

Tenets of Faith: Week 2

The Canon of Scripture

1. What is it? (definition; summary of the doctrine)

2 Samuel 23:2 - ““The Spirit of Yahweh spoke by me, and His Word was on my tongue.”

Psalms 119:105 - “Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path.”

Isaiah 40:8 - “The grass withers, the flower fades, but the Word of our God will stand forever.”

Isaiah 55:11 - “So shall my Word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it.”

Proverbs 30:5 - “Every Word of God proves true; He is a shield to those who take refuge in Him.”

Matthew 4:4 - “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every Word that comes from the mouth of God.”

Matthew 24:35 - “Heaven and earth will pass away, but my Words will not pass away.”

John 17:17 - “Sanctify them in the truth; your Word is truth.”

2 Timothy 3:16 - “All Scripture is God-breathed and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness...”

Hebrews 4:12 - “For the Word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.”

2 Peter 1:19 - 21 - “And we have the prophetic Word more fully confirmed, to which you will do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts, knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation. For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.”

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The Word of God is...

- 1) A Person. *Jesus Christ*. Revelation 19:13: "The Name by which He is called is the Word of God." John 1:1: "In the beginning is the Word..."
- 2) Breath. *The Power to Create*. Gen 1:2b,3: "... the Spirit (Ruach or "Breath") of God moved upon the face of the waters."
- 3) Light. *The Power to illuminate*. Gen. 1:3: "And God said, Let there be light: and there was light." John 1:1,5: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ... And the light shineth in the darkness and the darkness comprehendeth it not." Ps. 119:105: "Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path."
- 4) Living. *It is alive and active!* Hebrews 4:12: "For the Word of God is living and active..."
- 5) A Sword. *The Power to cut down the enemy and to defend against his attacks*. Eph 6:17: "... and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God..." Hebrews 4:12: "... sharper than any two-edged sword..."
- 6) Truth. *The Power to dispel lies and to guide us through life*. Ps. 119:11, 29, 30, 69, 151, 160
- 7) Spiritual Food. *The Power to nourish our soul*. Duet. 8:3b: "...man shall not live by bread alone; but man lives by every word that proceeds from the mouth of the Lord." Ps. 119:103; Rev. 10:8-11
- 8) A Mystery. *The Power to produce wonder and awe*. Psalm 25:14: "The secret of the LORD is with them that fear him; and he will shew them his covenant." Ephesians 3:3-10: "But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory."
- 9) A Stumbling block to the Jew and Foolishness to the Greek. 1 Cor. 1:23: "...but we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness."
- 10) A Covenant between God and His people; a former Covenant and a New Covenant. Luke 22:20
- 11) The Gospel. *The Good news; that Jesus Christ came to save us from our sins*. John 3:16: "For God so loved the world that He sent His only begotten Son that whosoever believes in Him should not perish but inherit eternal life."
- 12) The Testimony of Jesus Christ. Revelation 1:9 I, John ... was on the island called Patmos on account of the Word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ.

Many more including: Shield (Ps. 18:30) and Hammer (Jer. 23:29)

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Why Scripture?

There are two types of Divine Revelation: General and Special Revelation. General Revelation can be seen in God's creation as in Ps. 19:1 "The heavens declare the glory of God and the firmament sheweth his handywork." General Revelation is also the knowledge of God that is placed in the hearts of man as in Romans 1:19,20 "Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse..."

Special Revelation became necessary with the fall of man in the garden of Eden. Before the fall, God walked with man, after the fall God chose to reveal Himself to man through His Prophets and preserve that revelation in the form of the written word. All followers of God now have a unified message from God to mankind, this is His Special Revelation. Why would God use the written word as His primary form of revelation to His children? "First, an accurate preservation of God's words for subsequent generations. Second, the written word permits careful study and discussion, which leads to better understanding and more complete obedience. Third, God's words in writing are accessible to many more people than they are when preserved merely through memory and oral repetition. The reliability, permanence, and accessibility of the form in which God's words are preserved are all greatly enhanced when they are written down and there is no indication that their authority or truthfulness is diminished." (Grudem, Wayne)

The Process of Canonization

The recognition of the Canon of Scripture was the result of a long and gradual process, in the course of which certain writings, regarded as authoritative, were separated from a much larger body of early Christian and Jewish literature.

The Word "canon" has a simple meaning... It means the list of books contained in scripture, the list of books recognized as worthy to be included in the sacred writings of the worshipping community. In a Christian context, we might define the Word as the "list of the writings acknowledged by the Church as documents of the Divine revelation." The word 'canon' was first used by Athanasius, Bishop of Alexandria, in a letter circulated in AD 367.

The origin of the word 'canon' came to our language through Latin from the Greek word *kanōn*. In Greek it meant a rod, especially a straight rod used as a rule; from this usage comes the other

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meaning “rule” or “standard”. A straight rod used as a rule might be marked in units of length (like a modern ruler); from this practice the Greek word *kanōn* came to be used of the series of such marks, and hence to be used in the general sense of ‘series’ or ‘list’. It is this last usage that underlies the term ‘the canon of scripture’.

The word canon has also been used in the sense as the ‘rule of faith’ or the ‘rule of Truth’. In the early church the ‘canon’ was the summary of Christian teaching, what we would call ‘doctrine’ today. We could define the early use of the word Canon as: a summary of Christian teaching, believed to reproduce what the Apostles themselves taught, by which any system of doctrine offered for Christian acceptance, or any interpretation of Biblical writings, was to be assessed. Once the limits of Holy Scripture came to be generally agreed upon, Holy Scripture itself came to be regarded as the Rule of Faith as the Canon of Scripture.

To summarize: *The ‘Canon of Scripture’ is the list of books which are acknowledged to be, in a unique sense, the rule of belief and practice of the Christian Faith.*

As is well known the Canon of Scripture is commonly divided into the “Old” and “New” Testaments. Another way of seeing this is the “First” and “Second” Covenants. The word ‘Testament’ is interchangeable with the word ‘Covenant’. The word ‘testament’ in English normally means a will (someone’s ‘last will and testament’); but this is not the sense in which it is used of the two parts of the Christian Bible. Our word ‘testament’ comes from Latin *testamentum*, which similarly means a will, but in this particular context the Latin word is used as the translation of the Greek word *diathēkē*. This Greek word may indeed mean a will, but it is used more widely of various kinds of settlement or agreement, not so much of one which is made between equals as of one in which a party superior in power or dignity confers certain privileges on an inferior, while the inferior undertakes certain obligations towards the superior. It is used repeatedly in both Old and New Testaments, both in the Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible and in the original Greek of the New Testament. It is usually rendered by our word ‘covenant’, and its most distinctive usage relates to an agreement between God and human beings. (Source: The Canon of Scripture by F. F. Bruce, pg. 19)

Each of these covenants - the ancient covenant of Sinai (Mosaic Covenant) and the new covenant inaugurated by Jesus - launched a great spiritual movement. Each of these movements gave rise to a special body of literature that came to be known in the Christian

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Church as ‘the Books of the Ancient Covenant’ and ‘the Books of the New Covenant’. It wasn’t until the end of the 2nd Century AD that the two collections began to be described as the Old Covenant and the New Covenant.

Not as well known or accepted in the Protestant camp is the Apocrypha, a collection of writings believed to have been written sometime between 200 BC and 100 AD, which have been heavily contested as to whether or not they should be considered as part of the Canon of Scripture. As a rule of thumb, Roman Catholics and the Eastern Orthodox church believe that the Apocrypha are indeed a part of the Canon of Scripture while most Protestants as well as Jews do not accept the Apocrypha as part of the Canon. We will address this in more detail shortly.

There are additional extra-canonical works that some believe should be included such as the Books of Enoch and Jubilee as well as many Gnostics “gospels,” many which came to light in the discoveries at Nag Hammadi and Qumran. We will also take some time to look at why these discoveries were not allowed to change the official Canon of Scripture.

3 Categories to Consider

KEY IDEA: The Church assumed a canon long before they developed the grammar and language to describe the canon. The churches had books, and the books of our modern Bible were widely shared.

- 1) Received Books - those books universally accepted by the early church
- 2) Rejected Books - books some in the church may have felt were canonical but were later deemed outside the Canon of Scripture
- 3) Heretical Books - books embraced by only a few who take issue with orthodox teaching like Gnostic gospels

It is most likely that the process of canonization of the New Testament began with Paul who was working with Luke. We begin to see evidence of this in Luke 1:1-4 - “Forasmuch as many have taken in hand to set forth in order a declaration of those things which are most surely believed among us, even as they delivered them unto us, which from the beginning were eyewitnesses, and ministers of the Word; It seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write unto thee in order, most excellent Theophilus, that thou mightest know the certainty of those things, wherein thou hast been instructed”; and 2 Timothy

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4:11-13 and 2 Peter 3:15-16 and Revelations 5:1. *IT IS CRITICAL TO UNDERSTAND THAT THE CANON WAS NOT CREATED BUT REVEALED!*

2. Taught in the Old Testament

The Protestant branch of Christianity now predominantly holds to the Old Testament known to the Jewish people as the “Tanakh” ... although our modern Bible lists the books of Tanakh in a different order, the same books are included in the completed Canon of Scripture. There are only 24 or 22 total books (the content remains the same) in the Tanakh while there are 39 books in the Protestant Old Testament. *These 24 books are identical with the 39 books of the Protestant Old Testament; the difference in reckoning arises from counting the 12 (minor) Prophets separately and dividing Samuel, Kings, Chronicles and Ezra-Nehemiah into 2 each. Some versions of the Jewish Tanakh include 22 books as Ruth is included with Judges and Lamentations with Jeremiah.*

NOTE: The name “Tanakh” is derived from the first Hebrew letters in the 3 sections Torah (Ta), Nevi'im (Na) and Ketuvim (K). Some traditional Jews continue to refer to the entire Tanakh as the Torah.

The Law and the Prophets:

The Old Testament is often referred to as “The Law and the Prophets” but there are actually three divisions of the Old Testament.

- a. The Law or Torah: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy
- b. The Prophets or Nevi'im: In the Tanakh they are divided into:
 - i. Four Former Prophets: Joshua, Judges, Samuel, Kings
 - ii. Three Latter Prophets: Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel
 - iii. Book of the Twelve Prophets: Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi.
- c. The Writings/Poetry or Ketuvim:
 - i. Psalms, Proverbs and Job
 - ii. “The Five Scrolls” or *Hamesh Megillot*: Song of Solomon, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, Esther
 - iii. Daniel, Ezra-Nehemiah (reckoned as one book) and Chronicles.

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CLASSIFICATIONS OF OLD TESTAMENT BOOKS		
BOOKS	STANDARD ENGLISH CLASSIFICATION	HEBREW CLASSIFICATION
Foundational Books Genesis Exodus Numbers Joshua Judges 1 Samuel 2 Samuel 1 Kings 2 Kings Ezra Nehemiah	Books of the Law Genesis Exodus Leviticus Numbers Deuteronomy	The Law Genesis Exodus Leviticus Numbers Deuteronomy
Complementation Books Leviticus Deuteronomy Ruth 1 Chronicles 2 Chronicles Esther	Books of History Joshua Judges Ruth 1 Samuel 2 Samuel 1 Kings 2 Kings 1 Chronicles 2 Chronicles Ezra Nehemiah Esther	The Former Prophets Joshua Judges 1 Samuel 2 Samuel 1 Kings 2 Kings
Books of Poetry/Wisdom Job Psalms Proverbs Ecclesiastes Song of Solomon Lamentations	Books of Poetry/Wisdom Job Psalms Proverbs Ecclesiastes Song of Solomon	The Latter Prophets Isaiah Jeremiah Ezekiel Hosea Joel Amos Obadiah Jonah Micah Nahum Habakkuk Zephaniah Haggai Zechariah Malachi
Prophets During the Divided Kingdom Obadiah Joel Jonah Amos Hosea Isaiah Micah	The Major Prophets Isaiah Jeremiah Lamentations Ezekiel Daniel	The Writings Psalms Job Proverbs Ruth Song of Solomon Ecclesiastes Lamentations Esther Daniel Ezra Nehemiah 1 Chronicles 2 Chronicles
Prophets During the United Kingdom Nahum Zephaniah Jeremiah Habakkuk	The Minor Prophets Hosea Joel Amos Obadiah Jonah Micah Nahum Habakkuk Zephaniah Haggai Zechariah Malachi	
Prophets During the Exile Daniel Ezekiel		
Prophets After the Exile Haggai Zechariah Malachi		

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3-Stage Canonization of the Old Testament:

The first record we have of the written Word of God, is by the finger of God Himself! Ex. 31:18: “And He gave to Moses, when He had made an end of speaking with him upon Mount Sinai, the two tablets of the testimony, tables of stone, written with the finger of God.” We are then told that Moses destroyed the original tablets. Eventually, Moses wrote the law down and gave it to the priests and it was deposited in the ark of the covenant. Duet. 31:24-26: “Take this book of the law, and put it by the side of the ark of the covenant of the Lord your God, *that it may be there for a witness against you.*” Here we see the Word (Scripture) being stored in the ark of the covenant, just as Jesus, the Word, is stored in the hearts of the Believers in the New Covenant.

Further additions are made to this law in Joshua 24:26: “And Joshua write these words in the book of the law of God.” Furthermore, God commanded Isaiah: “And now go, write it before them on a tablet, and inscribe it in a book, that it may be for the time to come as a witness for ever” (Isaiah 30:8). God commands Jeremiah, “Write in a book all the words that I have spoken to you” (Jer. 30:2; Jer. 36:2-4; 27-31; 51:60). It is important to remember that these are God’s own Words, even though they are written down by human beings and always in human language.

It is not known with certainty how the Old Testament/Tanakh was canonized but it is well known that by the time of Jesus the Tanakh was held as sacred and the very Word of God spoken through the voice of His chosen Prophets. Jesus, as well as Paul and other authors of the New Testament, make this abundantly clear. One of the best examples of this is in the temptation of Jesus by Satan in which Satan tried to twist the Word of God in tempting Jesus and then Jesus used the very same Word of God to defend Himself. Jesus could have chosen any other method He wished but chose to use the Word of God to battle Satan, setting the example for us on how best to conduct spiritual warfare! [Luke 4:4, Jesus refers to Duet. 8:3; Luke 4:8, Jesus refers to Duet. 6:13; Luke 4:12, Jesus refers to Duet 6:16]

Although the process is not known with complete certainty, there is a theory that the Old Testament Canon came into shape in three stages, corresponding to the 3 divisions of the Hebrew Tanakh. The Law was first canonized early in the period after the return from Babylonian exile, the Prophets were next late in the 3rd Century BC. When these two divisions were closed everything else that was recognized as Holy Scripture had to go into the 3rd division, the Writings, which remained open until the end of the 1st Century AD, when it was

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affirmed at Jamnia. [Jamnia was not a council like the Council of Nicea, rather it was a rabbinic center that rose to prominence in the city of Jamnia (Yavneh) after Jerusalem was destroyed in AD 70. After Jerusalem was destroyed - and with it copies of the Tanakh - the group of Jamnia worked to preserve their Jewish heritage. Part of that heritage was ensuring that the canon of the Old Testament was not forgotten. The point of any discussions was not to determine the canon but to affirm what was already authoritative for the community.]

In reality, this is only a theory and no one knows how the Old Testament was canonized. Most likely, it was a much more fluid process as there was so much turmoil for the Israel nation from the time of their captivity through the reconstructed Temple and then the persecution at the hands of Antiochus Epiphanes (circa 160 BC) through the time of Roman occupation of Israel.

The Dead Sea Scrolls at Qumran:

It was not until 1946 and the discovery of a collection of nearly 500 scriptures buried for nearly 2000 years that independent verification of the Hebrew Tanakh was achieved. Incredibly, ALL the books of the Tanakh are represented with the exception of the book of Esther. Along with the books of the Tanakh discovered were a number of commentaries that referred to the books of the Tanakh as the Word of God. We may confidently say, therefore, that the canon of the Qumran community included the Pentateuch, the Prophets, the Psalms, the book of Daniel and Job.

NOTE: The discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls at Qumran is often confused with the discovery of the Gnostic texts at Nag Hammadi, which took place relatively the same time (1945 vs 1946 at Qumran). This is significant because these two discoveries represent two very distinct groups - The Essenes of Qumran and the Gnostics of Nag Hammadi - separated by nearly 500 years. Although there is some overlap, this confusion has been used consciously and unconsciously in an attempt to give veracity to the Gnostic scriptures. To be clear, the Gnostic scriptures are NOT included in the official Canon of Scripture, nor should they be included.

The Septuagint Translation:

The Hellenization of the Jews began to take place at the time of Alexander the Great and the founding of Alexandria, Egypt in 331 BC. By 198 BC the Jewish contingent in Alexandria spoke almost exclusively Greek, effectively cutting them off from the Hebrew Scriptures. From roughly 250-150 BC a Greek translation of the Hebrew Tanakh emerged. The term Septuagint derives

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from a legend that it was the work of 70 (or 72) Elders of Israel brought to Alexandria for that purpose.

The order of books in copies of the Septuagint differs from the Hebrew Tanakh, and is behind the conventional order of the Christian Old Testament. It has been held indeed that the Septuagint order represents an early Palestinian order of the books in the Hebrew Bible, contemporary with and possibly even antedating the Hebrew order which became traditional.

NOTE: *To this day the Eastern Orthodox church uses the Septuagint as its primary text of the Old Testament.*

The Apocrypha - Disputed Books of the Canon:

It is important to note that additional books known as the “Apocrypha” appear in the Septuagint that do not appear in the Hebrew Tanakh. To this day, the validity and canonized status of the Apocrypha is not agreed upon. While the Protestants and Jews strongly object to these books being included, the Roman Catholic Church and other denominations such as the Ethiopian Christian Church do include them. While there is strong arguments for and against these books being included, most Biblical scholars would agree that the Apocrypha do not enjoy the same “status” as the official Hebrew Tanakh and therefore many Christians do not consider them as part of the Word of God but rather books of knowledge and wisdom that can be complementary to the accepted Word of God. These writings date from approximately 300 BC to 70 AD, among these 13 are most commonly included in early codexes including the Septuagint:

- 1 and 2 Esdras
- Tobit
- Judith
- The Wisdom of Solomon
- Ecclesiasticus or Sirach
- Baruch
- The Letter of Jeremiah
- The Prayer of Manasseh
- 1 and 2 Maccabees
- Additions to Esther

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- Additions to Daniel: The Prayer of Azariah and the Song of the Three Young Men, Susanna and Bel and the Dragon

Evidence from the early church Fathers as well as from Jewish sources leads us to believe that the first Christians did not treat the Apocrypha on par with the Tanakh. This knowledge comes from the writings of Josephus, Justin Martyr, Melito and others. By the 3rd century the Apocrypha had gained popularity among Christians primarily due to its inclusion in the Septuagint.

In the Protestant Reformation, the Apocrypha was rejected as not canonical. At the Council of Trent (1586), the Roman Catholic Church reacted by declaring these works to be part of the Christian Canon of Scripture. (See Chart Section for greater detail)

The Pseudepigrapha

A modern collection of ancient writings from approximately 250 BC to 200 AD that are essential for understanding early Judaism. This collection of 65 documents is neither closed nor canonical. The most familiar titles include Jubilees, 1-3 Enoch, 3 and 4 Maccabees, the Sibylline Oracles and Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs. The term “Pseudepigrapha” means “falsely attributed” to another person - such as Adam, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Moses, David, Solomon, Ezra, and others who lived before prophecy was considered to have ended circa 400 BC. The most popular book of the Pseudepigrapha is 1 Enoch, which is referenced in Jude 14-15.

The Talmud the Targums and the Kabbalah

The Talmud speaks in several places of the inspired Scripture. The Talmud is a collection of Hebrew oral law (the Mishna) along with transcribed scholarly discussions and commentary (the Gemara). The Mishna was written in the second century A.D., and the Gemara was added later. While the Talmud was completed after the first century, it does contain the oral traditions from the post-exilic Jews. Tractate Baba Bathra contains the divisions of the Hebrew Scriptures (the Law, Prophets, and Writings or “Hagiographa”) with their contents, along with the traditional authors of each. The books listed match the books of our Old Testament—nothing added or taken from them. The most interesting evidence concerning the Hebrew canon comes from tractate Sanhedrin: “The rabbis taught: Since the death of the last prophets, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi, the Holy Spirit has left Israel...” Thus, Jewish oral tradition held that Malachi was the last inspired book of the Old Testament.

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The Targums are simply paraphrases of the Tanakh into Aramaic meant to aid in understanding the archaic language of the Old Testament. Initially, the Targums were strictly oral transmissions but over time they were written down and an official text emerged sometime in the 2nd century AD.

The Kabbalah is the study of mystical Judaism and its origins are not well known. Kabbalah utilizes gematria which is the conversion of letters into numbers and numbers into letters. Using this technique, many layers of meaning and connections are extracted from the Scriptures. Another aspect of Kabbalah is the Tree of Life diagram which considers either ten or eleven “Sephiroth” or globes. Each of these globes represent an aspect of Yahweh and include the following: Majesty, Wisdom, Knowledge, Mercy, Judgement, Beauty, Victory, Glory, Foundation and Kingdom. The practice of Kabbalah has become very popular in modern times especially in the New Age Movement.

Independent Witness - Flavius Josephus

In the first century AD Josephus, one of the most highly respected historians of his time, writes: “It is true, our history hath been written since Artaxerxes very particularly, but hath not been esteemed of the like authority with the former by our forefathers, because there hath not been an exact succession of prophets since that time; and how firmly we have given credit to those books of our own nation, is evident by what we do; for during so many ages as have already passed, no one has been so bold as either to add anything to them, to take anything from them, or to make any change in them; but it comes natural to all Jews, immediately and from their very birth, to esteem those books to contain divine doctrines, and to persist in them, and, if occasion be, willingly to die for them.... Among us (the Jews) there are not thousands of books in disagreement and conflict with each other, but only twenty-two books, containing the record of all time, which are rightly trusted.” - from *Against Apion*

3. Taught in the New Testament

2 Tim. 3:16,17 - “All Scripture is God-breathed (Inspired by the Holy Spirit) and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be equipped, having been thoroughly equipped for every good work.”

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Revelation 22:18 - "I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book, and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book."

There are presently 5,686 Greek manuscripts in existence today for the New Testament. If we were to compare the number of New Testament manuscripts to other ancient writings, we find that the New Testament manuscripts far outweigh the others in quantity. There are thousands more New Testament Greek manuscripts than any other ancient writing. The internal consistency of the New Testament documents is about 99.5% textually pure. That is an amazing accuracy. In addition there are over 19,000 copies in the Syriac, Latin, Coptic, and Aramaic languages. The total supporting New Testament manuscript base is over 24,000.

Almost all biblical scholars agree that the New Testament documents were all written before the close of the First Century. If Jesus was crucified in 30 A.D., then that means that the entire New Testament was completed within 70 years. This is important because it means there were plenty of people around when the New Testament documents were penned who could have contested the writings. In other words, those who wrote the documents knew that if they were inaccurate, plenty of people would have pointed it out. But, we have absolutely no ancient documents contemporary with the First Century that contest the New Testament texts.

AUTHOR	BOOK	DATE WRITTEN	EARLIEST COPIES	TIME GAP	NO. OF COPIES
Homer	<i>Iliad</i>	800 B.C.	c. 400 B.C.	c. 400 yrs.	643
Herodotus	<i>History</i>	480-425 B.C.	c. A.D. 900	c. 1,350 yrs.	8
Thucydides	<i>History</i>	460-400 B.C.	c. A.D. 900	c. 1,300 yrs	8
Plato		400 B.C.	c. A.D. 900	c. 1,300 yrs	7
Caesar	<i>Gallic Wars</i>	100-44 B.C.	c. A.D. 900	c. 1,000 yrs	10
Livy	<i>History of Rome</i>	59 B.C. – A.D. 17	4 th Cent. (partial) mostly 10 th cent.	c. 400 yrs c. 1000 yrs	1 partial 19 copies
Tacitus	<i>Annals</i>	A.D. 100	c. A.D. 1100	c. 1,000 yrs	20
Pliny the Younger	<i>Natural History</i>	A.D. 61-113	c. A.D. 850	c. 750 yrs	7
New Testament		A.D. 50-100	c. 114 (fragment) c. 200 (books) c. 250 (most of NT) c. 325 (complete NT)	+50 yrs 100 yrs 150 yrs. 225 yrs.	5366

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Furthermore, another important aspect of this discussion is the fact that we have a fragment of the gospel of John that dates back to around 29 years from the original writing (John Rylands Papyri 125 A.D.). This is extremely close to the original writing date. This is simply unheard of in any other ancient writing and it demonstrates that the Gospel of John is a First Century document.

Around AD 240 Origen mentioned the twenty-seven New Testament books by name, which he called "trumpets hammered thin," as a charming image of a loud anthem played on the thin pages of the Bible. The New Testament Canon was officially accepted by the Roman Catholic Church at the Council of Rome in AD 382 and further ratified at the Council of Hippo: The Synod of Hippo refers to the Synod of AD 393 which was hosted in Hippo Regius in northern Africa during the early Christian Church. Additional synods were held in 394, 397, 401 and 426. Some were attended by Augustine of Hippo.

The synod of 393 is best known for two distinct acts. First, for the first time a council of Bishops listed and approved a Christian Biblical canon that corresponds closely to the modern Catholic canon while falling short of the Eastern Orthodox canon. The canon list approved at Hippo included six books later classed by Catholics as deuterocanonical books and by Protestants as Apocrypha; but also included, as 'two books of Ezra', the Old Latin books First Ezra and Second Ezra, of which only the latter would subsequently be found in the Catholic canon. The canon list was later approved at the Council of Carthage (397) pending ratification by the "Church across the sea", that is, the See of Rome. Previous councils had approved similar, but slightly different, canons.

4. Historical Progression

2000 BC - 400 BC: Abraham called out of Sumer. The 12 sons of Israel move to Egypt. Moses is called by Yahweh to deliver his people and he writes the Torah beginning the process of recording God's Word. The Old Testament Canon is completed.

400 BC - 100 AD: The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha are written.

0 - 100 AD: Jesus' life and mission is completed. All the books of the New Testament are written.

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100 - 200 AD: The early church takes form and the first lists of inspired New Testament books are compiled by the early Church Fathers.

200 - 300 AD: The first record of the New Testament canon in its current 27 book form by Origen (240 AD)

300 - 400 AD: Jerome's Latin Vulgate translation of the Old Testament relies on the original Hebrew manuscripts in place of the common Septuagint. The Council of Hippo officially recognizes the 27 books of the New Testament.

400 - 1400 AD: The Masoretes were responsible for translating the Old Testament from the 6th to 10th centuries AD. Their role in preserving the Bible cannot be overstated, since the Masoretes were the link between earlier versions of the Old Testament, now mostly lost, and the medieval copies of the Hebrew Bible used today when scholars translate the Bible. The two most important copies of the Hebrew Bible come from the Masoretes: The Aleppo Codex and the Leningrad Codex - the oldest complete manuscript of the Old Testament. The discovery at Qumran confirmed that the work of the Masoretes was excellent with less than a 1 % variation!

1500 to Present: The first English versions of the Bible are written including the most famous of all, the 1611 King James Version. The Protestant Reformation goes back to the Canon recognized by the Jews for the Old Testament in opposition to the additional books of the Apocrypha recognized by the Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox Churches.

5. Heretical Counterfeits (impact of false doctrine, what truths it changes; how it affects the Gospel, sources of the counterfeits)

Nag Hammadaï and The Gnostic Gospels: In 1945 shepherds discovered at Nag Hammadaï on the east bank of the Nile in Upper Egypt what proved to be a whole Gnostic library, dating from about AD 400 and comprising some fifty treatises in Coptic, collected into thirteen codices totalling about 1000 pages. Most of these supply first hand information that supplements our knowledge of Gnosticism, an extremely complex and verbose belief system that overlaps Christianity in some areas but is mostly divergent. There are three main features of Gnosticism: 1) Philosophical dualism that rejects the visible world as being

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alien to the Supreme God; 2) belief in a subordinate deity called the Demiurge, who is responsible for the creation of the world (correlating to Jehovah) and 3) a radical distinction between Jesus and the Christ; Jesus becomes “the Christ” at His baptism in the Jordan River, before which he was simply a man. Jesus became the first “Christ” but now has ushered in “the Christ Consciousness” to all mankind.

It is not a coincidence that the New Testament canon was ratified around AD 400 most likely as a direct response to the numerous Gnostic “gospels” that were proliferating at that time and the false doctrines they espoused.

The most famous Gnostic gospel is The Gospel of Thomas, which is an alleged collection of sayings of Jesus Christ, many of which overlap with the Sermon on the Mount from the book of Matthew.

In addition, Gnosticism rejects the Old Testament and it is their belief that Yahweh was the Demiurge, an evil creator god who was vengeful, controlling, jealous, angry and had humans trapped until they were liberated by eating the fruit in the garden. As an extension, Lucifer becomes a savior figure on par with Jesus! (Many Gnostics claim Lucifer and Jesus are brothers and some even claim the two are the same being with two aspects). Gnostics also deny the death and resurrection of Christ. To them it is either an elaborate myth or someone else was put to death in His place.

Montanism (beginning AD 156). A significant factor in the forming of the canon of the New Testament was the influence of Montanism, an enthusiastic and apocalyptic movement that broke out in the second half of the second century. Montanism claimed to be a religion of the Holy Spirit and was marked by ecstatic outbursts which it regarded as the only true form of Christianity. The insistence of the Montanist on the continuous gift of inspiration and prophecy influenced the early Church to emphasize the final authority of apostolic writings as a rule of faith. By rejecting the extravagances of Montanism, the Church took the first step toward the adoption of a closed canon of Scripture.

6. Application Today (why it matters so much where it puts Jesus, the body of believers, Israel, truth, etc.)

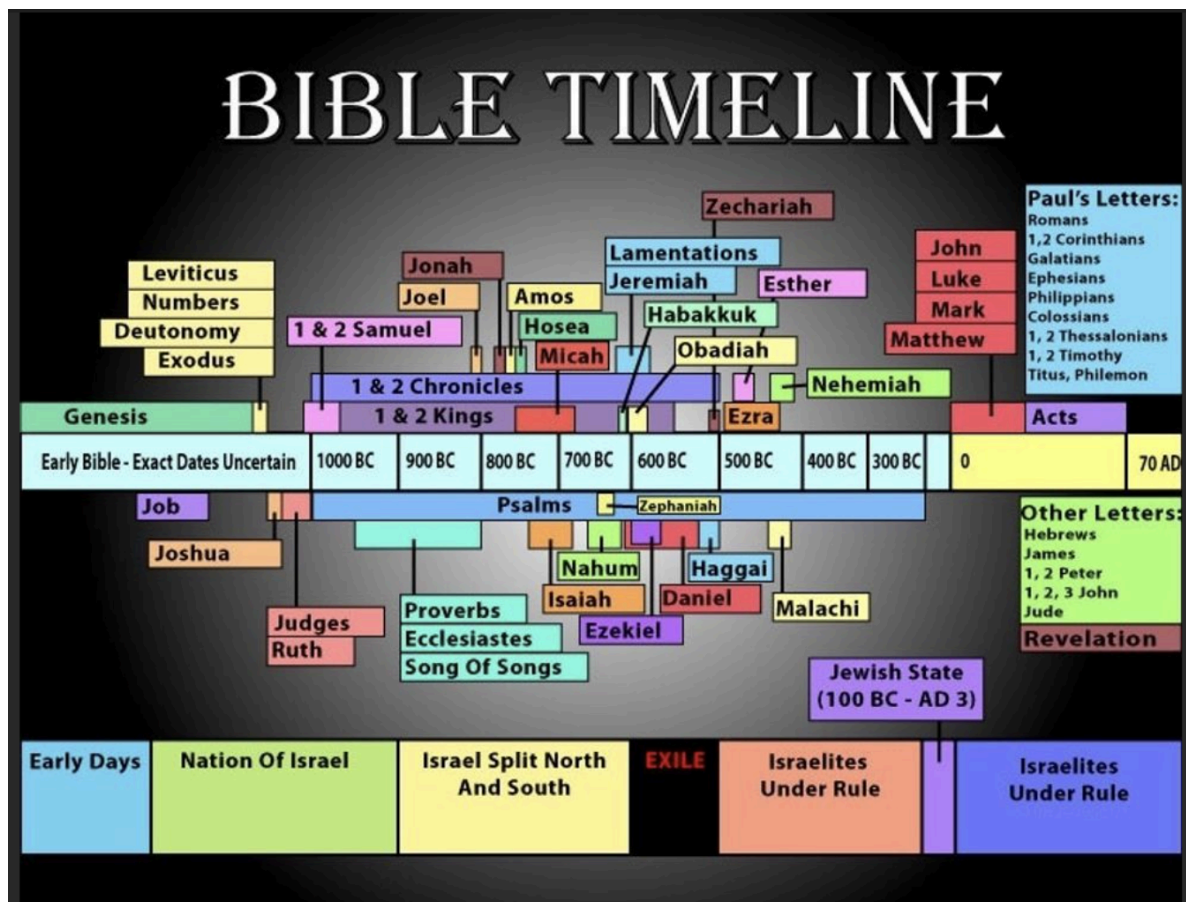
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The stance an individual and/or a church takes in regards to the Word of God is absolutely essential. Do you believe it is the inspired Word of God or just another spiritual book? Do you believe it is the ONLY inspired Word of God, or do you believe there are other religious traditions such as Hinduism and Islam who also have books inspired by God? Do you believe the Word of God is the ultimate Truth? Do you believe the Word of God is sufficient and contains all we must know about God to attain Salvation? These questions and more must be carefully thought out as the answers will determine one's Worldview and one's Worldview determines how one acts and what one does in Life.

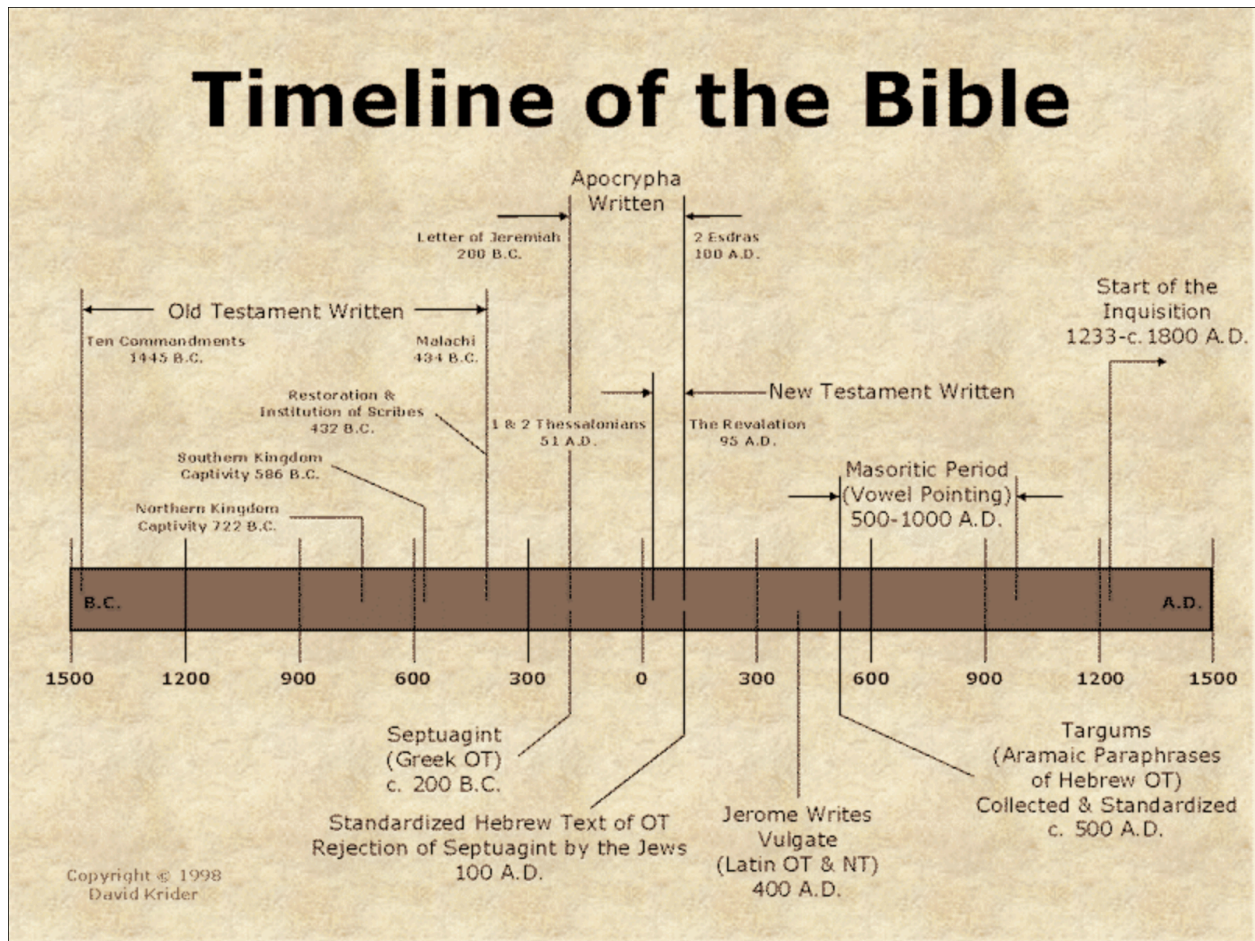
7. Supporting Scripture and references

Charts



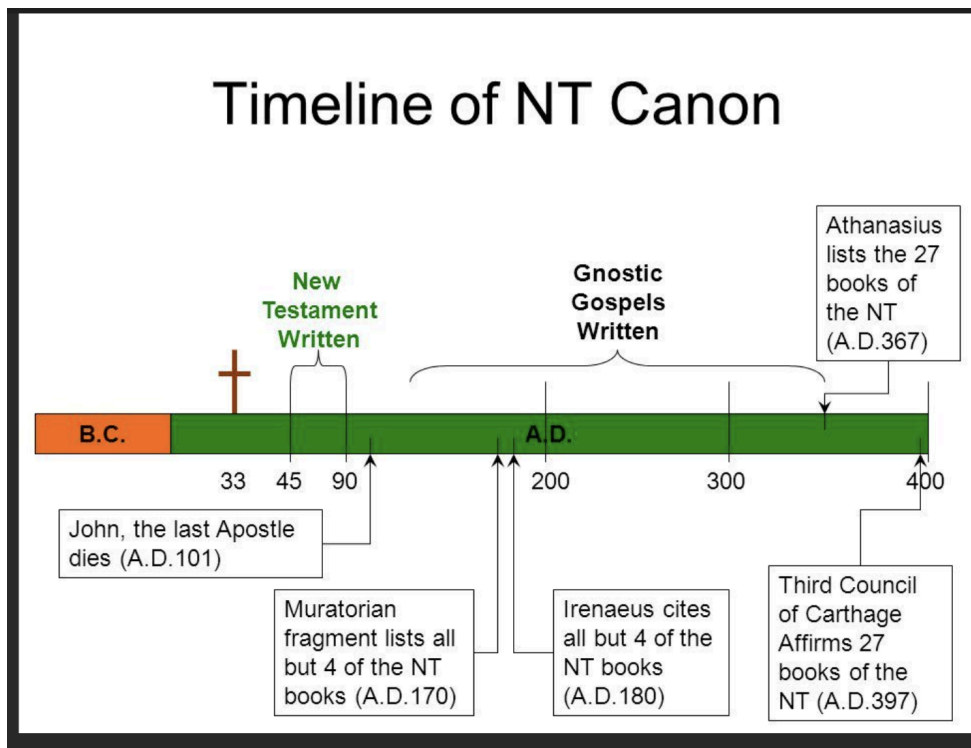
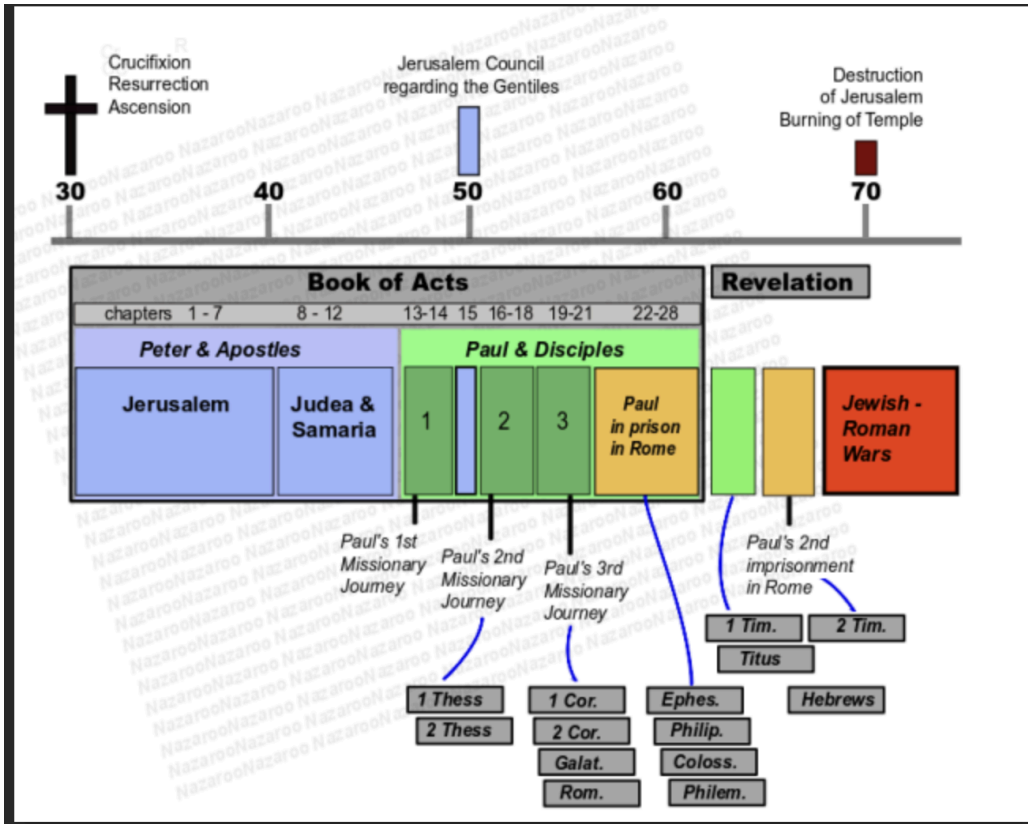
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Comparison of Old Testament Canons

Hebrew Bible (Tanakh)	Roman Catholic and Orthodox Canons	Protestant Canon
<p>Torah</p> <p>Bereshith - Genesis Shemot - Exodus Vayikra - Leviticus Bamidbar - Numbers Devarim - Deuteronomy</p> <p>Nevi'im</p> <p>Y'hoshua - Joshua Shophtim - Judges Sh'muel - Samuel (I & II) M'lakhim - Kings (I & II) Y'shayahu - Isaiah Yir'mi'yahu - Jeremiah Y'khezqel - Ezekiel</p> <p>The Twelve Prophets</p> <p>Hoshea - Hosea Yo'el - Joel Amos - Amos Ovadyah - Obadiah Yonah - Jonah Mikhah - Micah Nakhum - Nahum Havakuk - Habakkuk Ts'phanyah - Zephaniah Khagai - Haggai Z'kharyah - Zechariah Mal'akhi - Malachi</p> <p>Ketuvim</p> <p>The "Sifrei Emet," "Books of Truth"</p> <p>Tehillim - Psalms Mishlei - Proverbs Iyov - Job</p> <p>The "Five Megilot" or "Five Scrolls"</p> <p>Shir Hashirim - Song of Songs Rut - Ruth Eikhah - Lamentations Kohélet - Ecclesiastes Esther - Esther</p> <p>The rest of the "Writings"</p> <p>Dani'el - Daniel Ezra v'Nehemia - Ezra-Nehemiah Divrei Hayamim - Chronicles (I & II)</p>	<p>Pentateuch</p> <p>Genesis Exodus Leviticus Numbers Deuteronomy</p> <p>History</p> <p>Joshua Judges Ruth Samuel Kings Chronicles Ezra and Nehemiah Tobit* Judith* Esther + Additions to Esther</p> <p>Poetry & Wisdom</p> <p>Job Psalms Proverbs Ecclesiastes Song of Solomon Wisdom of Solomon* Ecclesiasticus (Wisdom of ben Sirach)*</p> <p>Prophets</p> <p>Isaiah Jeremiah Lamentations Baruch, + The Letter of Jeremiah (Roman Catholic Only) Ezekiel Daniel, + Additions to Daniel (Prayer of Azariah; Song of the Three Young Men; Susanna; Bel and the Dragon)* Osee (Hosea) Joel Amos Abidas (Obadiah) Jonas (Jonah) Micheas (Micah) Nahum Habucuc (Habakkuk) Sophonias (Zephaniah) Aggeus (Haggai) Zacharias (Zechariah) Malachias (Malachi) 1 Maccabees* 2 Maccabees* (Roman Catholic Only)</p> <p>*Apocryphal in the Protestant Canon</p>	<p>Pentateuch</p> <p>Genesis Exodus Leviticus Numbers Deuteronomy</p> <p>History</p> <p>Joshua Judges Ruth 1-2 Samuel 1-2 Kings 1-2 Chronicles Ezra and Nehemiah Esther</p> <p>Poetry & Wisdom</p> <p>Job Psalms Proverbs Ecclesiastes Song of Solomon</p> <p>Prophets</p> <p>Isaiah Jeremiah Lamentations Ezekiel Daniel Hosea Joel Amos Obadiah Jonah Micah Nahum Habakkuk Zephaniah Haggai Zechariah Malachi</p>

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New Testament Documentation

There are over 6,000 early manuscript copies or portions of the Greek New Testament in existence today. When we include the Latin Vulgate and other early versions, we have over 24,000 early copies or portions of the New Testament (twice that many when including quotes by early church fathers). Some of these date only twenty to thirty years from the original autographs. By comparison, of works by Plato and Aristotle very few copies exist at all, and those were written 1,200 to 1,400 years after the autographs. ¹⁴ According to a former director of the British Museum,

The interval then between the dates of original composition and the earliest extant evidence becomes so small as to be in fact negligible, and the last foundation for any doubt that the Scriptures have come down to us substantially as they were written has now been removed. Both the authenticity and the general integrity of the books of the New Testament may be regarded as finally established.

The **Chester Beatty Papyrus II** is the earliest piece of the New Testament known to exist. This contains most of Paul's letters copied circa AD 100.

The **John Rylands Manuscript** contains part of the Gospel of John copied in AD 130. It can be found in the John Rylands Library of Manchester, England.

The **Codex Vaticanus** is a Greek copy of the entire Old Testament and most of the New Testament. Copied between the years 325 and 350 ¹⁶, the Codex Vaticanus has resided in the Vatican's library since 1481 as one of the most trustworthy witnesses to the New Testament text. ¹⁷

The **Codex Sinaiticus** was discovered in the Mt. Sinai Monastery in 1859 by Dr. Constantin Von Tischendorf. It was penned circa AD 375-400 and contains all of the New Testament and most of the Old Testament. It was presented to the Russian Czar and in 1933 was bought by England. Today, it is in the British Museum in London.

The **Codex Washingtonianus** may be found in the Smithsonian Institution, having been written about AD 450. It contains the complete four Gospels.

The **Bodmer Papyri** and **Bodmer Papyri II** are manuscripts dating from AD 150 to 200. These various parts of the New Testament, discovered in Egypt, now exist in the Bodmer Library of

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World Literature. Other significant collections include the **Codex Alexandrinus** which is an Egyptian text circa AD 450, the **Codex Ephraemi**, and the **Oxyrhynchus Papyri**.

Notable Latin versions of scripture include the **Itala Version** completed around AD 200 in the North Africa region, the **Wurzburg Palimpsest Codex** circa AD 450, and the **Lyons Codex** from about AD 650. The most famous Latin version is Jerome's **Vulgate** from AD 390-404. [18](#)

This overwhelming quantity of New Testament documents is appreciated even more when we realize that the Diocletian persecution of AD 303 sought to eradicate Christianity, including all of its churches and historical writings. The prosecution's failure to do so is underscored by the United Bible Society's estimates that, since 1815, an unbelievable four billion Bibles have been published worldwide. [19](#)

Source: <http://www.provethetebible.net/T2-Integ/B-0801.htm>

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