

The Bible

God's Inspired and Complete Truth

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Please note: that many, many Jews and Christians has given their lives to protect and pass the Holy Bible down through the generations. Also this is a totally different question than "What does the Bible mean to me?" This latter question is usually couched in the context of the discussion of interpreting the meaning of some Bible passage. That is a totally different question for another paper. The focus of this question is to discuss what the nature of the entire Bible is. What is its status as a self-standing object in the world and then what value do I place of the entire Bible in correlation to my life?

Are the 66 books of the "Bible" to be considered the beginning and ending of God's special revelation to man? Or does or has God given us specific, clear, undeniable additional revelation acknowledged as from His mouth after Rev 22:21?

What is the Word of God to me?

How we answer this question totally affects all our relationships with God, with our spouse, with our children, with our friends, with our work, with strangers we meet ... everyone.

How do we know God' s name ... the Bible
How do we know what God likes ... the Bible
How do we know how to please God ... the Bible
How do we know what angers God ... the Bible
How do we know of God's historical interaction with man ... the Bible
How do we know of God's judgment of man ... the Bible
How do we know of God's redemptive plan for man ... the Bible
How do we know what God considers love from man ... the Bible
How do we know about Jesus ... the Bible
How do we know about Jesus' claim to be God and Israel's Messiah ... the Bible
How do we know about Jesus rising from the dead ... the Bible
How do we know about the Holy Spirit ... the Bible etc., etc.

The list may seem redundant but the list could go on ad infinitum branching out into virtually everything we know of God and all teachings (doctrine) about all spiritual subjects. But the point making here is that the 66 books we call the Holy Bible is a unique collection of writings that hold a higher place than the mere writings of a collection of men and are the only writings that should be elevated to this higher level.

To answer this question, we have to look at the details. Without looking deeper at details, then we are left with no substance with which to discuss. At that point we are not allowing the Biblical text to speak for itself. Our discussion is left to conjecture and opinion resulting from our own knowledge, our own rational, and our own judgment - in fact we are in the place of God judging His Word. (But is that not what councils did in the past?) This is not a new idea by any means. The discussion of are all 66 books of the Bible the complete and end of God's "Word" to mankind has been going on ever since Moses penned the first Words of God.

But one thing must be clear for the believer - FAITH. God has never and will never ask anyone to kiss away your mind and intellect and take a leap of blind faith. This is something that the liberal, atheistic, "I'm-so-smart-you-can't-stand-me" crowd has always thrown at Christians. As was said in our discussion Tuesday night, God is okay with any question you want to throw at him. I have a degree in Philosophy from a secular University and can attest to that fact. During my time at the University, I was an odd ball for believing as I did as a Christian and being a Philosophy major. I got it from sides, Christians and non-Christians. The faith comes in on everything in the Christian life. So just as you had to exercise faith to come to a saving faith in Jesus' death replacement for you personally, you have to exercise that same faith in believing God's Word "IS" God's Word. But remember it is a reasonable faith - a step of faith and not a blind leap. But it is faith all the same.

Just as there is evidence that demands a verdict (borrowing from a famous book title) relative to Jesus being Who He claimed to be (we know this from the Bible by the way...), there is also evidence external and internal that attests to the Holy Bible as:

- Inspired -God superintended the human authors of Scripture so that what they wrote was simultaneously their own words as well the Word of God Himself; God "breathed out" His words through the words (using the minds and personalities) of His spokespeople. Inspiration is not limited to just the penning of the words but also occurs in a variety of situations involving the writers as whole people (their minds, emotions and wills, etc) in their own particular life situations (linguistic, religious, political, economic, etc.). The end product, however, was always God's Word to man through man (2 Tim. 3:16; 2 Pet. 1:20-21) and carries God's "full weight and authority."¹
- Inerrant - (without error) properly understood does not diminish the human authorship of the scripture. If what the authors of Scripture penned was indeed under the supernatural influence and guidance of the Holy Spirit, then since God is true, what they wrote and affirmed is in all ways true as well. Inerrancy refers to the original manuscripts and the Greek, Hebrew and Aramaic copies insofar as they faithfully reproduce the original manuscripts (autographa).¹

The Scriptures: We believe (faith) the Bible to be the verbally inspired Word of God without error in the original writings, and the supreme and final authority in doctrine and practice.

This question at hand has to deal with the word CANON.

Definition: "Canon" is a word that comes from Greek and Hebrew words that literally means a measuring rod. So canonicity describes the standard that books had to meet to be recognized as scripture.

Why important? Bottom line if you are going to consider a book to be God's Word to man through and carries God's "full weight and authority" and that it is the supreme and final authority in doctrine and practice, you better KNOW what you are picking!

Also look at the question posed Tuesday night similar to these: How do we know that the 66 books in our Bible are the only inspired books? Who decided which books were truly inspired

by God? The Roman Catholic Bible includes books that are not found in other Bibles (called the Apocrypha). How do we know that we as Protestants have the right books? These questions are addressed by a study of canonicity.

On the one hand, deciding which books were inspired seems like a human process. Christians gathered together at church councils in the first several centuries A.D. for the purpose of officially recognizing which books are inspired. **But it's important to remember that these councils did not determine which books were inspired. They simply recognized what God had already determined.**²

It is essential to remember that **the Bible is self-authenticating** since its books were breathed out by God (2 Tim. 3:16). In other words, the books were canonical the moment they were written. It was not necessary to wait until various councils could examine the books to determine if they were acceptable or not. Their canonicity was inherent within them, since they came from God. People and councils only recognized and acknowledged what is true because of the intrinsic inspiration of the books as they were written. **No Bible book became canonical by action of some church council.**³

What was the historical necessity for the choosing of what books to include?

There are undoubtedly many reasons which prompted early Christians to preserve the writings of the apostles, but perhaps the passing away of the apostles as well as the development of heresies (e.g., Marcion) and doctrinal (teaching) disputes, were two of the most significant, negatively viewed. Also, the Diocletian persecution (AD 303-11), in which Christians were tortured, their property taken, and their sacred books destroyed by fire, undoubtedly helped to move the church along in its recognition of which books were sacred (i.e., inspired) and which were not. That is, there arose the need to know which books to copy and preserve in light of the possibility that the state (government) continue to try and destroy the faith.

Summary:

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.

Tests of Canonicity:

The early church councils applied several basic standards in recognizing whether a book was inspired.

- Is it authoritative ("Thus saith the Lord")?
- Is it prophetic ("a man of God" 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) or and apostle of the church (N.T. – It must be based on the testimony of an original apostle).

- Is it authentic (consistent with other revelation of truth)?
- Is it dynamic – demonstrating God's life-changing power (Hebrew 4:12)?
- Is it received (accepted and used by believers – 1 Thessalonians 2:13)?

The History of Canonization:

Old Testament Canon – Recognizing the correct Old Testament books

- Christ refers to Old Testament books as “scripture” (Matthew 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 – Recognizing the correct New Testament books

- The apostles claimed authority for their writings (Colossians 3:16; 1 Thessalonians 5:27; 2 Thessalonians 3:14)
- The apostle’s writings were equated with Old Testament scriptures (2 Peter 3:1, 2, 15, 16)
- The Council of Athanasius (A.D. 367) and the Council of Carthage (A.D. 397) recognized the 27 books in our New Testament today as inspired.

Note: There is a disagreement between Protestants and Catholics on the inclusion of the 15 books called the Apocrypha. Pay close attention as to when these books were adopted by the Catholic church (A.D. 1546) some 1149 years AFTER the last Church Council closed the canon and 29 years after Martin Luther refuted these doctrines.

The Apocryphal books are 15 books written in the 400 years between Malachi and Matthew. They record some of the history of that time period and various other religious stories and teaching. The Catholic Bible (Douay Version) regards these books as scripture. The Apocrypha includes some specific Catholic doctrines, such as purgatory and prayer for the dead (2 Maccabees 12:39-46), and salvation by works (almsgiving – Tobit 12:9). Interestingly, the Catholic Church officially recognized these books as scripture in A.D. 1546, only 29 years after Martin Luther criticized these doctrines as unbiblical.

Below are listed several additional reasons for rejecting the Apocrypha as inspired:

- The Jews never accepted the Apocrypha as scripture.
- The Apocrypha never claims to be inspired (“Thus saith the Lord” etc.) – In fact, 1 Maccabees 9:27 denies it.
- The Apocrypha is never quoted as authoritative in scriptures. (Although Hebrews 11:35-38 alludes to historical events recorded in 2 Maccabees 6:18-7:42).
- Matthew 23:35 – Jesus implied that the close of Old Testament historical scripture was the death of Zechariah (400 B.C.). This excludes any books written after Malachi and before the New Testament.

Other disputed books are also not scripture

- There were other books that some people claimed to be scripture. Some of them were written in the intertestamental period and called Old Testament pseudopigrapha (or “false writings”). Others were written after the apostolic age (2nd century A.D. and following). These are called New Testament pseudopigrapha.
- The writers often ascribed these books to the 1st century apostles (Gospel of Thomas, The Gospel of Peter, etc.). Evidently, they figured they would be read more widely with an apostle’s name attached. They include some fanciful stories of Jesus’ childhood and some heretical doctrines. No orthodox Christian seriously considered them to be inspired.

- There was some other more sincerely written books that had devotional value and reveal some of the insights of Christian leaders after the 1st century (Shepherd of Hermas, Didache, etc.). Although they are valuable historically, and even spiritually helpful, they also do not measure up to the standards of canonicity and were not recognized as scripture.
- This is what can be said of ANY present day author like John Eldredge or Chuck Swindoll or anyone else or group anywhere on the planet earth.
- These are the reasons why God's Word as His Word to us is closed and no other revelation is added.

Note: If you consider that the office of the Apostle is still NOW as official as it with the original Apostles then of course you have an open door to new authoritative revelation from God. Of course that would be hard pressed since the original Apostles had to be one who was directly appointed by Jesus. Also noted the church for thousands of years have not recognized any new Apostles.

NOTE: A plagiarized compilation of several articles and my own thoughts sprinkled throughout. The point here is I "AM NOT" claiming this as "MY" work. Please refer to the author's works below for the full content of their references used within this document.

¹ Bibliology: The Bible by Greg Herrick

LINK: <https://bible.org/seriespage/1-bibliology-bible>

² Canonicity by Sid Litke

LINK: <https://bible.org/seriespage/6-canonicity>

³ The Bible: The Holy Canon of Scripture by J. Hampton Keathley, III

LINK: <https://bible.org/seriespage/7-bible-holy-canon-scripture>