

APPRECIATING THE NEW TESTAMENT

Dispelling the Myths about The Canon of Scripture

- # 1. Emperor Constantine (AD 306-337) did not decide which Books would be included in the Bible.
- # 2. The Council of Nicaea (AD 325) did not decide which Books would be included in the Bible.
- # 3. The Synod of Carthage (AD 397) did not decide which Book would be included in the Bible.

Last week I showed you that the Jewish canon of Scripture was clearly defined by 400 BC. The first Christians, following the example of Jesus, accepted those Jewish books as inspired.

The inspired books of the New Testament were already being defined in circulated lists in the middle of the 2nd Century. This was necessitated by persecution, since a Christian (just like the ancient Jews before them) needed to know which books (along with the doctrines they contained) were worth dying for.

In a nutshell, the inspired books of the New Testament were delineated by two things:

- 1) They had been written by an apostle or prophet
- 2) They had been written by a close companion of an apostle or prophet

This concept certainly matches Jesus own promises to His apostles:

“These things I have spoken to you while abiding with you. But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you.”

John 14:25-26 (NASB95)

Paul selection by Jesus as the Apostle to the Gentiles clearly came with the same gift of inspiration. The Apostle Peter, in his final writing, considered Paul’s letters as “Scripture.”

“Therefore, beloved, since you look for these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, spotless and blameless, and regard the patience of our Lord *as* salvation; just as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given him, wrote to you, as also in all *his* letters, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which the untaught and unstable distort, as *they do* also the rest of the Scriptures, to their own destruction.”

2 Peter 3:14-16 (NASB95)

THE NEW TESTAMENT
27 Books from the time of Jesus & after

4 GOSPELS
(N.T. FOUNDATION)
Matthew, Mark, Luke and John

1 BOOK OF HISTORY
(N.T. FOUNDATION)
Acts

13 LETTERS FROM THE APOSTLE PAUL
Romans, 1 & 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians,
Colossians, 1 & 2 Thessalonians, 1 & 2 Timothy, Titus and Philemon

8 FROM OTHER APOSTLES OR PROPHETS
Hebrews, James, 1 & 2 Peter, 1 & 2 & 3 John and Jude

1 BOOK OF PROPHECY
Revelation

THE FIVE FOUNDATIONAL BOOKS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

The Four Gospels & The Book of Acts

Matthew = Written around the mid-40's by the Apostle Matthew for Jewish people.
Contains a lot of Old Testament references.

Mark = Written during the mid-60's by John Mark (Peter's "secretary" in Rome) for people living in Rome.
Contains a lot of short stories about Jesus, specifically from Peter's perspective.

Luke = Written in the early 60's by Luke (Paul's Gentile traveling companion, a physician & a prophet) for Theophilus.
Contains a lot of eye-witness accounts, particularly from women's perspectives.

John = Written in the mid-60's by the Apostle John to help people believe in Jesus as the Son of God.
Contains a lot of direct quotes from Jesus.

Acts = Written in the early-60's by Luke as a follow-up to his first letter (Luke) to Theophilus.
Contains lots of eyewitness information about the establishment & growth of Christ's Church from the time of Jesus' ascension (Spring, AD 33) until the second year of the Apostle Paul's detention at Rome (AD 63).