

## The Anchor Q&A

# How was the Bible compiled?

### A Little Background

A common question asked about the Bible is, “who decided what books should be included”? At the heart of this question is a concern about whether the books in there are the ones God wanted to be in there. Should all of those books be in there? Were there other Divinely inspired books left out that He wants us to find? Let’s start by defining a new word we will use in this study.

Canon –

The history of the Bible spans thousands of years. As we discussed in a previous lesson, the Lord used godly men to write the books of the Bible as they were moved by the Holy Spirit. (2 Peter 1:21) This took place over approximately 1,600 years. It took even longer for each of the books to be gathered together into one volume and then translated into English, our native language. Who decided what books should be in the Bible? The simple answer to this question is God.

**Man did not \_\_\_\_\_ canon, but \_\_\_\_\_ the canon established by \_\_\_\_\_.**

This is a very important concept to understand. Our focus in this lesson will be to look at canonization from a Biblical perspective.

### The Concept of Canon

If there is to be a canon, or official set of books in the Bible, then that concept should be found in the Word of God. Look at the following passages and summarize their teachings.

*Deuteronomy 4:22* –

*Proverbs 30:5-6* –

*Ecclesiastes 3:14* –

*John 12:48* –

### Canonization of the Old Testament

Remember, men didn’t determine what books should be in the Old Testament. The Lord made that decision when He inspired those books. Man’s part was to recognize what the Lord had already done. As we learned from the previous passages, the Lord will make sure His Word is preserved!

How quickly would an inspired book be recognized as part of the Scriptures? We know from Deuteronomy 4:22, that the words penned by Moses were immediately recognized as Scripture and preserved. What about other Old Testament books? Let’s look at a couple of examples.

**The Book of Joshua.** Read *Joshua 24:26*.

**The Book of Jeremiah.** Read *Daniel 9:2*.

So when did the entire Old Testament get put together in one book? Read the following passage.

*Amos 8:11-12* –

Whether the passage in Amos is prophecy of the time we are about to talk about, or not, it is a reminder that the Lord did put Israel through times when no new revelation was given. According to Jewish historical traditions, prophecy ceased around 400 B.C. in Israel. They recognized that the Lord was no longer speaking to them and giving divine revelation. How could they tell?

Once they recognized that new books of Scripture were no longer being written, it became important to preserve the ones they already had. According to Josephus, a Jewish historian, there were four criteria used to determine the Old Testament canon.<sup>1</sup>

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

Jesus lived around 400 years after the last book in the Old Testament was written and a few hundred years after they collected all of the books into one larger volume, known to us as the Old Testament. What did Jesus think about the accuracy of the Old Testament canon?

*Luke 11:50-51* –

*Matthew 5:17-18* –

## Canonization of the New Testament

We will see a lot of similarities between the canonization of the New Testament and the Old Testament. How quickly were the books of the New Testament recognized as part of the Scriptures?

*2 Peter 3:15-16* –

*1 Timothy 5:8* –

During the writing of the New Testament, did the writers realize they were writing on God's behalf?

*Galatians 1:1* –

*1 Corinthians 7:5-10* –

When did the Lord stop using men to write new books of Scripture? Ephesians 2:20 states that the church is built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets. Although all of the apostles and prophets passed away almost two thousand years ago, their work lives on in the writings of Scripture. The Lord almost

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<sup>1</sup> Contra Apion 1:37-42

exclusively used apostles to write the New Testament, with the exception of some godly men who wrote under the direction of an Apostle. Books of the New Testament ceased to be written at the death of the Apostles. The newest book of the New Testament is Revelation, written by the Apostle John who outlived all the other Apostles. Since his death, no other books of Scripture were written.

What were the four criteria used to determine canonicity? One old copy of Scripture, called the Muraturian Canon, eludes to four principles used to recognize what books were to be included in the New Testament.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

Is the New Testament Canon closed? Could any other books ever be added?

What has the Lord done to demonstrate that the Bible, as we know it, is accurate?

Why has the Lord sought to preserve His Word? (see *Hebrews 4:12, Romans 1:16*)

Revelation, the last book of the Bible, ends with this command. It is a fitting conclusion to this discussion.

*Revelation 22:18-19* – “For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.”