

CAN WE TRUST THE BIBLE? Part 6

“The Witness of Preservation”

(The CANON: Which Books Belong in the Bible?) - Lesson 2

INTRO: Today, “The Witness of Preservation” Lesson 2 – Which books belong? As God’s Spirit inspired the original writers, He also preserved their transmission over centuries until canonization was complete. Note: Inspiration determined canonization; man discovered it. He gave them 5 Principles to recognize the ones God wanted . . . What about those books that didn’t make the OT and NT canons? Remember their timelines?

- A. **INSPIRATION** Promised (Jn. 14:16, 17, 26; 15:26-27; 16:12-13). Thus, the principle that *canonicity is determined by inspiration* was told by Jesus concerning the OT Scripture, and promised for the writers of the NT. Again, if God could inspire fallible writers to author infallible writings, can He not also protect and preserve the accurate transmission of those same writings?
- B. **CANON IS COMPLETE** – OT completed 400-200 BC and eventually recognized in 90 AD at Council of Jamnia. Generally speaking, Protestant, Jews, and Catholics accept the 39 books in the OT. Even Jesus indicated a finished OT was in place before His birth (Matt. 23:35; Lk. 11:51). Abel (Genesis) to Zechariah (Malachi). NT completed by 70 AD and officially recognized in 397 AD at Council of Carthage. Canon is closed. Why? No more inspired books (Deut. 4:2; 12:32; Pro. 30:6; Jude 3; Rev. 22:18-19). We got all we need. OT & NT Timelines ...
- C. “What about the Apocryphal Books?”

The Apocryphal is a set of 15 books (7 in Catholic Bibles). These books are not recognized as inspired books deserving of being in the canon for several reasons:

1. None of the apocryphal books claim to be inspired by God, and some disclaim inspiration (cf. 1 Maccabees 4:46; 9:27; 14:41; 2 Maccabees 15:38). Early church leaders: Philo, Josephus, . . .
2. All were written in the intertestamental period, often referred to as the “Silent Years,” 430 BC – AD (Zech. 1:5; 13:2-5; Mal. 4:5)
3. The Apocrypha contains numerous factual and doctrinal errors, unlike the inspired Scriptures, which are inerrant. Examples . . .
4. The Jewish people have never regarded them as inspired. They were not included in the canon of the Old Testament adopted by the Jewish synod of Jamnia at the close of the first century.

5. Neither Jesus nor the writers of the New Testament quoted from the Apocrypha, though no doubt they knew of their existence. Jesus quoted the Old Testament 180 times, but not once the Apocrypha.
6. All are non-biblical and non-canonical because they fail to pass the divine inspiration “earmarks.”
7. Not until 1546 at the Counter Reformation Council of Trent, did these books get included, over 1000 years after Council at Carthage.

The apocryphal books have some historical value as sources of information on the intertestamental period, but they are not the inspired Word of God, and are not trustworthy as a source of doctrine. Don’t pass the tests!

THE PRESERVATION OF THE CANON

- A. **Manuscript Evidence** – “Since there are no original manuscripts, how trustworthy are the copies?” How likely over all the years is it that changes occurred? After the various . . . The process of copying manuscripts (about 5800 copies of Greek manuscripts) were meticulously done by professionals (until printing press in 1500s). Most agree word for word. No ancient document approaches the Bible in manuscript integrity and evidence. ICR . . . Chart . . .

AUTHOR	DATE WRITTEN	EARLIEST COPY	TIME SPAN	NUMBER OF COPIES	ACCURACY
Homer	ca 850 BC	ca AD 1400	About 2200 yrs	643	95%
Plato	ca 380 BC	ca AD 900	About 1300 yrs	7	Not enough copies to reconstruct original
Aristotle	ca 350 BC	ca AD 1100	About 1400 yrs	5	
Caesar	ca 60 BC	ca AD 900	About 950 yrs	10	99.5
New Testament	ca AD 60	ca AD 130	About 70 yrs	About 25000	

Are there difficulties, apparent contradictions, and even mysteries in places? Yes! But NO mistakes or errors. The copies we have today can be trusted (Lk. 16:17).

- B. **Translators were Meticulous** – In copying hundreds of handwritten manuscripts over the centuries, the writers were precise. Most textual scholars hold that 99.99% of the original writings have been preserved, and that the remaining .01% has no variants affecting any Christian doctrine. Any discrepancies are only in spelling. Are there difficulties? Yes. Are there mistakes or errors? NO!
- C. **The Canon is CLOSED!** (Jude 3; Rev. 22:18-19). No 67th book to come. We have what we need and all we need (2 Tim. 3:16-17). Jesus promised to preserve (Matt. 5:18; 24:35). Let me end with three statements . . .

CONC: If God could inspire the original writings through fallible men could He not also protect and preserve the transmission of the copies?