**CAN WE TRUST THE BIBLE? Part 5**
**"The Witness of Preservation"**
**(The CANON: Which Books Belong in the Bible?) - Lesson 1**

**INTRO**: Series Goal … I believe … Today: Canonization. REVIEW - Examining the truthfulness of Scripture by hearing from reliable witnesses. So far: God Himself, Biblical writers, Jesus, Gospel writers. Each of the books is Scripture, not only because they are "in the Bible", but because the writings were inspired by God. So how do we know that the Bible we have has any relationship to the original manuscripts? Today examine concept of canonization – How the same God who revealed Himself in many ways, including Written Word and then inspired men to accurately write down all He said, also preserved and protected those original autographs which were meticulously copied for us to have the trusted Bible we hold today. Key concepts …

| LINK | ADDRESSES |
|---|---|
| Revelation | *What* God did in revealing His *message* in the written Word (2 Tim. 3:16) |
| Inspiration | *How* God did it (method) in the receiving and recording of Scripture (2 Pet. 1:20) |
| Canonization | *Which* books are inspired? Discovery, recognition, transmission, accuracy |

**QUESTION:** "If the Bible is the sole basis of truth, then what books belong?"

## I. THE *DEFINITION* OF "CANON"

A. "Canon" refers to a standard of measurement (Gal. 6:16; 2 Cor. 10:13, 15; Phil. 3:16).

B. Biblically, canon refers to standard of measurement used to determine which books belonged in the Bible, i.e., the books that "measured-up" as revealed, inspired, and the authoritative Word of God.

## II. THE *DETERMINATION* OF CANON

A. GOD's inspiration determined the canonization (the books that belonged). Man, not even smart and godly ones, did NOT decide which books were canonical, God did. The early church leaders only discovered and recognized what had been determined by God. A book God inspired was canonical (measured-up) the moment it was recorded. "What measuring stick did God give to those early Christian leaders to discover and recognize which books were inspired?"

B. RULER (Measurement, Tests, Earmarks of Inspiration) to GUIDE in discovering and recognizing which books God inspired. God led the early church leaders all those who followed them, to ask some key questions of each book under consideration.

1. Is it **Authoritative**? Did it claim to be divine authorship? Did it come with the authority of God? Did it ring with and say such as "And the Word of the Lord came," "Thus says the Lord," "The Lord said unto me," "and God said"? "It is written" SPEAK WITH DIVINE AUTHORITY?
2. Is it **Prophetic**? (OT) or **Apostolic** (NT)? Was it written by a recognized spokesman for God? It's reasonable to believe that the Word of God from the Spirit of God to the people of God would only come through a man of God. OT Prophet (Heb. 1:1) or NT Apostle (Eph. 2:20; 3:5 "holy" select Heb. 2:2-4). Was it authored by an Apostle or Prophet or a close associate (Mark/Peter, Luke/Paul)?
3. Is it **Authentic**? Is its content consistent, genuine and truthful? Does it agree with itself or contradict? Does it tell the truth about God, sin, man, etc. esp. as already clearly known in previous revelation? Agreement alone would not make it canonical but disagreement would make it non-canonical. Rule? If in doubt, toss it out!
4. Is it **Dynamic**? Did it come with the life-changing power of God? They knew God's Word was living, active and powerful. They knew God's message was backed by His might! Did it bring people to Christ and cause them to grow?
5. Is it **Accepted**? Was it generally received, collected, read and used by the people of God?

OT and NT timelines . . .

**Summary:** If these "earmarks" of inspiration were clearly evident, then a book was recognized and accepted. If any absent, rejected. By these principles the Spirit guided the early church to sort the true from false in order to discover those books which God had determined to be canonical. The entire process was providentially directed by the Holy Spirit. Man, alone could never write or identify God's Word, but the Holy Spirit had to open their eyes to recognize God's Word.

If God did the greater work in revealing and inspiring His Word to the original writers, then can He not do the lesser work of preserving the accurate transmission of what He had them write? YES! So, it was asked of every book if it (1) came with the *authority* of God, (2) was written by a *man* of God, (3) told the *truth* about God, man, etc., (4) came with the *power* of God, and (5) was accepted by the *people* of God. Why only the 66 we have? All God inspired!

**CONC:** Next lesson will pick up with completion of the canons and the books that didn't make the list.