORD knew face to face.
- 1.3.4.8. God so prepared and influenced the human authors and editors that even the words they chose were the exact words God wanted written.
  - 1.3.4.8.1. Galatians 3:16 The promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. The Scripture does not say “and to seeds,” meaning many people, but “and to your seed,” meaning one person, who is Christ.
  - 1.3.4.8.2. Matthew 5:18 I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished.
- 1.3.5. Implications of inerrancy
  - 1.3.5.1. The authority of Scripture.
    - 1.3.5.1.1. Since Scripture is God’s Word it speaks with His authority.
  - 1.3.5.2. Scripture can not fail.
    - 1.3.5.2.1. John 10:35 If he called them ‘gods,’ to whom the word of God came—and the Scripture cannot be broken—
    - 1.3.5.2.2. Matthew 24:35 Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away.

- 1.3.5.3. To ignore or disobey Scripture is to do so to God.
  - 1.3.5.3.1. Deuteronomy 18:18–19 I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brothers; I will put my words in his mouth, and he will tell them everything I command him. <sup>19</sup> **If anyone does not listen to my words that the prophet speaks in my name, I myself will call him to account.**
  - 1.3.5.3.2. 1 Thessalonians 4:8 Therefore, **he who rejects this instruction does not reject man but God,** who gives you his Holy Spirit.
- 1.3.6. The truthfulness of Scripture – inerrancy.
  - 1.3.6.1. God’s Word is absolutely true.
    - 1.3.6.1.1. John 17:17 Sanctify them by the truth; **your word is truth.**
    - 1.3.6.1.2. Psalms 12:6 **And the words of the LORD are flawless,** like silver refined in a furnace of clay, purified seven times.
    - 1.3.6.1.3. Psalms 19:7 **The law of the LORD is perfect,** reviving the soul. **The statutes of the LORD are trustworthy,** making wise the simple.
  - 1.3.6.2. Inerrancy – definition - The original manuscripts of the Bible, when correctly interpreted in view of the purposes for which it was given, and taking into account the literary standards of the time in which it was written, does not affirm anything that is contrary to fact.
    - 1.3.6.2.1. Original manuscripts – inspiration and inerrancy apply to authors – not copyists.
    - 1.3.6.2.2. Correctly interpreted – Bible is true – not necessarily my interpretation of Scripture!
    - 1.3.6.2.3. Purposes – Do not make peripheral statements as central affirmations.
    - 1.3.6.2.4. Literary standards – pay attention to genre, and to standards & methods of their time – not ours!
    - 1.3.6.2.5. Affirm anything – can report the errors of other people without affirming them.
  - 1.3.6.3. Implications of inerrancy:
    - 1.3.6.3.1. Great care must be given to discern the original text of Scripture – textual criticism.
    - 1.3.6.3.2. Great care must be given to learn the literary and historical methods of writing during the times of the biblical authors - literary analysis.
    - 1.3.6.3.3. Great care must be given to the process of interpretation – hermeneutics.

- 1.3.6.3.4. Scripture can be inerrant and still speak in the ordinary language of everyday people – phenomenal rather than scientific; round off numbers; approximate quotations.
- 1.3.6.3.5. Humility – Scripture is inerrant – I am not!

## 2. Canonization - the Recognition of the Inspired Writings That Belong in the Bible

- 2.1. Understanding the term 'canon'
  - 2.1.1. Definition – The canon of Scripture is the list of books that have been recognized as being inspired by God and which therefore belong in the Bible.
  - 2.1.2. From Greek - κανών – rule or standard.
    - 2.1.2.1. Galatians 6:16 Peace and mercy to all who follow this **rule**, even to the Israel of God.
  - 2.1.3. Came to mean the books which met the standard of being inspired, and therefore were included as Scripture.
- 2.2. The importance of this concept - what belongs in the Bible?
  - 2.2.1. Canonization became important as the church had to wrestle with the question - what words were really inspired by God and thus are the rule we must follow? What should be included - and what should be left out?
    - 2.2.1.1. Deuteronomy 4:2 **Do not add to what I command you and do not subtract from it**, but keep the commands of the Lord your God that I give you.
    - 2.2.1.2. Proverbs 30:5–6 Every word of God is flawless; he is a shield to those who take refuge in him. <sup>6</sup> Do not add to his words, or he will rebuke you and prove you a liar.
  - 2.2.2. Key questions:
    - 2.2.2.1. Which books belong in the Old Testament?
    - 2.2.2.2. Which books belong in the New Testament?
    - 2.2.2.3. Who decided these things?
    - 2.2.2.4. What were the criteria?

## 3. The Old Testament Canon

- 3.1. The beginning of an OT canon - Moses
  - 3.1.1. God's written & binding covenant
    - 3.1.1.1. Exodus 24:7 Then he took **the Book of the Covenant** and read it to the people. They responded, "**We will do everything the LORD has said; we will obey.**"

- 3.1.2. The Ten Commandments
  - 3.1.2.1. Deuteronomy 10:4–5 The LORD wrote on these tablets what he had written before, the Ten Commandments he had proclaimed to you on the mountain, out of the fire, on the day of the assembly. And the LORD gave them to me. <sup>5</sup> Then I came back down the mountain and put the tablets in the ark I had made, as the LORD commanded me, and they are there now.
- 3.1.3. The Torah – book of the Law
  - 3.1.3.1. Deuteronomy 31:24–26 After Moses finished writing in a book the words of this law from beginning to end, <sup>25</sup> he gave this command to the Levites who carried the ark of the covenant of the LORD: <sup>26</sup> “Take this Book of the Law and place it beside the ark of the covenant of the LORD your God. There it will remain as a witness against you.”
- 3.2. The growth of OT canon – prophets and writings
  - 3.2.1. Joshua’s writings (known as ‘the early prophets in Judaism’)
    - 3.2.1.1. Joshua 24:25–26 On that day Joshua made a covenant for the people, and there at Shechem he drew up for them decrees and laws. <sup>26</sup> And Joshua recorded these things in the Book of the Law of God.
  - 3.2.2. Prophets
    - 3.2.2.1. Jeremiah 30:1–2 This is the word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD: <sup>2</sup> “This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: ‘Write in a book all the words I have spoken to you.’”
    - 3.2.2.2. Habakkuk 2:2–3 Then the LORD replied: “Write down the revelation and make it plain on tablets so that a herald may run with it. <sup>3</sup> For the revelation awaits an appointed time; it speaks of the end and will not prove false. Though it linger, wait for it; it will certainly come and will not delay.
  - 3.2.3. Writings
    - 3.2.3.1. 2 Samuel 23:1-2 These are the last words of David: “The oracle of David son of Jesse, the oracle of the man exalted by the Most High, the man anointed by the God of Jacob, Israel’s singer of songs: “The Spirit of the LORD spoke through me; his word was on my tongue.”
    - 3.2.3.2. Proverbs 2:1–6 My son, if you accept my words and store up my commands within you, <sup>2</sup> turning your ear to wisdom and applying your heart to understanding, <sup>3</sup> and if you call out for insight and cry aloud for understanding, <sup>4</sup> and if you look for it as for silver and search for it as for hidden treasure, <sup>5</sup> then you will understand the fear of the LORD and find the knowledge of God. <sup>6</sup> For the LORD gives wisdom, and from his mouth come knowledge and understanding.
- 3.3. Threefold OT canon – law, prophets, writings (Tanak)
  - 3.3.1. Jesus

- 3.3.1.1. Luke 24:44 - He said to them, “This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in **the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms.**”
- 3.3.1.2. Matthew 23:35 - And so upon you will come **all the righteous blood that has been shed on earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah son of Berekiah,** whom you murdered between the temple and the altar.
- 3.3.2. *Prologue of Ecclesiasticus* (2<sup>nd</sup> century BC) – “Whereas many and great things have been delivered unto us by **the law and the prophets, and by others that have followed their steps,** for the which things Israel ought to be commended for learning and wisdom... my grandfather Jesus, when he had much given himself to the reading of **the law, and the prophets, and other books of our fathers,** and had gotten therein good judgment, was drawn on also himself to write something pertaining to learning and wisdom... and not only these things, but **the law itself, and the prophets, and the rest of the books,** have no small difference, when they are spoken in their own language.”
- 3.3.3. Josephus – “For we have not an innumerable multitude of books among us, disagreeing from and contradicting one another, [as the Greeks have,] but **only twenty-two books,** which contain the records of all the past times; which are justly believed to be divine; and of them **five belong to Moses, which contain his laws** and the traditions of the origin of mankind till his death. This interval of time was little short of three thousand years; but as to the time from the death of Moses till the reign of Artaxerxes king of Persia, who reigned after Xerxes, **the prophets, who were after Moses, wrote down what was done in their times in thirteen books. The remaining four books contain hymns to God, and precepts for the conduct of human life.**” Josephus, *Against Apion* 1:8 (note that certain books are counted as one by the Jews – 1 & 2 Samuel, 1 & 2 Kings, etc.)
- 3.3.4. Other writings have 3 fold division as well. This was the common practice of the day - and it continues to this day within Judaism.
  - 3.3.4.1. The Jewish Scriptures are referred to as the TaNaK.
    - 3.3.4.1.1. T = Torah - law
    - 3.3.4.1.2. N = Nevi'im - prophets
    - 3.3.4.1.3. K = Ketuvim - writings
- 3.3.5. Books of Hebrew OT canon:
  - 3.3.5.1. Law – Genesis – Deuteronomy
  - 3.3.5.2. Prophets -
    - 3.3.5.2.1. Former - Joshua, Judges, Samuel, Kings.
    - 3.3.5.2.2. Latter – Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, the Twelve.
  - 3.3.5.3. Writings – Psalms, Job, Proverbs, Ruth, The Song of Songs, Ecclesiastes, Lamentations, Esther, Daniel, Ezra-Nehemiah, Chronicles



- 3.3.6. Books which were almost not included:
  - 3.3.6.1. Some argued against Esther - no mention of God.
  - 3.3.6.2. Some argued against Song of Songs – is it an erotic love poem or allegory of God’s love for Israel?
  - 3.3.6.3. Some argued against Ecclesiastes – it seemed unorthodox at points.
  - 3.3.6.4. Some argued against Proverbs – it contradicts itself.
    - 3.3.6.4.1. Proverbs 26:4–5 - <sup>4</sup> Do not answer a fool according to his folly, or you will be like him yourself. <sup>5</sup> Answer a fool according to his folly, or he will be wise in his own eyes.
  - 3.3.6.5. Ezekiel – Temple specifications seemed to conflict with Torah specifications for Temple.
  - 3.3.6.6. By the time of Christ, the Jews had essentially settled on these books as the Old Testament canon, and had probably generally accepted the three sections and the order shown above.
- 3.3.7. Writings of the Apocrypha – addressed later.

#### 4. The New Testament Canon

- 4.1. A New Testament?
  - 4.1.1. The OT had to be recognized – Jesus did!
  - 4.1.2. The apostles had authority from Christ.
  - 4.1.3. Were their writings inspired and authoritative?
- 4.2. The recognition of the new inspired writings
  - 4.2.1. The apostles claimed their teachings were from God.
    - 4.2.1.1. 1 Thessalonians 2:13 And we also thank God continually because, **when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but as it actually is, the word of God,** which is at work in you who believe.
    - 4.2.1.2. 1 Thessalonians 4:2 For you know what **instructions we gave you by the authority of the Lord Jesus.**
    - 4.2.1.3. 2 Peter 3:1–2 Dear friends, this is now my second letter to you. I have written both of them as reminders to stimulate you to wholesome thinking. <sup>2</sup> **I want you to recall the words spoken in the past by the holy prophets and the command given by our Lord and Savior through your apostles.**
  - 4.2.2. The apostles claimed their writings were from God and were to be obeyed.
    - 4.2.2.1. 1 Corinthians 14:37 If anybody thinks he is a prophet or spiritually gifted, let him acknowledge that what I am writing to you is the Lord’s command.
    - 4.2.2.2. 1 Thessalonians 4:8 Therefore, he who rejects this instruction does not reject man but God, who gives you his Holy Spirit.

- 4.2.2.3. 2 Thessalonians 3:14 If anyone does not obey our instruction in this letter, take special note of him. Do not associate with him, in order that he may feel ashamed.
- 4.2.3. The apostles considered other NT writings Scripture.
  - 4.2.3.1. 2 Peter 3:15–16 Bear in mind that our Lord’s patience means salvation, just as our dear brother Paul also wrote you with the wisdom that God gave him. <sup>16</sup> He writes the same way in all his letters, speaking in them of these matters. His letters contain some things that are hard to understand, which ignorant and unstable people distort, **as they do the other Scriptures**, to their own destruction.
  - 4.2.3.2. 1 Timothy 5:17–18 The elders who direct the affairs of the church well are worthy of double honor, especially those whose work is preaching and teaching. <sup>18</sup> **For the Scripture says**, “Do not muzzle the ox while it is treading out the grain,” and **“The worker deserves his wages.”** (This text quotes Deuteronomy 25:4 and Luke 10:7).
  - 4.2.3.3. Luke 10:7 Stay in that house, eating and drinking whatever they give you, **for the worker deserves his wages.**
- 4.2.4. The use of apostolic writings in the new churches and by leaders.
  - 4.2.4.1. Verses just mentioned show this was happening.
  - 4.2.4.2. Justin Martyr - And on the day called Sunday, all who live in cities or in the country gather together to one place, and **the memoirs of the apostles or the writings of the prophets are read**, as long as time permits; then, when the reader has ceased, the president verbally instructs, and exhorts to the imitation of these good things. *First Apology*, 67.3.
  - 4.2.4.3. Used by leaders such as Ignatius, Polycarp, Tertullian, and Irenaeus in their writings. It is clear that the considered the writings of the apostles and their circle of companions as authoritative as the Old Testament writings.
- 4.3. The rise of heretics - the need for a finalized canon
  - 4.3.1. By the mid 2<sup>nd</sup> century heretics were producing their own list of which books they said belonged in the NT. Two key heretics/groups were Marcion and Valentinus and the Gnostics.
    - 4.3.1.1. Marcion – a truncated canon.
      - 4.3.1.1.1. Born around 100 AD; raised in the church.
      - 4.3.1.1.2. Extreme antinomian – rejected law in any sense as incompatible with grace & justification by faith.
      - 4.3.1.1.3. “god” of the OT & the God of the NT were different.
      - 4.3.1.1.4. Only Paul kept the pure Gospel of Christ; the other apostles corrupted it.
      - 4.3.1.1.5. Marcion’s ‘canon’ -
        - 4.3.1.1.5.1. No Old Testament.

- 4.3.1.1.5.2. A highly edited Gospel of Luke – removed anything he thought was a “corruption” – including birth narrative of John the Baptist and Christ, ministry of John the Baptist; genealogy, etc.
      - 4.3.1.1.5.3. Edited versions of 10 of Paul’s letters – not the Pastoral epistles. He removed anything that viewed the Old Testament in a favorable light.
    - 4.3.1.2. Valentinus and the Gnostics – a reinterpreted canon with additional books.
      - 4.3.1.2.1. Around the same time as Marcion – mid 100’s.
      - 4.3.1.2.2. He or his circle of followers produced *The Gospel of Truth* which laid out their understanding of the Gospel and the New Testament writings.
      - 4.3.1.2.3. The Gnostic “canon” and interpretation –
        - 4.3.1.2.3.1. Refers to a number of New Testament books and treats them as authoritative – Matthew, Luke-Acts, John, 1 John, Paul’s letters (except the Pastoral epistles), Hebrews, and Revelation.
        - 4.3.1.2.3.2. The Gnostics taught all matter was evil, and therefore Jesus was not really human. Thus, they had to radically reinterpret the New Testament.
        - 4.3.1.2.3.3. The Gnostics also created their own Gospels and writings – many have been recovered in the *Nag Hammadi* tests. These include the now famous *Gospel of Thomas*, and a number of other Gospels, Acts, and epistles which were rejected by the early church as inauthentic.
- 4.4. The growth of the NT canon
  - 4.4.1. A couple of important lists:
    - 4.4.1.1. Muratorian fragment –
      - 4.4.1.1.1. Probably 2nd century list from Rome.
      - 4.4.1.1.2. Has most of NT books – missing Hebrews, 1 Peter, James.
      - 4.4.1.1.3. Notes that some did not want 2nd Peter.

- 4.4.1.2. Eusebius – circa 300 AD - 3 categories of books:
  - 4.4.1.2.1. Recognized – Four Gospels, Acts, 13 Pauline epistles; Hebrews (ascribed as Pauline); 1 Peter, 1 John, Revelation.
  - 4.4.1.2.2. Disputed –
    - 4.4.1.2.2.1. Generally accepted – James, Jude, 2 Peter, 2 and 3 John.
    - 4.4.1.2.2.2. Not genuine – Acts of Paul, Shepherd of Hermas, Apocalypse of Peter, Epistle of Barnabas, the Didache.
  - 4.4.1.2.3. Rejected – Gospel of Peter; Gospel of Thomas, the Acts of Andrew; the Acts of John, etc.
- 4.4.2. Some important trends
  - 4.4.2.1. The Gospels, Acts, and Paul’s writings were accepted very early and almost universally.
  - 4.4.2.2. 1 Peter and 1 John were accepted early and universally.
  - 4.4.2.3. The remaining general epistles (Hebrews-Jude) and Revelation were slower to be accepted.
  - 4.4.2.4. There were some differences between the East and the West in when books were accepted. For example, Hebrews and James were almost always accepted in the East, but did not find acceptance in the West until late, while Revelation was accepted in the West fairly early but not until late in the East.
- 4.4.3. Athanasius’ Paschal letter of 367
  - 4.4.3.1. First list to contain all 27 books of NT with no extra books.
  - 4.4.3.2. By this point the NT canon was settled and was never really in dispute again.
- 4.4.4. Luther and the reconsideration of the NT canon
  - 4.4.4.1. Luther strongly questioned whether Hebrews, James, Jude, and Revelation belonged in the canon. These were listed separately in the 1522 version of his Bible.
  - 4.4.4.2. Luther later accepted these books and restored them to their normal place, though he did remain critical of James.
  - 4.4.4.3. All Protestants, Roman Catholics and Eastern Orthodox churches have an identical NT canon.
- 4.5. Criteria for NT canonicity
  - 4.5.1. Apostolicity - Authentic authorship by one of the apostolic circle – included Peter, John, Matthew, Paul, James, but also those closely associated with them – Mark, Luke, Jude.
    - 4.5.1.1. Note – Hebrews was initially accepted because many thought it had been written by Paul. Most later recognized that this was unlikely, but Hebrews was still accepted into the canon.

- 4.5.1.2. Because of this, some would also include antiquity, since the document had to be old enough to have been written by one of the apostolic circle.
- 4.5.2. Orthodoxy – the writing must adhere to the rule of faith, the common set of beliefs and practices adhered to all the universal church.
- 4.5.3. Universality – the writing should have been used widely from early days, and if used by larger , more influential churches this carried extra weight.

## 5. What About the Apocrypha (Deutero-Canonical) Books?

- 5.1. What are the Apocrypha?
  - 5.1.1. Apocrypha – also called Deutero-Canonical (second canon).
  - 5.1.2. Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox churches have these extra books.
  - 5.1.3. Judith, Tobit, Maccabees, etc.
  - 5.1.4. Where are they from? Are they canonical?
- 5.2. Where are they from?
  - 5.2.1. Part of the Septuagint (LXX ) – a Greek translation of the Scriptures and other Hebrew writings.
  - 5.2.2. After Alexander many Jews spoke Greek – not Hebrew, so they translated the OT into Greek.
  - 5.2.3. Other books were added as well.
  - 5.2.4. Some of the Apocrypha were probably originally written in Greek.
  - 5.2.5. As part of the LXX the Apocrypha became widely circulated and read.
- 5.3. How did the Jews view the Apocrypha?
  - 5.3.1. Many Jews thought of them as useful, but not as Scripture
    - 5.3.1.1. Josephus – “It is true, our history hath been written since Artaxerxes very particularly, but hath not been esteemed of the like authority with the former by our forefathers, because there hath not been an exact succession of prophets since that time...” Josephus, Against Apion, 1:8.
    - 5.3.1.2. Babylonian Talmud – “After the latter prophets Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi had died, the Holy Spirit departed from Israel, but they still availed themselves of the bath qol” (Babylonian Talmud, Yomah 9b, quoted in Grudem, 56).
  - 5.3.2. They were ultimately deemed as useful but non-canonical writings.
  - 5.3.3. This position continues to the present day among Jews.
- 5.4. The use of the Apocrypha in the early church.
  - 5.4.1. The Apocrypha were widely used and quoted
    - 5.4.1.1. The main Bible of the early church was the LXX, since most Christians could not read Hebrew, but did read Greek.
    - 5.4.1.2. Animosity between the Church and Judaism caused some to want to oppose whatever position Jewish leaders espoused.
  - 5.4.2. Some leaders did not consider them equal to Scripture.
    - 5.4.2.1. Melito of Sardis – listed OT books as Jewish OT minus Esther.

- 5.4.2.2. Origen – OT same as Hebrew canon plus Letter of Jeremiah.
- 5.4.2.3. Athanasius – OT was same as Hebrew OT plus Baruch, Letter of Jeremiah, but minus Esther.
  - 5.4.2.3.1. “There are other books outside of these which are indeed not included in the canon, but have been appointed from the time of the fathers to be read to those who are recent converts to our company and wish to be instructed in the word of true religion. These are the Wisdom of Solomon, the Wisdom of Sirach, Esther, Judith and Tobit...” Athanasius Paschal Letter, 367 AD.
- 5.4.2.4. Jerome – Hebrew OT is canon; others are Apocrypha –
  - 5.4.2.4.1. “Whatever falls outside these must be set apart among the Apocrypha. Therefore Wisdom, which is commonly entitled Solomon’s, with the book of Jesus the son of Sirach, Judith, Tobias and the Shepherd are not in the canon...” Jerome, quoted in Bruce, Canon of Scripture, 90.
- 5.4.2.5. Jerome – read Apocrypha for edification, but not for doctrine
  - 5.4.2.5.1. “Therefore as the church indeed reads Judith, Tobit and the books of Maccabees, but does not receive them among the canonical books, so let it also read these two volumes for the edification of the people but not for establishing the authority of ecclesiastical dogmas. Jerome, Quoted in Bruce, Canon of Scripture, 91-92.
- 5.4.3. Some leaders seem to consider at least some of them as Scripture.
  - 5.4.3.1. Tertullian – accepted much of Apocrypha; possibly even other writings as well.
  - 5.4.3.2. Augustine – OT has 44 books; includes much of Apocrypha.
  - 5.4.3.3. Many churches used Apocryphal books (and other non-canonical books from the NT era as well), and many Latin and Greek translations contained them.
- 5.5. The Apocrypha from Reformation to present
  - 5.5.1. Reformers – edification, not doctrine – same as Athanasius and Jerome.
    - 5.5.1.1. The writings of Luther, Calvin and other Reformers contain references to these writings.
    - 5.5.1.2. The early translations into English usually included the Deutero-Canonical writings, but did separate them out into separate sections.
  - 5.5.2. Roman Catholic Church - Declared to be part of canon by the Council of Trent in 1546.

- 5.5.3.** Declared to be canonical in Eastern Orthodox churches at Councils of Jassy (1642) and Jerusalem (1672).
- 5.6.** The use of the Apocrypha today
- 5.6.1.** Protestants - these books are virtually ignored except by scholars who will cite them for parallels to biblical texts or for the use of Greek and Hebrew words.
- 5.6.2.** Roman Catholic Church and Eastern Orthodox churches - these books are technically accepted as Scripture, but in practice are usually relegated to a lower class, being used far less in liturgies and discussions than the rest of the Old Testament. In actual practice the books are little more used by the average Roman Catholic or Eastern Orthodox believer than they are by the average Protestant believer.
- 5.6.2.1.** “In the west these books are often called the ‘Apocrypha’. These were declared by the Councils of Jassy (1642) and Jerusalem (1672) to be ‘genuine parts of Scripture;’ most Orthodox scholars at the present day, however, following the opinion of Athanasius and Jerome, consider that the Deutero-Canonical Books, although part of the Bible, stand on a lower footing than the rest of the Old Testament.” – Bishop Kallistos Ware, *The Orthodox Church*.
- 5.7.** A hint from Christ on the limits of the OT canon
- 5.7.1.** “There is evidence that Chronicles was the last book in the Hebrew Bible as Jesus knew it. When he said that the generation he addressed would be answerable for ‘the blood of all the prophets, shed from the foundation of the world’, he added, ‘from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah, who perished between the altar and the sanctuary’ (Luke 11:50f.). Abel is the first martyr in the Bible (Gen. 4:8); Zechariah is most probably the son of Jehoiada, who was stoned to death ‘in the court of Yahweh’s house’ because, speaking by the Spirit of God he rebuked the king and people of Judah for transgressing the divine commandments (2 Chron. 24:20-22). Zechariah (c 800 BC) was not chronologically the last faithful prophet to die as a martyr; some two centuries later a prophet named Uriah was put to death in Jerusalem because his witness was unacceptable to King Jehoiakim (Jer. 26:20-23). But Zechariah is canonically the last faithful prophet to die as a martyr, because his death is recorded in Chronicles, the last book in the Hebrew Bible.” FF Bruce, *Canon of Scripture*, 31.

## **7. Conclusion and Summary**

- 7.1.** The canon is established and can be trusted.
  - 7.1.1.** God guided the flawed men and flawed process so that the books which He had truly inspired we recognized and given their rightful place in the canon.
  - 7.1.2.** “The New Testament books became canonical because no one could stop them from doing so.” William Barclay, quoted in Bruce, Canon of Scripture, 282.
  - 7.1.3.** “The books which were included to form the future canon forced themselves on the Church by their intrinsic apostolic authority, as they do still, because Kyrios Christ speaks in them.” Oscar Cullman, quoted in Bruce, Canon of Scripture, 282.
- 7.2.** The canon provides the rule or standard for our faith.
  - 7.2.1.** Other books are helpful and should be read, but only these provide the unalterable rule of faith for the church.
  - 7.2.2.** Church history and the councils are important and should be carefully studied and given great weight, but only these books provide the unalterable rule of faith by which the church lives and makes her decisions.