

The Books of the Bible are Determined by God & Recognized by Men (Development of the Canon)

The Bible is Unique:

- Stands apart from other books
- Unique content
- 66 individual books (you would think there would be no continuity)
- 40 different human authors
 - Kings, Peasants, Philosophers, Fishermen, Shepherds, a Physician, Poets, Statesmen
- Different countries, Written over a period of 1,600 years, Multiple languages, and STILL consistent, continuous
- Why? Because there is something special about it. It is inspired by God.
- **So, how do you figure out what should be in the Bible and what shouldn't be in the Bible?**

Background of Concept of a Canon:

- Comes from the Greek word *Kanon*, which literally means a measuring rod or a ruler
- If inspiration indicates how the Bible received its authority, canon = how it received its acceptance
- Theological definition: the standard for the books accepted; the accepted book of the Bible;
 - Irenaeus (130-202 AD) wrote about the idea of a canon of teaching, but the world first applied to "texts" by Athanasius, 350 A.D.
- Historically, the Jews did not use the term canon, but still had the same concept. They were called...
 - Sacred Writings kept in the Ark of the Covenant (Deut 31:24-26)
 - Authoritative Writings that even the king had to follow (Deut. 17:18-19)
 - Books that Defile the Hands of those who touch it because they were so holy that they couldn't be handled (Talmudic Tradition)
 - Books from the Prophetic Period were considered sacred and canonical by the Jews, but after Malachi (meaning apocryphal) were not considered sacred (Josephus, Contra Apion 1:8)
- So:
 - The Jewish tradition held to a canon or standard of sacred texts
 - Not all religious writings were/are considered canonical
 - **Canon = the collection of writings which conformed to the rule of divine inspiration and God-given authority**

Determination of the Canonical Books (Healthy vs. Inadequate Views):

- Inadequate Views of Determining:

- Does age determine canon? No
 - Many ancient documents are not in the canon
 - There are books mentioned in the Old Testament that were not considered canon by the Hebrews
 - Many young books were placed in the canon
 - Moses' writings were placed in the ark (made sacred) while he was still alive
- Does Hebrew language determine canon? No
 - Many Hebrew books are not in the canon even though they were religious texts (c.f. Apocryphal Books)
 - Some books not totally written in Hebrew are in canon (c.f. Daniel)
- Does religious value determine canon? No
 - There are many books of religious value that are not considered canon
- The Problem with the Above Views:
 - A failure to distinguish between the determination of canon and the recognition of canon
 - God determines canon and man recognizes what He has determined
- A Healthy View of Canon
 - Canonicity is determined by God
 - e.g. There are 66 books in the Bible because that is how many God inspired. In other words, only 66 books were found to have the divine stamp of authority
 - A book is valuable b/c it is canonical (not other way around)
 - A book is canonical b/c it is inspired
 - Inspiration determines canonization: "When the Word of God was written it became scripture and, inasmuch as it had been spoken by God, possessed absolute authority. Since it was the Word of God, it was canonical. That which determines the canonicity of a book, therefore, is the fact that the book is inspired of God."
 - Jesus defended this idea:
 - He quoted from most of the 22 books of the Hebrew canon
 - He considered Law, Prophets, and Poetry to be inspired by God and prophetic of himself (Luke 24:27,44)
 - He believed that inspiration extended from the beginning to the end (Matt 23:35)
 - He said the OT was unbreakable scripture (John 10:35), that it would never perish (Matt 5:18), and that it must be fulfilled (Matt 19:5)
 - He believed in Jonah, Adam & Eve, Noah and the flood, etc

How the Canon was Discovered/Recognized:

The incorrect View	The Correct View
The Church is the Determiner of Canon	The Church is the Discoverer of Canon
The Church is Mother of Canon	The Church is Child of Canon
The Church is Regulator of Canon	The Church is Recognizer of Canon
The Church is Magistrate of Canon	The Church is Minister of Canon
The Church is Judge of Canon	The Church is Witness of Canon
The Church is Master of Canon	The Church is Servant of Canon

- Correct vs. Incorrect View of Authority and Canon
 - The incorrect view of discovering canon is to say that the authority lies in the church or in tradition
 - The correct view is that the authority is found in the Bible and that the church is submissive to that
 - In this way, a church's "rightness" could be determined by substituting the word "view" above with "church" (A litmus of what makes a church a biblical church)
- So How was the Canon Discovered?
 - From a study of historical and biblical process of canonization, the use of five principles emerges. These principles guided the Fathers in the recognition
 - Discovery Questions:
 - Is it authoritative? Did it come with the authority of God?
 - "Thus says the Lord" "God spoke"
 - Many books are rejected b/c they have no authority (Pseudepigrapha)
 - Must contain teaching for the people of God; *a word from God for the people of God*
 - Is it prophetic? Was it written by a man of God?
 - the Word of God, inspired by the Spirit of God, was written by men of God (Paul's argument in Galatians 1:1-24 for his authority)
 - Written by an apostle, prophet, or leader of Israel
 - Ex: A Lost Epistle to Corinthians was found around third century, but determined to be a forgery
 - Is it authentic? Did it tell the truth about God, man, etc as compared with the rest of scripture?
 - Bereans in Acts 17:11
 - Apocrypha at times rejected b/c lacked authenticity w/ scriptures
 - Is it dynamic? Did it come with the life-transforming power of God?
 - If it is of God, it will work - it will come to pass (2 Tim 3:15)

- Was it received? Was it collected, read, accepted, and used by the people of God?
 - Honestly: the full canonical lists were not universally accepted at first (Esther, James, Song of Solomon, Ecclesiastes)
 - Must be accepted by the people of God (the Church)
 - Apostolic Fathers - Early Church Fathers quoting the NT, Gospels, Acts, Epistles, etc
 - **During the first 100 years of the existence of the NT books, virtually every one of them was quoted as authoritative by church leaders.**
 - Acceptance is defined as immediate, subsequent, and final acceptance
 - Ultimately **ALL** non-canonical books met their faith by virtue of this principle
 - Apocryphal books were never accepted upon their writing
 - The councils of Hippo (AD 393) and Carthage (AD 397), although under the political influence of Augustine, ratified and agreed with the current accepted canon of NT books. They were accepted “unofficially” prior to the councils.
- **To really boil down the three steps to canonization:**
 - **Inspiration by God**
 - **Recognition by men of God**
 - **Collection and preservation by the people of God**

What about the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha?

- There is a devotional and historical value in them because they show what people thought about God during the time of their writing (kind of like finding a copy of the Purpose Driven Life 1,000 years from now)
- Although the apocrypha might make for interesting reading, realize it is not inspired
 - Some of the teaching is unbiblical or heretical
 - Some of their stories are extra-biblical and fanciful
 - Much of their teaching is sub-biblical and at times immoral
 - Most of them are post-biblical or from the intertestamental period
 - All of it is non-biblical as it is not inspired by God

Is the Canon Closed?

- From time to time, people will write something (Book of Mormon) or find something (Gospel of Thomas) that claims to be an addition to the Bible. Why don't these things get added?
 - Claims Do Not Make It True
 - 1 John 4:1 says that we are supposed to test the spirits because there are false prophets out there. False prophets in OT were stoned to death.

- Adding to God's Word and putting words in his mouth is serious business
- The downfall of all the books that have claimed inspiration is that they present a different revelation from what has previously been recorded.
 - Ex: The Koran says that Jesus did not die for the sins of the world.
 - Ex: The sacred books of Mormonism teach that there exist many gods rather than the one God, that each male can someday become a god himself, denies salvation by faith, denies hell
 - No Book Qualifies
 - Every book written since the completion of the Bible that claims to be further revelation from God fails on the same ground.
 - They all deny that Jesus Christ is God Himself
 - They deny salvation by grace through faith.
 - They preach a different gospel.
 - *I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting him who called you in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel...But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one we preached to you, let him be accursed. (Galatians 1:6, 8, ESV)*
 - But God told me...
 - *Hebrews 4:12, the Word is living and active*
 - God has spoken in his word
 - He still speaks today through the word (it is alive, not dead)
 - *If anyone thinks that he is a prophet, or spiritual, he should acknowledge that the things I am writing to you are a command of the Lord. If anyone does not recognize this, he is not recognized. (1 Corinthians 14:37-38, ESV)*
 - In other words: if you pursue new revelation at the expense of the Bible, you shouldn't be recognized
 - If the Bible is more sure than anything outside the Bible, why chase things outside the Bible?
 - God still speaks by his Spirit through his Word
 - **The Scripture is complete. Nothing should be added to or subtracted from it.**
 - *The whole counsel of God, concerning all things necessary for His own glory, man's salvation, faith and life, is either expressly set down in Scripture, or by good and necessary consequence may be deduced from Scripture: unto which nothing at any time is to be added, whether by new revelations of the Spirit, or traditions of men ("Westminster Confession," 1:6).*