

June 9, 2024

The Canon of Scripture

Many ideologies have been blended into Christianity. A large percentage of people who consider themselves Christian have stopped attending church or never did. The result is millions of people who are easily deceived and subverted away from true Christianity. Much of this happens through New Age philosophies and witchcraft as people create their own faith system.

There has always been an attack on the authenticity of Scripture. The New Age is usually very subtle in twisting the truth in the Bible, but there are those who are blatantly “deconstructing” the Bible. They systematically breakdown Scripture in order to cause doubt, even to the point of indicating Jesus is actually Lucifer! It is very easy to fall to this manipulation if you have not been trained up in the Word of God.

Pg 14 Kingdom Builder Prayer Book: “I clearly see and run with the vision: **“Teaching Answers for Life!”** Believing the Bible is the inspired, infallible, authoritative, spoken, living Word of God effectively working in me to change my life as God’s manifold wisdom is made known through me a to the principalities and powers in heavenly places.”

The foundation on which our Christian faith stands is the **Canon of Scripture**. If we have any doubt that the Bible is the inspired Word of God, our faith is broken and we cannot diligently seek God, for how can we seek God if we don’t know where to look?

Heb 11:6 *But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.*

Apart from being the Inspired Word of God, the Bible is the most amazing book ever written. There is nothing like it in the world! It is the most published book ever.

The Bible (Greek for “The Book”) is made up of 66 books written over a 1500-year period by over 40 authors. The first writings appeared over 3500 years ago by Moses. All 66 books were first compiled in the fifth century A.D. The New Testament is considered the best attested ancient document in the world by non-believers as well as believers. 39 Old Testament books and 27 New Testament books (gotquestions.com). This is often referred to as the Protestant Bible. Once words were written on parchment, God’s authority was always there. Man did not put it there through any “process.” Man was led by the Holy Spirit to see those writings that are divinely inspired and compile them into a book.

63,779 Cross-References: Even though the Bible was written over a 1,500-year period by over 40 authors, the words and themes contain cross-references that tie everything together! NT quotes from or alluding to every OT book but two. Jesus endorsed the Hebrew canon in Matt 22:35 by a statement connecting the start of the canon with the close of the canon. **Matt 23:35** *that on you may come all the righteous blood shed on the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah, son of Berechiah, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar.* Abel is in the Book of Genesis and Zechariah is recorded in 2 Chronicles which is the last book in the Hebrew Bible. Jesus was basically saying “from the first murder in the Bible to the last” giving credence to the entire OT canon.

Canon: Greek *kanwn*, and Hebrew word *qaneh*, and most likely the Akkadian word *qanu*. Literally a straight rod or bar; a measuring rule as a ruler, a rule or standard for testing straightness. It is a rule or law used to determine if a book measured up to a standard (bible.com). It is important to know, as soon as the writer penned the words, they were canonical. Most of the Christian Church agrees the completion of canon happened in A. D. 397.

Psalm 119:160 states that the entirety of God's Word is truth. Starting with that premise, we can compare writings outside the accepted canon of Scripture to see if they meet the test. As an example, the Bible claims that Jesus Christ is God (Isaiah 9:6-7; Matthew 1:22-23; John 1:1; 2, 14; 20:28; Acts 16:31; 34Philippians 2:5-6; Colossians 2:9; Titus 2:13; Hebrews 1:8; 2 Peter 1:1). **Yet many extra-biblical texts, claiming to be Scripture, argue that Jesus is not God.** When clear contradictions exist, the established Bible is to be trusted, leaving the others outside the sphere of Scripture, (gotquestions.com).

Jews and Christians both recognize all 39 books of the OT as Inspired, but only Christians believe the 27 NT books are inspired. Roman Catholics have 80 books in the Catholic Bible due to the inclusion of the Apocrypha.

Apocrypha: Means “hidden” and the word deuterocanonical means “second canon,” or semicanonical. These books were written/positioned between the Old and New Testaments. They are contained in the Catholic Bible. Some statements in the Apocrypha were not accurate and some of the teachings did not line up with the continuity of Scripture, so they were removed. The NT quotes the OT 250 times and none are from the Apocrypha. Jesus never quoted from the Apocrypha. It did not meet the standards of being “Divine” due to the lack of high moral and spiritual values reflected in the work of the Holy Spirit, so it was removed. The Apocrypha was part of the original version of the King James Version printed in 1611, but was removed 274 years later in 1885 A.D.

Torah: the Hebrew Bible meaning “to instruct.” It contains the first 5 books of the Protestant Bible, Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy.

Jewish/Hebrew Bible: this has the same 39 books as the Protestant Bible (Old Testament books).

Septuagint: Also aka LXX, this is the Hebrew Bible translated into the Greek Language. Septuagint is Latin for 70 and it is a tradition that 70 Jewish scholars were the translators. This was done around the third and second centuries BC in Alexandria Egypt.

Dead Sea Scrolls: were found by the northwest shores of the Dead Sea in 1947. Portions of the scrolls were written in 300 B.C. The scrolls contain all of the Old Testament writings except the book of Ruth and Esther help to prove its accuracy. These are some of the oldest historical documents ever found.

According to military historian C. Sanders, there are three criteria in which to test the validity of historical documents; bibliographical test, internal evidence test and the external evidence test.

The bibliographical test shows how reliable the copies are based on manuscripts and the time interval between the original and the copies. Aristotle wrote his poetics around 343 B.C. and yet the earliest copy we have is dated A.D. 1100 with only five manuscripts. Most of the New Testament was written around A.D. 70, the earliest copies are the papyri from the second century with over 20,000 manuscripts (more than any other historical document of its age). The closest is the Iliad with 643 manuscripts. Throughout the early centuries of the Church, few books were ever disputed and the list was basically settled by A.D. 303.

The internal evidence test determines whether that written record is credible and to what extent. It looks for contradictions of known facts. In essence, are the writers telling the truth? **Old Testament prophecies** about Jesus Christ: 60 major prophecies and 270 ramifications all fulfilled. Professor Stoner, author of the book *Science Speaks*, calculated the odds for a person to fulfill 8 major prophecies is 1 in 10 to the 17th power.

The external evidence test looks at other written documents and other sources outside of the manuscripts that substantiate its accuracy, reliability and authenticity. Many archaeological finds prove the authenticity of the NT.

The writer test: Did the book indicate God was speaking through the writer? Was the author an apostle or did he have an endorsement of an apostle? Was this book universally accepted by the Church? Was he considered a prophet? Authors of supporting documents: Athanasius, Polycarp, Irenaeus, Hippolytus, Josephus, and the list goes on. There were also councils created by our Church Fathers who studied the canon of Scripture starting as early as A. D. 90.

Conclusion: If God can create the entire universe, and He created man to have fellowship with Him and dominion over the Earth, would He not be capable of giving us a book with His instructions to do so? And then protect that book throughout the ages and pass it down from generation to generation until His Kingdom is fully restored on Earth? No other document of antiquity has been attested as much as the Bible, not even close. The scrutiny of the Bible far surpasses any book ever written.

