

# **Canonicity Lesson: The Divinely Inspired Word of God:**

## **Bible facts:**

### **1. How many books are in the Bible?**

The Bible contains 66 books, divided among the Old and New Testaments.

### **2. How many books are in the Old Testament?**

There are 39 books in the Old Testament. (24 in the original Hebrew Testament)

### **3. How many books are in the New Testament?**

There are 27 books in the New Testament.

### **4. What does "testament" mean?**

Testament means "covenant" or "contract."

### **5. Who wrote the Bible?**

The Bible was written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit by over 40 different authors from all walks of life: shepherds, farmers, tent-makers, physicians, fishermen, priests, philosophers and kings. Despite these differences in occupation and the span of years it took to write it, the Bible is an extremely cohesive and unified book.

### **6. What does the word Bible mean?**

It comes from the word "*biblia*" for "the Books"

### **7. What does "Talmud" mean?**

Talmud means "To Teach"

### **8. When was the Bible written?**

It was written over a period of some 1,500 years, from around 1450 B.C. (the time of Moses) to about 96 A.D. (following the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ).

### **9. What is the oldest book in the Old Testament?**

Many scholars agree that Job is the oldest book in the Bible, written by an unknown Israelite about 1500 B.C. Others hold that the Pentateuch (the first five books of the Bible) are the oldest books in the Bible, written between 1446 and 1406 B.C.

### **10. What languages was the Bible written in?**

The Bible was written in three languages: Hebrew, Aramaic, and Koine Greek.

### **11. When was the first translation of the Bible made into English?**

1382 A.D., by John Wycliffe.

### **12. When was the Bible printed?**

The Bible was printed in 1454 A.D. by Johannes Gutenberg who invented the "type mold" for the printing press. It was the first book ever printed.

### **13. How many languages has the Bible been translated into?**

The Holy Bible has been translated into 2,018 languages, with countless more

partial translations, and audio translations (for unwritten languages). (This is an enormous amount of translations. In comparison, Shakespeare, considered by many to be the master writer of the English language, has only been translated into 50 languages.)

**14. Is the Bible still the best-selling book in the world?**

Yes, its estimated to have sold between 2.5 to 6 billion books.

**15. When was the Bible canonized?**

The entire New Testament as we know it today, was canonized before the year 375 A.D. The Old Testament had previously been canonized long before the advent of Christ.

**16. What does "canon" mean?**

"Canon" is derived from the Greek word "Kanon," signifying a measuring rod. Thus, to have the Bible "canonized" meant that it had been measured by the standard or test of divine inspiration and authority. It became the collection of books or writings accepted by the apostles and leadership of the early Christian throughout the ages live and worship.

## **The Need for the Canon:**

**1. So that Believer's in every generation may have a complete Revelation from God-** There is a need to understand doctrine and understand the standard of absolute authority and this can't be done without a written standard by God. The position of Absolute Authority is a divine prerogative, and no matter what office or title you give a human they still cannot speak with Absolute Authority because every human possesses a sin nature.

**2. It is Necessary that people have God's Word in writing-** After A.D. 96 all revelation and prophecy had ceased, therefore having God's word in writing became imperative to learning about God's completed plan.

**3. There was a need for Preservation and Circulation of sacred Writings-** In A.D. 320 the Roman Emperor Diocletian had ordered all sacred books of Christians to be destroyed, so a completed Canon was necessary.

**4. There had to be a Norm or Criteria for Canonicity, so that people may know which writings were Canonical-** This was done to protect against the potential inclusion of false doctrines.

# **The Organization of the Old Testament Canon:**

\*In Content the Hebrew Old Testament Canon is identical to our Old Testament in the English. However, the number of books and their arrangement is different. The Hebrew Testament contains 24 books, whereas our English contains 39 books.

\*The Old Testament is broken into 3 Parts: The Torah, The Prophets, The Writings

## **1. The Torah (The Pentateuch)-** Torah means “Law or Direction”

\*Contains Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy- All Written by Prophet Moses.

## **2. The Prophets (Nabhiim)-** All writers possessed the gift of prophecy.

\*It's broken into 2 groups: The Former Prophets (before the Jewish captivity of the Babylonian empire), and The Latter Prophets (after the captivity of Babylonian empire)

\*The Former Prophets: contains books of Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and Kings (there was no breakup of books for Samuel and Kings like in our Bible)

\*Joshua wrote last chapter of Deuteronomy and book of Joshua; Samuel wrote Judges, and both books of Samuel; the author of Kings is a mystery.

\*The Latter Prophets: Contains books of Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and The Twelve (this contained all minor books from Hosea to Malachi; except for book of Daniel)

## **3. The Writings (Kethubim)-** All writers had gift of prophecy but didn't hold office as a prophet.

\*Divided into 3 sections: Poetical Books, the 5 Rolls, and the Historical Books

\*The Poetical Books: contains the books of Psalms, Proverbs, and Job

\*The Five Rolls: (Megilloth Scrolls), (All read at a different Jewish Feast)- The Song of Solomon (Read at Passover); Ruth (Read on Pentecost); Ecclesiastes (Read on Feast of Tabernacles); Esther (Read at Feast of Purim); and Lamentations (Read on remembrance of destruction of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar).

\*The Historical Books (very end of Hebrew Canon): contains the books of Daniel, Ezra-Nehemiah (one book), and Chronicles.

\*It's important to understand this order of Hebrew Canon scripture because Jesus often taught based upon this order. In *Luke 11:50* Jesus speaks of the blood of martyrs beginning with Abel and ending with Zechariah. However, Zechariah wasn't the last martyr of the Old Testament, Uriah was chronologically killed

afterwards (*Jeremiah 26:20-23*). Jesus was simply speaking based upon their location in the Canon at that time. In which case, Zechariah was a martyr in Chronicles, the last book of the Hebrew Canon.

## **Attacks, Translation, and Preservation of the Hebrew Old Testament Canon:**

**\*Josephus:** Many people rejected this Canon as not being Divinely Inspired, and even went as far enough to say that it held no historical accuracy. God however, in His Divine plan used the least likely person, but the best equipped, to authenticate His Word to the world. He used a man by the name of Flavius Josephus, who was an unbeliever, but a Jew by race. In his mannerism, adoption and citizenship he was a Roman to his very core. By profession he was a Roman soldier and a historian who had a talent for historical accuracy. He published a book called “*Contara Apion*,” which was in opposition to the false belief that the Hebrew Canon held no legitimacy. In the book he states that the sacred books of the Jews are historically accurate, that there was never a time that the Jews disregarded the Canon as the Word of God, and he supported the fact that no prophecy had come after the rule of Artraxerxes I (465-424 B.C.) and nothing had been added to the Canon since his death and the ceasing of the prophecy. This unbeliever had helped to preserve for all time the existence and legitimacy of the historical Canon.

**\*Septuagint:** By the year 280 B.C. the Jews living in Alexandria could no longer read and understand the original Hebrew of the scripture. The Jews living in Alexandria had adopted Greek as their new language and therefore required a translation for the first time. This was done with the utmost importance of keeping every context of the scripture 100% accurate. The process was completed by 72 Alexandrian Hebrew scholars, and so the Canon of scripture moved dialects from Hebrew to Greek. This new scripture was named “Septuagint” (seventy) after its translators. This process would set the precedent for all translations to follow.

**\*Dead Sea Scrolls:** Once the process of translations had taken place many critics had begun to again question the authenticity of the Canon and their correct translations. That was until March of 1948 when a Arab boy looking for a goat stumbled upon a cave containing ancient scrolls. These scrolls were eventually sold to and examined by Professor E.L. Sukenik of the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. These scrolls contained passages from the book of Isaiah with 54 columns of text which reached around 24 feet long. The find also included a

“Manual of Discipline” (Rule book which governed Jewish sect responsible for producing the scrolls), contents of the book of Habakkuk and an unknown work which became known as “The Genesis Apocryphon.” Upon further excavation the “Ruins of Qumran” were discovered. In total around 800 intact scrolls were discovered and over a thousand fragments as well. with the exception of Esther, every book of the Old Testament was found within the scrolls, and all contained remarkable accuracy in translation between the Hebrew Canon and the Septuagint. Some of these scrolls dated as far back as the 3<sup>rd</sup> century B.C.

## **Human Interaction vs God’s Supreme Will:**

\*The Old Testament Canon faced opposition well into the centuries following the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The Patristics were men who were assigned the duty of deciding what should be included in the Canon of scripture and what should not. Don’t forget that Canon means divinely inspired by God and He determines what should be in His written word not man; and often times men who were unbelievers would be very confused by this fact, even those assigned to the Canon, and would lead to controversy. But God’s Will always finds a way!

\*There were 4 areas of issue that the Patristics had to deal with:

**1. The Homologoumena:** These were the books within the Canon agreed upon by all the Patristics. (included most the Books of the original Hebrew Canon.

**2. The Antilegomena:** These were books already within the Canon that raised controversy that the Patristics thought maybe shouldn’t have been included. These were Esther (that it doesn’t mention the word God); Song of Solomon (that it dealt with a love affair); Ecclesiastes (that the philosophy of the book couldn’t be reconciled with bible doctrine and Judaism); Ezekiel (because chapters 40-48 contradicted Mosaic Law); Proverbs (because one proverb seemed to contradict the next). The controversy arose because the Patristics knew and couldn’t understand the doctrine behind these scriptures. These Books and passages were Pre-Designed by God to be included in the Canon, and had been present for within the Canon for hundreds of years prior to this controversy.

**3. The Pseudepigrapha:** (translates into a “Phony Forgery”). These were books of faked writings that were based upon cult sects that wanted accreditation by scholars of their books as authentic. These books tried to gain substantiation for their beliefs through the Patristics approval. An example of these books included

“The Penitence of Jannes and Jambres;” which says that a person must earn salvation through penitence. Another example is “The Magic Book of Moses;” which says that Moses spoke in tongues.

**4. The Apocrypha:** (Means hidden or secret) This set of books is inserted between Malachi and Matthew in most Catholic Bibles and some King James texts. These books were written after the sealing of the Canon in 425 B.C. and these books were never seen in any copy of the Hebrew Canon. Some of these books are in some ways historically accurate, they fill us in on the 400 year gap between Malachi and Matthew, the Old and New Testament; HOWEVER, they are not Canonical meaning that they are not inspired by God, but only by man and have no place within the Word of God.

These books include: 1 and 2 Esdras, Tobit, Judith, Additions to book of Esther, Wisdom of Solomon, Ecclesiasticus, Baruch, The Letter of Jeremiah, The Prayer of Azariah and the Song of Three Young Men, Susana, Bel and the Dragon, Prayer of Manasseh, and 1 and 2 Macabees.

#### **Reasons to Reject Apocrypha:**

- \*Apocrypha was never in original Hebrew Canon, always only contained 24 books
- \*Neither Jesus Christ nor any of New Testament writers ever mention it.
- \*Josephus expressly excluded it from his historical list and categorized it as spurious, and without divine inspiration, and lacking Divine Authority.
- \*Never mentioned in first four centuries (A.D.) in any canonical dialogue
- \*None of the Old Testament Prophets were connected with it, and lacks prophecy.
- \*Teaches upon doctrines that are in contradiction to scripture: Justified Suicide, Prayers and offerings for the dead, atonement and salvation by almsgiving, cruelty to slaves justifiable, doctrine of emanations, and the preexistence of souls.

\*The Books of the Old Testament Canon all share one major thing in common and it's that they are Divinely Inspired by God. It was His master plan that allowed for the creation of the Canon and our Bible and He is expressively against anyone altering, adding, or subtracting from His Word. As faithful students to His TRUE Word I pray that after studying this lesson we will have a deeper appreciation for just how important God's written Word is for our lives and that we will be better equipped to stand firmly behind it.

