



HOW WE GOT THE BIBLE

OUR OBJECTIVES THIS WEEK

- To map out the historic process of canonization for the New Testament
- To remember that Jesus validated inspired writings from both Old and New Testament
- To understand the principles that governed acceptance as books of Scripture

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NEW TESTAMENT CANON: A FLUID AND GRADUAL WORK

FIRST CENTURY — Books and letters were written and began to be copied and disseminated

- Writers occasionally make direct claims of inspiration
- Certain books were clearly intended to be sent to other places after their initial reception
- New Testament writings are occasionally referred to as Scripture by ‘outside’ sources within the Bible
- Clement of Rome and the *Didache* are examples of late first-century familiarity with New Testament Scripture

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- Our earliest fragments come from c. 125 AD
- ‘Church fathers’ casually quote from New Testament books and appeal to them for authority (“it is written...”)
- Apocryphal and pseudepigraphal books quote regularly from, and refer to, most books of the New Testament
- The heresy of Marcion (85-160 AD) accelerated the need for a clear canon of Scripture

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- Irenaeus (130-202 AD), a student of Polycarp (a disciple of John) quoted from almost the entire New Testament
- Tatian (died c. 185 AD) compiled the *Diatessaron*, a Syriac harmony of the gospels
- The *Muratorian Canon* (c. 170 AD) includes four gospels, Acts, thirteen letters of Paul, Jude, I & II John, Revelation
- Regional translations begin to appear

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- Origen (185-254 AD) lists the gospels, Acts, Paul's letters, I Peter, I John, Jude, and Revelation without question
- Other books (Hebrews, for instance) are “disputed”
- Origen's *Homilies on Joshua* (one of his later writings) lists the entire modern New Testament
- Dionysius of Alexandria (died c. 264 AD) mentions differing support for books based on region

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- Eusebius (270-340 AD) gives a categorization of canonical books in his *Church History*
- Those classified as either universally agreed upon or “recognized by the majority” are exactly our 27 books
- Athanasius of Alexandria (296-373 AD) likewise lists our New Testament in his Festal Letter (c. 367 AD)
- “These are the springs of salvation...”

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VALIDITY FROM JESUS?

- We can clearly appeal to Jesus for clarification of the Old Testament canon, and adopt His view towards the Scriptures
- Though it takes a different form for the New Testament writings, we can still apply Jesus' view of inspiration to the canonization process
- Specifically, “He [the Counselor, the Holy Spirit] will guide you into all truth” (John 16:13); Jesus authorizes what was written at the Spirit's direction

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PRINCIPLES OF RECOGNITION

- Scripture itself invites a process of testing (I John 4:1-4; Revelation 2:2)
- Many non-biblical writings, of various forms, directly distinguish themselves from divine works
- The reader can usually spot obvious differences between legitimate Scripture and ‘pretenders’
- Authoritative books were recognized and accepted early on, then used continually

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