The Canon of Scripture

Bibliology





An Overview

I. The Meaning of Canon

II. The Official Church Recognition

III. The Biblical Criteria

IV. The Closed Canon





I. The Meaning of Canon

- Canon: comes from Greek through Latin
- Originally: "a straight rod or ruler marked into units"
- Used to refer to:
 - A straight rod or ruler used for measuring
 - Then, the marks on the ruler
 - Eventually, a definitive series or list





The Meaning of "the Canon of Scripture"

- 1. The list of books acknowledged to be inspired.
- 2. Therefore, the rule or standard of our belief and practice





II. The Official Church Recognition of the Canon: the Criteria

- Apostolicity was it written or endorsed by an apostle?
- Antiquity was it written during the apostolic age?
- Orthodoxy is it doctrinally correct and in agreement with the apostolic faith?
- Catholicity was it universally accepted throughout the church?





II. The Official Church Recognition of the Canon: the Criteria

- Lection was it widely read and used in the churches?
- Inspiration does it have the qualities of an inspired writing compared with other accepted inspired writings?





II. The Official Church Recognition of the Canon: the Criteria

- Age of Apostles
 - Paul re Luke (1 Tim. 5:18; cf. Dt. 25:4; Lk. 10:7)
 - Peter re Paul's letters (2 Pet. 3:15-16)
- Post-apostolic
 - Clement of Rome (95 AD)
 - Ignatius (115 AD)
 - Polycarp (108 AD; a disciple of John)
 - Irenaeus (185 AD)
 - Hippolytus (170-235 AD)
 - The Muratorian Canon (170 AD)

- Athanasius (367 AD) cited the 27 books of the NT as the only true NT era books from God
- Council of Laodicea (363 AD)
- Council of Hippo (393 AD)
- Council of Carthage (397 AD)



III. The Biblical Criteria



A. The Old Testament

- 1. The Jewish canon of the OT contains exactly the same content in our English OT
- 2. By the time of Christ, the Hebrew Scriptures were divided into three parts...
 - a. Law
 - b. Prophets
 - c. Writings
 - Poetical books (Job, Psalms, Proverbs)
 - Megilloth (books read at Jewish feasts)
 - Historical books (Dan., Ezra, Nehemiah, Chronicles)



A. The Old Testament

- 3. Multiple witnesses confirm that the OT canon matches our OT and was settled before the time of Christ.
 - a. The common view of Jewish scholarship
 - b. Josephus
 - 4. Christ endorsed this canon (Mt. 5:18; Lk. 24:44).



How was the OT Universally Accepted?

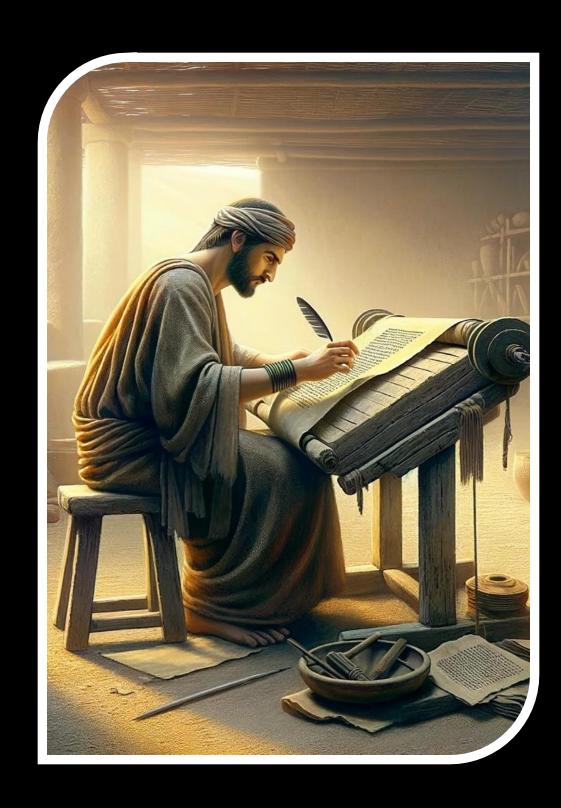
- Moses was unmistakably and undeniably validated as God's mouthpiece (Ex. 19:10-20; 20:18-21; Num. 12:6-8).
- Moses predicted other prophets would speak for God (Dt. 18:21-22).
- Moses provided two criteria to judge future prophets:
 - 1) Their predictions always come true (Dt. 18:21-22)
 - 2) Their message will always agree with previous revelation (Dt. 13:1-5)
- Moses also stated God would often authenticate true prophets with miracles (Ex. 4:1-5; 13:1-5).
- The true prophet's word was immediately accepted.



The Progression of Writing Prophets

- Moses (Dt. 31:24-26)
- Joshua (Josh. 24:26)
- Samuel (1 Sam. 10:25)
- A line of writing prophets...
 - 1 Ch. 29:29
 - 2 Ch. 9:29
 - 2 Ch. 12:15
 - 2 Ch. 13:22
 - 2 Ch. 20:34
 - 2 Ch. 32:32
 - 2 Ch. 33:19
- The Major & Minor Prophets





B. The Apocrypha



What the "Apocrypha" Is

- Meaning: "Things that are hidden"
- Content: LXX minus the Jewish OT
- Includes these writings...
 - 1 & 2 Esdras
 - Tobit
 - Judith
 - The Rest of Esther
 - The Wisdom of Solomon
 - Ecclesiasticus (a.k.a., Sirach)
 - Baruch

- The Song of the Three Holy Children
- Susanna
- Bel & the Dragon
- The Prayer of Manasseh
- 1 & 2 Maccabees



Arguments for Including the Apocrypha in the Canon

1. The early versions of Scripture included them.

2. The church fathers quote from them as authoritative.





- 1. The Apocrypha's own statements deny it is canonical (1 Macc. 4:45-46; 9:27).
 - 1 Maccabees 4:45-46 (c. 100 BC) "They tore down the altar and stored the stones in a convenient place on the temple hill until there should come a prophet to tell what to do with them."
 - 1 Maccabees 9:27 in the time of Maccabees, there had been no prophet for a long time; speaking of a time of great distress, the author writes, "Such as had not been since the time that prophets ceased to appear among them."





2. The Jews never accepted them as canonical.

- Josephus in *Against Apion*
- "We have not tens of thousands of books, discordant and conflicting, but only 22 ... which have been justly believed to be divine."
- "From Artaxerxes to our own times a complete history has been written but has not been deemed worthy of equal credit with the earlier records, because of the failure of the exact succession of the prophets."
- Talmud: "After the latter prophets Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi had died, the Holy Spirit departed from Israel."





- 3. The NT authors never once cite the Apocrypha, even though it was included in the LXX they used and quoted most.
- 4. Jesus affirmed the Jewish canon (Mt. 5:18; Lk. 24:44).





- 5. Church history argues against including the Apocrypha as part of the canon.
 - Melito, bishop of Sardis (170AD) earliest Christian list of OT books; 38 books (not Esther); not one book from Apocrypha
 - Eusebius (325AD) quotes Origen as affirming Melito's list
 - Athanasius (397AD) confirms books in our Bible except for Esther; mentions several Apocryphal books but says, "These are not indeed included in the canon but appointed by the Fathers to be read by those who newly join us, and who wish for instruction in the word of godliness."



- 5. Church history argues against including the Apocrypha as part of the canon.
 - Augustine
 - His list of canonical books includes most of the Apocrypha.
 - But he writes: "They are not found in the canon which the people of God received, because it is one thing to be able to write as men with the diligence of historians, and another as prophets with divine inspiration; the former pertained to the increase of knowledge; the latter to authority in religion, in which authority the canon is kept."



- 5. Church history argues against including the Apocrypha as part of the canon.
 - Jerome (404AD; completed Latin Vulgate)
 - Included the Apocrypha
 - In his "Helmed Prologue" to the books of Samuel-Kings, he lists the same content of our OT and addes this quote: "Whatever is not included in these is to be placed among the Apocrypha."
 - In his preface to the *Wisdom of Solomon*, he writes: "Just as the church reads Judith and Tobias and Maccabees (in public worship) but does not receive them into the canonical Scriptures, so let it read these two books also for the edification of the people, not for the establishing of the authority of the doctrines of the church."



- 5. Church history argues against including the Apocrypha as part of the canon.
 - <u>Gregory the Great</u> (pope c. 600AD) quotes *1 Maccabees* and says: "We address a testimony from books, though not canonical, yet published for the edification of the church."
 - <u>Cardinal Ximenes</u>, in the preface to his *Complutensian Polyglot*, which was "dedicated to Pope Leo X and approved by him," states that the Apocryphal books printed in it were not in the canon but used for edification.



The RCC Adds the Apocrypha to Canon of Scripture

When?

- During the Council of Trent
- April 8, 1546

Why?

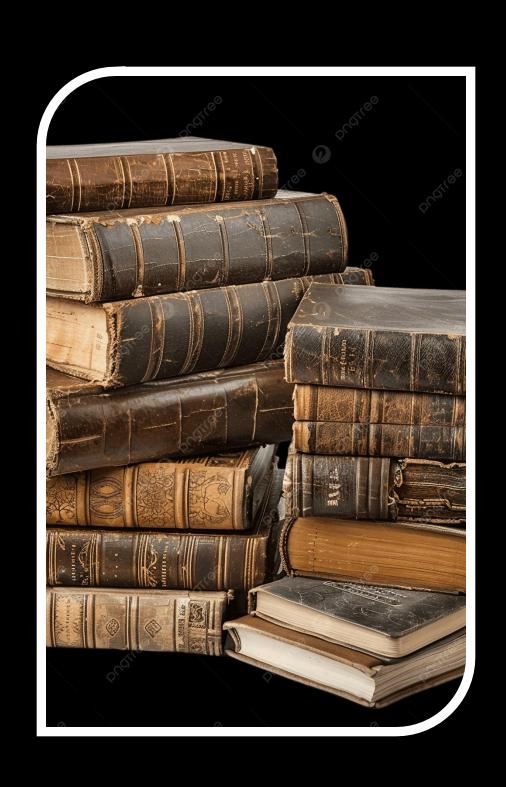
- 1. To defend its use of the Apocrypha in public worship
- 2. To defend its doctrine of purgatory (cf. 2 Maccabees 12:40-45)
- 3. To defend its support for the teaching of justification by faith <u>plus</u> works and not by faith alone.



A Summary of the Apocrypha

- Not inspired
- Not canonical
- Not authoritative
- Not to be treated differently from other human writings





C. The NT Canon



The History

The NT Era

- 1 Tim. 5:18
- 1 Cor. 14:37-38
- 2 Th. 2:5
- 2 Th. 3:6, 14
- 1 Th. 2:13

The Early Church Fathers

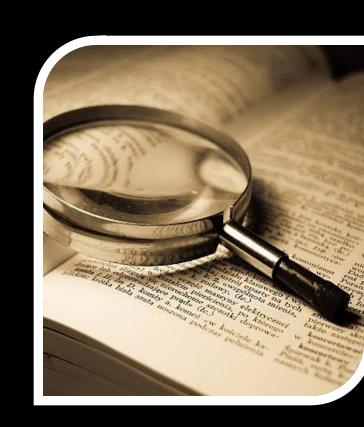
- Clement (95 AD): 8 (books)
- Ignatius (115 AD): 7
- Polycarp (108 AD): 15
- Irenaeus (185 AD): 21
- Muratorian Canon (170 AD): 24
- Athanasius (367 AD): 27
- The Councils (300s AD): 27



The Biblical Criteria for the NT Canon

- Jesus pre-authenticated the NT books...
 - He chose His apostles (Mk. 3:14; Acts 10:41; Eph. 2:20).
 - He authorized their writing (Jn. 14:26; 15:26-27; 16:12-15; 17:20).
- Harris: "The Lord Jesus did not...give us a list of the 27 NT books. He did, however, give us a list of the inspired authors. Upon them the church of Christ is founded, and by them the Word was written."





22 NT Books have Direct Apostolic Authorship

- Matthew
- John (Gospel, 3 Epistles, Revelation)
- Peter (1 & 2 Peter)
- James
- Paul (Romans Philemon)





The Five Non-Apostolic Books

- Mark
- Luke
- Acts
- Hebrews
- Jude

- Mark → Peter
- Luke \rightarrow Paul
- Acts → Paul
- Hebrews → Paul
- Jude -> James (Jesus' half-brother)



IV. The Closed Canon



The Closed Canon

- The age of OT prophets ended and there are no more apostles.
- Church history affirms the close of the canon.
- Heb. 1:1-2
- Jude 3
- Rev. 22:18-19





