

# GLORIOUS DOCTRINE THE WORD OF GOD

EXPLORING THE BIBLE'S  
INSPIRATION, INERRANCY,  
AUTHORITY, SUFFICIENCY,  
NECESSITY, CLARITY  
AND MORE...

## 1. THE CANON OF SCRIPTURE

### A. Definition of 'Canon'

The term 'canon' - from the Greek word κανών (kanōn). It simply means "measuring rod, standard". It refers to the standard by which you assess something, or determine the limits of something.

**The Canon of Scripture is the list of books which are divinely \_\_\_\_\_ and deserve to be in our Bibles.**

### B. The Importance of the Canon

- I. We are commanded not to \_\_\_\_\_ to or \_\_\_\_\_ from God's Word. (Deut. 4:2; Rev. 22:18-19)
- II. God superintended what was written by the biblical authors so that it was not just for them and their time, but also for us and His people throughout time. (Rom. 15:4; 1 Cor. 10:11)
- III. We must know what books are \_\_\_\_\_ in order to know what we must believe.

## 2. OLD TESTAMENT CANON

We see the earliest collection of written words from God actually come from His own hands! (Ex. 31:18; 32:16; cf. Deut. 4:13; 10:4)

**Thus, from very early in God's formation of His people, He intended that they would be 'a people of the \_\_\_\_\_' and that they would keep and treasure His Word.**

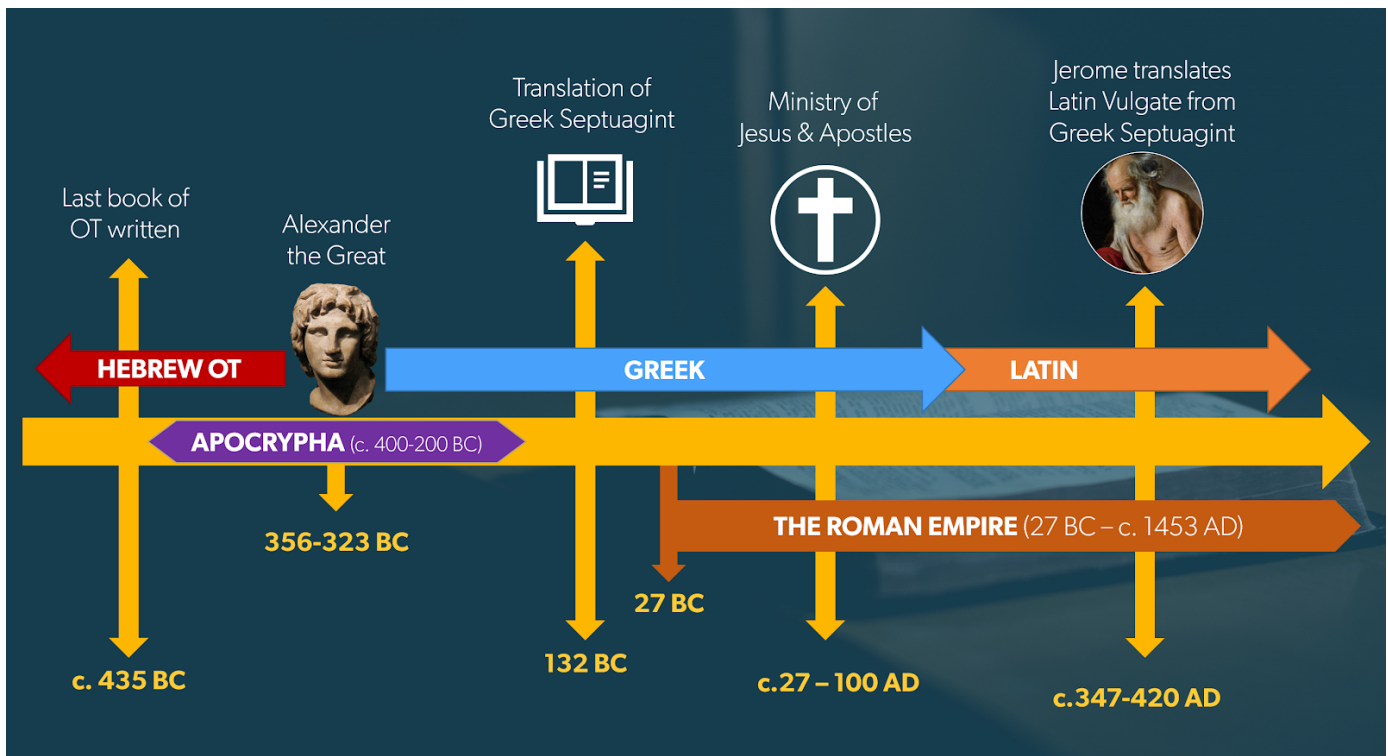
### A. The Close of the OT Canon

"...after approximately 435 B.C. there were no further additions to the Old Testament canon. The subsequent history of the Jewish people was recorded in other writings, such as the books of the Maccabees, but these writings were not thought worthy to be included with the collections of God's words from earlier years." (Grudem, Systematic Theology, p. 55-56)

### B. The Apocrypha

The word "Apocrypha" means \_\_\_\_\_.

There are seven books in the Apocrypha: Tobit, Judith, Wisdom, Ecclesiasticus, Baruch and 1 & 2 Maccabees. It also includes additional sections of the books of Esther and Daniel.



The Apocrypha made their way into the Bible through the Latin translation (called the Vulgate) produced by Jerome in the 4th century A.D. However, Jerome himself noted:

“As then the church reads Judith, Tobit, and the books of Maccabees, but does not admit them among the canonical Scriptures, so let it read these two volumes for the edification of the people, not to give authority to doctrines of the church.” (Jerome, Preface to the Books of Proverbs, NPNF 6:429)

For over a thousand years, the Latin Vulgate including the Apocrypha would be used as the Bible in churches until the Reformation in the 1500s.

**During the Reformation, the motto \_\_\_\_\_, meaning “back to the sources” - drove the Reformers to go back to the original Hebrew texts of the Old Testament.**

### C. The Reformation & the Vulgate

During the Reformation, the Protestant Reformers critiqued the use of the Apocrypha in the church for three main reasons:

- I. The Development of \_\_\_\_\_ Practices (e.g. prayer for the dead, purgatory, etc.)
- II. Poor Translation of Certain Passages
- III. Inconsistency within Roman Catholicism over the Apocrypha

According to Grudem, there are four reasons we should not regard the Apocrypha as scripture:

1. They do not claim for themselves the same kind of \_\_\_\_\_ as the Old Testament writings
2. They were not regarded as God’s words by the Jewish people from whom they originated
3. They were not considered to be Scripture by Jesus or the New Testament authors;
4. They contain teachings inconsistent with the rest of the Bible.

### 3. NEW TESTAMENT CANON

There are three main reasons why the books of the New Testament were added to the Biblical Canon of Scripture:

- A. **The New Testament is \_\_\_\_\_ by the Old Testament** (e.g. Mal. 3:1-4; 4:1-6)
- B. **Jesus equipped his apostles & disciples to write the New Testament** (John 14:26; 16:13-14)
- C. **The apostles claimed the authority to write Scripture** (2 Pet. 3:2; Acts 5:2-4; 1 Cor. 14:37; 2 Cor. 13:3; Rom. 2:16; Gal. 1:8-9; 1 Thess. 2:13; 4:8, 15; 5:27; 2 Thess. 3:6, 14)
  - a. From 2 Peter 3:15-16, Peter clearly considers Paul's writings as scripture.
  - b. From 1 Timothy 5:17-18, Paul quotes Deuteronomy 25:4 and Luke 10:7 both as scripture.
- D. **The Early Church attested to their inclusion in the Canon**

From both the testimony of the apostles and the Early Church writers, we see that the NT books were recognized as scripture from very early on.

"The law and the prophets she [the church] unites in one volume with the writings of the evangelists and apostles; from which she drinks in [receives] her faith." (Tertullian, 155 - 220 AD)

"I have pointed out the truth, and shown the preaching of the church, which the prophets proclaimed but which Christ brought to perfection, and the apostles have handed down. From which the church, receiving [these truths], and throughout all the world alone preserving them in their integrity, has transmitted them to her sons." (Irenaeus, 130 - 202 AD)

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### 4. RECOGNIZING THE CANON

"...the church is "built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets" (Eph. 2:20); thus, *Scripture preceded the church*, and it cannot owe its existence to church authority. The church recognized and affirmed the divinely inspired writings that God intended for placement in the canon, but *it did not create or determine the canon of Scripture.*" (Gregg Allison, Historical Theology, p. 53)

**Therefore the question of canon isn't one of "How did the church make these books canonical?" but rather, "How did the church \_\_\_\_\_ the books which are canonical?"**

There are three features which helped the church recognize canonical books:

- A. Divine Qualities
- B. Apostolic Origins
- C. Corporate Reception

We'll take a look briefly at these three features below.

#### A. Divine Qualities

**I. PROPHECY - One of the ways scripture shows its Divine Qualities is through fulfilled prophecy.**

Only the Sovereign Lord of history can 'declare the end from the beginning' (cf. Isa. 46:10). By various estimates, Jesus Christ fulfilled over 300 specific prophecies about the Messiah in his birth, life, death and resurrection! The odds of one person fulfilling even only 8 of those prophecies have been estimated by some as  $1 \times 10^{28}$  or 1 in 10,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000!

**II. \_\_\_\_\_ - The Scriptures reflect the majesty of their Author.**

They reveal the incomparable, sovereign beautiful and Majestic God. They reveal the wonder of His grace, mercy, love & goodness. They reveal God's perfection, purity, holiness and justice. They reveal their consistency across all their scope and the Grand Narrative of Redemptive History.

**III. POWER - The Scriptures show their power to convert sinners and transform lives.**

They comfort, build-up, rebuke and sanctify the believer (2 Tim. 3:16-17), bring wisdom (Ps. 119:98; 2 Tim. 3:16), give joy to the heart (Neh. 8:8-12; Ps. 119:111), provide "light" to the dark paths (Ps. 119:105), give understanding (Ps. 119:144), give peace and comfort (Ps. 119:50), expose sin and guilt (2 Kings 22:11-13; Acts 2:34-37; Heb. 4:12-13), and lead to prosperity and blessing (Ps. 1:1-3).  
"My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me." (John 10:27)

## B. Apostolic Origins

"...the New Testament canon is not so much a collection of writings by apostles, but a collection of apostolic writings—writings that bear the authoritative message of the apostles and derive from the foundational apostolic era (even if not directly from their hands)." (Michael Kruger, Canon Revisited)

"The Apostles received the Gospel for us from the Lord Jesus Christ, Jesus the Christ was sent from God. The Christ, therefore, is from God and the Apostles from the Christ." (1 Clement 42:1-2, c. 96 AD)

## C. Corporate Reception

**The role of the church in recognizing the canon is more like a \_\_\_\_\_ than a thermostat.**

The church over time recognizes the voice of the Shepherd in the books of scripture through their divine qualities and apostolic origins. Thus, the role of the church in recognizing the canon is more like a thermometer than a thermostat. Throughout the ages, though there may be some pockets of differing opinions, the church as a whole experienced predominant unity around the canon. This corporate reception of the canonical books is evidenced by the historical record we have of the writings of the early church (e.g. The Muratorian Fragment, c. 180 AD, and Athanasius' Festal Letter, c. 367 AD)

### Are there any other candidates for the Canon of Scripture?

**Today there exist no strong \_\_\_\_\_ for addition to the canon and no strong objections to any book presently in the canon.**

Two quick illustrations:

1. Early Church Fathers expressly stated that their own writings were not to be viewed as authoritative.
2. Other early writings contain unbiblical and absurd teachings that go against the rest of scripture.

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### Recommended Resources:

- **Know How We Got Our Bible** by Ryan Matthew Reeves
- **Canon Revisited: Establishing the Origins and Authority of the New Testament Books** by Michael J. Kruger

### FOR NEXT SESSION

- Read 2 Timothy 3
- Read 2 Peter 1:16-21