

Canon: Why These Books?

Why These Books?

- “Canon”: from Greek and Hebrew words meaning “measuring rod”
- Canonicity: the standard that books had to meet to be recognized as God-inspired Scripture

The Canon

- The collection of 66 books were properly recognized by the early church as the complete, authoritative Scriptures
 - Not to be added to or subtracted from (Duet. 12:32; Prov. 30:6)

Tests of Canonicity

- Authoritative: Claims to be written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit
- Prophetic (see 2 Peter 1:20)
 - A book in the Bible must have the authority of a spiritual leader of Israel
 - O.T.: Prophet, King, Judge, Scribe
 - N.T.: Apostle, or based on the testimony of an original Apostle
- Authentic: Consistent with the rest of Scripture
- Accepted: Used as Scripture by believers who first received it (1 Thess. 2:13)

The History of Canonization

- Old Testament Canon
 - Christ refers to Old Testament books as “Scripture” (Matt. 21:42, etc.)
 - The Council of Jamnia (A.D. 90) officially recognized our 39 Old Testament books
 - Josephus, the Jewish historian (A.D. 95), indicated that the 39 books were recognized as authoritative
- New Testament Canon
 - The Apostles claimed authority for their writings (Col. 3:16; 1 Thess. 5:27; 2 Thess. 3:14)
 - The Apostle’s writings were equated with Old Testament scriptures (2 Pet. 3:1, 2, 15, 16)
 - The Councils of Athenasius (A.D. 367) & Carthage (A.D. 397) recognized the 27 books in our New Testament today as inspired

Disputed Books

- Esther
 - Not among the Dead Sea Scrolls
 - Never mentions God
 - Describes a Jewish woman marry a non-Jewish man
 - *Canon*: Mentioned in all the Councils, and early lists
- Jude
 - References two extra-Biblical sources
 - The Testament of Moses (v. 9)

- 1 Enoch (v. 14-15)
 - *Canon*: Mentioned in all the Councils, and early lists
 - Message is consistent with Scripture
 - Author has Apostolic authority
 - Accepted as authentic from the outset
- The Apocrypha = “Hidden Things”
 - 15 books written in the 400 years between Malachi and Matthew
 - 1, 2 Esdras; Additions to Esther; 1, 2 Maccabees; Tobias; Judith; Wisdom of Solomon; Sirach; Baruch; Epistle of Jeremiah; Susanna; Prayer of Azariah; Prayer of Manasseh; Bel and the Dragon
 - The Epistle to the Laodiceans: claimed to be written by Paul
 - The Roman Catholic Church sees them as deuterocanonical
 - *Not Canon*
 - The Jews never accepted the Apocrypha as Scripture.
 - Never claims to be inspired
 - In fact, 1 Maccabees 9:27 denies it
 - Never quoted as authoritative in Scriptures
 - Though, Heb. 11:35-38 alludes to historical events recorded in 2 Maccabees 6:18-7:42
 - Jesus implied that the close of Old Testament historical scripture was the death of Zechariah (c. 400 B.C.) (Matt. 23:35)
 - This excludes any books written after Malachi and before the New Testament
- Pseudepigrapha
 - “False writings”
 - Often claimed to be written by someone who was obviously not the author in order to gain acceptance
 - OT Pseudepigrapha
 - Written in the Intertestamental period
 - Include 78+ Books:
 - 1-3 Enoch; 2-4 Baruch; 3, 4 Esdras; 5, 6 Ezra; 3-8 Maccabees; Several Apocalypses; Assumption of Moses*; Jubilees; Psalms of Solomon; Sibylline Oracles; Several Testaments
 - Testament of Moses may be alluded to in Jude 1:9
 - 1 Enoch is quoted in Jude 1:14-15
 - NT Pseudepigrapha: Written in or after 2nd century AD
 - Often claimed Apostles’ names to gain credibility
 - Ex. Gospel of Thomas, The Gospel of Peter, Gospel of Mary Magdalene
 - Include some fanciful stories of Jesus’ childhood and some heretical doctrines
- Apostolic Fathers
 - Sincerely written books
 - Have some devotional value and reveal some of the insights of Christian leaders after the 1st century

- Ex.) Clement, Ignatius, Polycarp*, Shepherd of Hermas, Didache, etc.
- Valuable historically, and even spiritually helpful
- Do not measure up to the standards of canonicity and were not recognized as Scripture