

**“Tough Questions: Why These 66 Books in the Bible?”**

**I. The Canon**

**A. The Meaning of Canon:**

1. **A straight rod/rule** (2 Cor. 10:13, 15, 16; Gal. 6:16; Phil. 3:16)
2. **A rule or a standard**
3. **A series or a list**

**B. The Canon of Scripture:**

1. **The list of books acknowledged to be inspired**
2. **The rule or standard of belief or practice**

**II. The Biblical Criteria** (see book: R. Laird Harris, “**The Inspiration and Canonicity of the Scriptures**”)

**A. The Old Testament**

**1. Jewish vs. Protestant Canon** (same content but different structure)

- a. **Number of Books** – 24 vs. 39 – Jewish canon combines some books (Samuel; Kings; Chronicles; Ezra-Nehemiah; 12 Minor Prophets)

**b. Order of Books**

- 1) **Protestant = Law; History** (Pre-Exilic = Joshua – 2 Chronicles; Post-Exilic = Ezra – Esther); **Wisdom** (Job – Song of Solomon); **Prophetic** (Major Prophets = Isaiah – Daniel; Minor Prophets = Hosea – Malachi)
- 2) **Jewish = Law** or Torah (Gen. – Deut.); The **Prophets** or Nevi'im (**Former** Prophets = Joshua, Judges, Samuel, Kings; **Latter** Prophets = Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel; Book of the Twelve = Hosea – Malachi); **Writings** or Kethuvim – (Psalms, Proverbs, Job, Song of Solomon, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, Esther, Daniel, Ezra-Nehemiah, Chronicles)

**2. Canon was endorsed by Christ** (Lk. 24:44)

**3. Canon was settled before Christ** – common view of Jewish scholars was that the Canon was closed around 400B.C. First century Jewish historian, Josephus, said it was completed during the reign of Artaxerxes (roughly the time of Ezra) and a group of leaders headed by Ezra collected, recognized, and preserved the canon. See Neh. 8:1-8; Ezra 7:6, 10-11.

**4. How was the OT Canon universally accepted?**

**a. Moses was unmistakably and undeniably validated as God’s mouthpiece** (Ex. 19:10ff; Num. 12:1ff)

- Ex. 17:14; 24:3-7; 34:27f – Moses wrote at the command of God
- Num. 33:1f; Dt. 31:9, 22, 24-26
- Pentateuch written by Moses as God commanded him – Josh. 1:7; 8:31f; 22:5; 23:6

**b. Moses predicted that others like him would continue to speak for God.**

- Dt. 18:14-18; Num. 12:6; Ex. 7:1; Jer. 1:7-9; 18:18; Ezek. 37:26; 1 Kings 22:1ff

- c. **Moses provided two criteria by which future prophets must be judged:**
  - **Deut. 18:21-22** – true prophet’s predictions will always come true
  - **Deut. 13:1-5** – the true prophet’s message will always be in complete doctrinal agreement with previous revelation
- d. **Moses also seemed to indicate that God would often authenticate true prophets with miracles (Ex. 4:1-5).**
- e. **The true prophet’s word was immediately accepted.**

**5. The Progression of Writing Prophets:**

- a. **Moses**
- b. **Joshua 24:26-28**
- c. **Samuel – 1 Sam. 10:25**
- d. **1 Chron. 29:29; 2 Chron. 9:29; 2 Chron. 12:15; 2 Chron. 13:22; 2 Chron. 20:34; 2 Chron. 32:32; 2 Chron. 33:19**
- e. **The Major & Minor Prophets**

**B. Apocrypha in the Canon? No!**

**1. What is it? “Things that are hidden”**

- 2. Books mixed in with the OT in the Septuagint:** 1 & 2 Esdras; Tobit; Judith; The rest of Esther (added to Esther); The Wisdom of Solomon; Ecclesiasticus; Baruch (prayer of Jeremiah); The Song of the Three Holy Children (added to Daniel); Susanna; Bel & the Dragon; The Prayer of Manasseh; 1 & 2 Maccabees
- **Note:** There are other books called the “Pseudepigrapha” or “False Writings” that were not accepted at all.

**3. The Arguments for inclusion in the Canon:**

- a. **The Septuagint includes them**
- b. **The church fathers quote from them as authoritative**

**4. The Arguments Against inclusion in the Canon:**

- a. **The Apocrypha’s own statements (1 Macc. 4; 9)**
- b. **The Jews never accepted them as canonical.**
- c. **The NT writers never cite them.**
- d. **Jesus affirmed the Jewish canon (Lk. 24:44) but not the Apocrypha.**
- e. **Church history argues against them.**
  - **Melito, bishop of Sardis (180 A.D.)**
  - **Eusebius (325 A.D.)**
  - **Athanasius (397 A.D.)**
  - **Augustine (430 A.D.)**
  - **Jerome (404 A.D.)**
  - **Gregory the Great (600 A.D.)**
  - **Cardinal Ximenes for Pope Leo X (early 1500’s A.D.)**
  - **Everything changed at the Council of Trent (April 8, 1546)**

### III. Church Recognition of the Canon

#### A. Old Testament was accepted by early church

#### B. New Testament Criteria

1. **Apostolicity** = was it written by an apostle or someone an apostle authorized?
2. **Antiquity** = was it written during the Apostolic age?
3. **Orthodoxy** = was a book doctrinally correct and in agreement with the Apostolic faith? (particularly concerning Christ)
4. **Catholicity** = was the book virtually universally accepted throughout the church as inspired?
5. **Lection** = was the book being widely read and used in the churches?
6. **Inspiration** = did the book have the qualities of an inspired writing when compared to other inspired books?

#### C. History of Recognition

##### 1. Age of Apostles

- a. **Paul** (1 Tim. 5:18 cf. Dt. 25:4 and Lk. 10:7)
- b. **Peter** (2 Pet. 3:15f)
- c. **Immediately accepted by churches** (1 Cor. 14:37-38; 2 Thess. 2:5; 3:6, 14; 1 Thess. 2:13)
- d. **Read by churches** (Col. 4:16; 1 Thess. 5:27)

##### 2. Post-apostolic

- a. **Clement of Rome** (c. 95 AD) – he mentions 8 of the NT books as Scripture
- b. **Ignatius** (c. 115 AD) – mentions 7 of the NT books
- c. **Polycarp** (c. 108 AD; a disciple of John) – acknowledges 15 of the NT books
- d. **Irenaeus** (185 AD) – listed 21 of the NT books
- e. **Hippolytus** (170-235 AD) – 22 of the NT books
- f. **The Muratorian Canon** (170 AD) – included all books except Hebrews, James and the Epistles of John
- g. **Athanasius** wrote (367 AD) he cited the 27 books of the NT as being the only true books from God
- h. **Council of Laodicea** (363 AD) – stated the OT and the 27 books of the NT are to be read in the churches
- i. **Council of Hippo** (393 AD) – affirmed the 27 books
- j. **Council of Carthage** (397 AD) – affirmed only the 66 books should be read in the churches

### IV. Canon Recognized, not Determined

#### A. Pre-authenticated by Jesus

#### B. Chosen Apostles (sent ones)

#### C. Holy Spirit's Authority in their writing (Jn. 14:25f; 15:26f; 16:12-15; 17:20f; Acts 2:43; 14:3; 2 Cor. 12:11-12)

#### D. List of Inspired Authors (apostles)

1. **Direct Apostolic Authorship:**
  - a. **Matthew**
  - b. **John**
  - c. **Peter**

- d. **James** (1 Cor. 15:7; Gal. 1:19)
- e. **Paul** (Gal. 1; 1 Cor. 9:1; Gal. 2:1-10; 2 Pet. 3:16)

2. **Five Non-Apostolic Authors:**

- a. **Mark** (by way of Peter)
- b. **Luke & Acts** (by way of Paul)
- c. **Jude** (by way of James; both were a half-brother of Jesus – Jude 1)
- d. **Hebrews** (under Paul's influence)

V. **Is the Canon Closed? Yes!**

- A. **Age of OT prophets ended; no more apostles** (Eph. 2:20; Rev. 21:14)
- B. **Church History**
- C. **Heb. 1:1-2**
- D. **Jude 3**
- E. **Rev. 22:18-19** (cf. Dt. 4:2; 12:32; Prov. 30:5-6)

So what?

**Discussion & Application:**

1. Was the Canon of Scripture determined by a church council or officially recognized by a church council? What difference does that make?
2. What does it mean that the “canon” is the rule or standard of belief or practice?
3. Read Ps. 19:7-11; 2 Pet. 1:3-4 and Jude 3. Is the Word of God sufficient for every area of belief and practice?
4. Why is it important to establish a canon of Scripture? What are the benefits to the believer of knowing that we have everything God wanted us to know for this life? How does a closed canon of Scripture help us identify false religions and cults?
5. Is there obvious evidence in your daily lifestyle that you truly believe the 66 books of the Bible are the inspired Word of God? If so, what is the evidence? If not, what can you do about it this week?