

# The Canon of Scripture

## Introduction

The word “canon” means a straight rod, rule, or standard.

In constructing a building, a plumb-line or a level may be used to determine if a wall is straight or a floor is level. Once a cornerstone or benchmark is set, the rest of the building is measured from that point.

There are standards by which we can determine whether a book or writing should be part of the Bible or not.

Over the last 75 years or so, there have been several books written with the title “The Lost Books of the Bible”. The contention is usually that someone thinks there are other writings that should be part of the Bible. The same people also claim bias or prejudice that keeps (or kept) their particular favored book(s) from being included in the Canon of Scripture. For example, someone of the Mormon persuasion may contend that the Book of Mormon should be included in the Bible.

The Bible was written over a period of approximately 1600 years by 40 different writers. Other things were written that were not included in the Bible. How was that determination made.

I am confident that there is nothing missing from the Bible.

2 Peter 1:3

seeing that his divine power hath granted unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that called us by his own glory and virtue;

## The Canon of the Old Testament

We are accustomed to having an Old Testament which consists of 39 books. The Hebrews include the same familiar content, but they have arranged it into 25 books.

Law	Prophets	Writings
Genesis	Joshua	Job
Exodus	Judges	Psalms
Leviticus	Samuel	Proverbs
Number	Kings	Ecclesiastes
Deuteronomy	Isaiah	Song of Solomon
	Jeremiah	Ezra
	Ezekiel	Nehemiah
	The Twelve	Esther
		Daniel
		Ruth
		Chronicles
		Lamentations

### The Law

1. Exodus 24:4-7
  - a. Moses told the people all the Lord's words and laws
  - b. People responded "Everything the Lord has said we will do."
  - c. Moses wrote everything down.
  - d. Moses read the Book of the Covenant to the people.
  - e. The people responded to the reading.
2. Exodus 34:28; Deuteronomy 4:13
  - a. Moses wrote down the 10 commandments on tablets of stone
  - b. The random development of new organs such as lungs
  - c. The random development of new body plans
3. Numbers 33:2
  - a. Moses wrote down the journeys of the people
4. Deuteronomy 31:24
  - a. Moses completed writing the words of this law in a book
  - b. The book was placed in the ark of the covenant (some translations read "by" instead of "in")
  - c. The ark of the covenant was in the most holy place of the tabernacle.

5. Critics claim that Moses did not write the first five books of the Bible, and that they were written as late as 300 BC by someone else.
  - a. The scriptures cited above seem to make it very clear that Moses wrote “The Law” and that he wrote it during his lifetime.
  - b. Jewish tradition is that Joshua wrote Deuteronomy 34, the account of Moses’ death. (See Joshua 24:26)
6. Joshua 1:7-8
  - a. The book of the Law existed for Joshua
7. Joshua 8:32-35
  - a. Joshua wrote a COPY of the law of Moses.
  - b. He read all the word of the Law to the people.
8. 1 Kings 2:1-3
  - a. David had the law of Moses in written form
9. 2 Kings 22:8-13
  - a. Book of the Law had been lost and was found during the 18<sup>th</sup> year of Josiah’s reign.
10. Nehemiah 8:1-8
  - a. The book of the Law was there during the rebuilding of Jerusalem
  - b. Early morning until mid-day
  - c. People stood when the book was opened
11. Nehemiah 8:14
  - a. Feast of tabernacles
    - i. Leviticus 23:34
    - ii. Deuteronomy 16:13-16
    - iii. Deuteronomy 31:10
  - b. The book of the law was not just Exodus or the 10 commandments, it was the first five books.

### **The Prophets**

1. When inspired materials came from the pen of those who were known to be prophets, they were immediately regarded as authoritative.
2. Joshua 26:24-26
  - a. Joshua is regarded as a prophet, and the words he wrote down are considered scripture.
3. 1 Samuel 10:25
  - a. The sanctity of Samuel’s writing is seen in the fact that it was “laid up before the Lord”.

- b. Similar to Moses instructions for the book of the law (Deuteronomy 31:24-26)
- 4. Isaiah 30:8
  - a. "...note it in a book, that it may be for the time to come for ever and ever."
- 5. Jeremiah 36:1-2
  - a. "... this word came from Jehovah ... Take thee a roll of a book, and write therein all the words that I have spoken unto thee against Israel, and against Judah, and against all the nations, from the day I spake unto thee, from the days of Josiah, even unto this day.
- 6. 2 Kings 19:1-7
  - a. Isaiah recognized as a prophet of God
- 7. 2 Chronicles 36:22
  - a. The word of the Lord spoken by the mouth of Jeremiah
- 8. Ezra 1:1
  - a. That the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled
- 9. Daniel 9:2
  - a. Daniel understood Jeremiah to be a prophet of God
  - b. Daniel refers to "books" and then specifically to Jeremiah
  - c. Daniel looking at Jeremiah 25:11

## **The Writings**

- 1. Evidence is not as abundant as for the law and the prophets
- 2. Psalms
  - a. Written by different men, beginning with Moses, ending not later than Ezra and Nehemiah, a period of about 1000 years.
  - b. 116 direct quotations from Psalms in the New Testament
  - c. Psalms is divided into five books
    - i. "It is presumed that these several collections were made at times of high religious life: the first, probably, near the close of David's life; the second in the days of Solomon; the third by the singers of Jehoshaphat (2 Chr. 20:19); the fourth by the men of Hezekiah (2 Chr. 29, 30, 31); and the fifth in the days of Ezra."
  - d. Psalm 90 was written by Moses
  - e. About 2/3 of the psalms have been attributed to David
  - f. 2 Samuel 23:1-2

- i. “The Spirit of the Lord spake by me”
  - g. 1 Chronicles 6:31-39
    - i. Men appointed over the service of song in the house of the Lord
    - ii. Includes Asaph, writer of about 12 psalms (50, 73-83)
  - h. Some were written in captivity (126, 137)
  - i. Luke 24:44
    - i. Recognized by Jesus
- 3. Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon
  - a. Written mostly by Solomon
  - b. 1 Kings 3:1-15
    - i. Solomon asked for and was granted wisdom
  - c. Oracle (or prophecy)
    - i. A prophetic utterance
      - 1. Isaiah 14:28
      - 2. 2 Kings 9:25
      - 3. Ezekiel 12:10
      - 4. Proverbs 30:1
        - a. An oracle (or prophecy of Agur)
      - 5. Proverbs 31:1
        - a. A prophecy taught to Lemuel by his mother
- 4. Job and Daniel
  - a. Ezekiel 14:14, 20
    - i. Job was well-known to captive Israel
  - b. Ezekiel 28:3
    - i. Daniel recognized by captive Israel to have divinely-sent wisdom
- 5. Ezra, Nehemiah, Chronicles
  - a. Provide a record of how God interacted with his people in various periods of their history.
  - b. The people of God saw something in this writings that they did not see in 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Maccabees (which were rejected from the Hebrew canon of scripture).
- 6. Lamentations
  - a. Recognized as being written by the prophet Jeremiah
- 7. Ruth
  - a. Provides a vital link in the story of the lineage of David and thus the Messiah.

## Interbiblical Silence

1. Malachi 4:5-6
  - a. The Old Testament closes with a prediction of a prophet to come
2. Matthew 11:13, 14
  - a. Jesus refers to Malachi stating that John the Baptist is the Elijah (Elias) who was foretold.
3. Some statements from interbiblical Jewish writings
  - a. Maccabees (approximately 125 BC)
    - i. 1 Maccabees 4:46
      1. "... so they pulled down the alter, and laid down the stones in the mountain of the house in a convenient place, until a prophet should come and decide concerning them"
    - ii. 1 Maccabees 9:27
      1. "... and there was great tribulation in Israel, such as was not since the time that a prophet had appeared to them"
    - iii. 1 Maccabees 14:41
      1. "... And the Jews were well pleased that Simon should be their leader ... forever, until a faithful prophet should arise"
  - b. Josephus
    - i. Against Apion, I.8
      1. "From Artexerxes to our own time the 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"
      2. "For although such long ages have now passed, no one has ventured either to add or to remove or to alter a syllable."
      3. Note: Artexerxes became king of Persia in 465 BC
      4. "Our books, those which are justly accredited, are but two and twenty, and contain the record of all time. Of these, five are the books of Moses, comprising the laws and the traditional history from the birth of man to the death of the lawgiver

... From the death of Moses until Artaxerxes, who succeeded Xerxes as king of Persia, the Prophets subsequent to Moses wrote the history of the events of their own times in thirteen books. The remaining four books contain hymns to God and precepts for the conduct of human life.”

ii. The thirteen books mentioned by Josephus

1. Joshua
2. Judges + Ruth
3. Samuel
4. Kings
5. Chronicles
6. Ezra – Nehemiah
7. Esther
8. Job
9. Isaiah
10. Jeremiah + Lamentations
11. Ezekiel
12. Minor Prophets
13. Daniel

iii. The four books mentioned by Josephus

1. Psalms
2. Song of Solomon
3. Proverbs
4. Ecclesiastes

4. The thirty nine books we know as our Old Testament, have continued to be accepted as canonical in discussions by Jewish Rabbis between 200 BC and 200 AD.

- a. Ecclesiastes and Song of Solomon received the most scrutiny by the Rabbis
- b. Obviously they have been retained in the Hebrew Old Testament canon

5. The Apocrypha

- a. Some highly-esteemed Jewish books of a religious or historical nature were written during the interbiblical period.
- b. The early Catholic Church accepted eleven of them at its Council of Carthage in 397 AD
- c. The Latin Vulgate maintained these books as part of the canon until close to 1600 AD

- i. The reformers rejected the Apocrypha and Catholics were warned not to reject them
- ii. A major factor in rejection is that the Hebrew Bible does not include them
- iii. Origen, writing about 300-400 AD
  - 1. “But it should be known that there are twenty-two canonical books, according to the Hebrew tradition; the same as the number of letters of their alphabet.”

d. The Books

- i. 1 Esdras
- ii. 2 Esdras
- iii. Tobit
- iv. Additions to Esther
- v. Wisdom of Solomon
- vi. Baruch
- vii. Additions to Daniel
- viii. Prayer of Manasses
- ix. 1 Maccabees
- x. 2 Maccabees
- xi. Ecclesiasticus (also called Sirach)

## **New Testament Evidence for the Canon of the Old Testament**

1. Luke 11:50-51
  - a. Blood of Abel (Genesis)
  - b. Blood of Zechariah (2 Chronicles 24:20-21)
  - c. Genesis is the 1<sup>st</sup> book of the Hebrew Bible
  - d. Chronicles is the last book of the Hebrew Bible
  - e. Jesus seems to be incorporating ALL of the Hebrew canon
2. Luke 24:44
  - a. *These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me*
  - b. Psalms is the first book of the last section (writings) of the Hebrew canon
3. The phrase “It is written” is found 25 times in the gospels (KJV). A few examples are:
  - a. Matthew 21:13

- b. Mark 7:6
  - c. Luke 7:27
  - d. John 6:31
4. The quotation of the Old Testament in the New Testament is very strong evidence that the Old Testament was universally regarded as authoritative in first century Judaism and Christianity.
- a. You don't find quotations from 1 Maccabees or 2 Maccabees or other apocryphal books in the New Testament
  - b. A few references can be found to extra-biblical writings, such as Jude 14 quoting from 1<sup>st</sup> Enoch 1:9.

### **The Canon of the New Testament**

1. Matthew 28:18-20
  - a. Jesus commissioned the apostles
2. John 14:26; 16:13
  - a. Jesus promised the guidance of the Holy Spirit to the apostles
3. Acts 1:4-8; 2:1-4, 33
  - a. Jesus fulfilled the promise of the Holy Spirit
4. Acts 2:42
  - a. Apostles commissioned by Jesus
  - b. Apostles received promise of guidance into all the truth (John 16:13)
5. Hebrews 2:3-4
  - a. 1<sup>st</sup> spoken by the Lord
  - b. Confirmed by those who heard him (Apostles)
  - c. Witnessed by signs, wonders, miracles, gifts of the Holy Spirit
6. Jude 17
  - a. Remember the words spoken by the apostles
7. Peter
  - a. 2 Peter 3:2
    - i. Remember the words spoken before by the holy prophets and the commandment of us the apostles of the Lord and Saviour
  - b. 1 Peter 5:1; 2 Peter 1:16-21
    - i. Peter a witness of the sufferings of Christ
    - ii. Eyewitnesses of His majesty
    - iii. Heard the voice from heaven on the holy mount
8. Paul
  - a. 1 Corinthians 2:13; 15:8; Galatians 1:11-12

- i. Paul speaks words taught by the Holy Spirit
    - ii. Paul saw Jesus
    - iii. Paul received the gospel by revelation of Jesus Christ
  - b. 2 Thessalonians 3:6, 14
    - i. Obedience to his teachings the basis of Christian fellowship
- 9. John
  - a. John 19:35; 21:24; 1 John 5:13; Revelation 1:1, 9-ff
    - i. He that saw it bare record (John refers to himself in the 3<sup>rd</sup> person)
    - ii. This disciple testified, wrote, know that his testimony is true
    - iii. Written to you that believe, know that you have eternal life, believe on the name of the Son of God
    - iv. Signified by His angel unto his servant John
    - v. John was in the Spirit on the Lord's day
- 10. Writings were circulated during the lifetime of the apostles and were regarded as truth
  - a. 2 Thessalonians 2:2, 15
    - i. Both spoken and written messages to be held steadfastly
  - b. 1 Timothy 5:18
    - i. Quoted from Luke 10:7
    - ii. Referred to his source as "scripture"
    - iii. Luke was not an apostle, but was a Christian prophet

Αξιός ο εργατής του μισθού αυτού  
(GREEK: 1 TIMOTHY 5:18)

Αξιός γάρ ο εργατής του μισθού αυτού  
(GREEK: LUKE 10:7)

- iv. The only difference is that Paul omitted the introductory word "for" (γάρ)
    - v. Apostolic approval of writings such as Luke caused early Christians to accept them as authoritative also.

## Quotations of Scripture in Writings of Early Christians

	PSEUDO BARNABAS (C. 70-130)	CLEMENT OF ROME (C. 95-97)	IGNATIUS (C. 110)	POLYCARP (C. 110-150)	HERMAS (C. 115-140)	DIDACHE (C. 120-150)	PAPIAS (C. 130-140)	IRENAEUS (C. 130-202)	DEOGNETUS (C. 150)	JUSTIN MARTYR (C. 150-155)	CLEMENT OF ALEX. (C. 150-215)	TERTULLIAN (C. 150-220)	ORIGEN (C. 185-254)	CYRIL O' JERUSLAEM (C. 315-386)	EUSEBIUS (C. 325-340)	JEROME (C. 340-420)	AUGUSTINE (C. 400)
MATT	X	X		X	X	X		O		X	X	X	X	O	O	O	O
MARK	X			X	X			O		X	X	X	X	O	O	O	O
LUKE	X			X		X		O		X	X	X	X	O	O	O	O
JOHN		X		X			X	O		O	X	X	X	O	O	O	O
ACTS				X	X			O		X	X	X	X	O	O	O	O
ROM		X		X		X		O		X	O	X	X	O	O	O	O
1 COR		O		X	X	X		O		X	O	X	X	O	O	O	O
2 COR				X	X			O	X	X	O	X	X	O	O	O	O
GAL				X				O	X	X	O	X	X	O	O	O	O
EPH	X	X	X	X				O		X	X	X	X	O	O	O	O
PHIL			X	X	X			O			O	X	X	O	O	O	O
COL			X	X				O	X	X	O	X	X	O	O	O	O
1 THESS			X	X	X	X		O		X	X	X	X	O	O	O	O
2 THESS			X	X				O		X	X	X	X	O	O	O	O
1 TIM		X		X	X	X		X			O	X	X	O	O	O	O
2 TIM	X				X			X				X	X	O	O	O	O
TITUS	X	X						X	X		O	X	X	O	O	O	O
PHILEMON			X											O	O	O	O
HEB	X	X			X			X			O	X	?	O	O	O	O
JAMES		X			X									O	?	O	O
1 PETER	X			X	X			O		X	O	X	O	O	O	O	O
2 PETER	X	X											?	O	?	O	O
1 JOHN				X	X			O			O	X		O	O	O	O
2 JOHN				X				X					?	O	?	O	O
3 JOHN													?	O	?	O	O
JUDE								X			O	X		O	?	O	O
REV					X	X	O	O		X	O	X	O		O	O	O

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X --- NT quotation

O --- Writer regards NT book as authentic

? --- Writer mentions a dispute about the canonicity of the book

## The Canon of Eusebius

1. Eusebius 260 AD – 340 AD
2. Highly-regarded as a historian
3. Categorized the books of the New Testament, reflecting the highly unanimous acceptance of the contents of the New Testament canon at the time he lived

<b>Recognized</b>	<b>Disputed</b>	<b>Not Genuine</b>
Gospels	James	Acts of Paul
Acts	Jude	Apocalypse of Peter
Epistles of Paul (including Hebrews)	2 Peter	Epistle of Barnabas
1 Peter	2 John	Didache
1 John	3 John	
Revelation		

4. Manuscripts from the 4<sup>th</sup> century include all 27 books that we know as our New Testament
  - a. Codex Vaticanus
  - b. Code Sinaiticus

**We have every reason to believe that our Bible contains exactly those books which it is intended to contain.**

1. The 66 books have stood the test of time
2. The 66 books have stood the test of doctrinal examination
3. The 66 books have stood the test of historical examination
4. We must submit our lives to the things which are taught in these holy books if we hope to live with God in eternity.