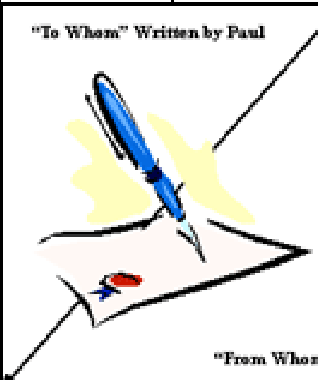


The Structure and Authority of the New Testament

The New Testament is the completion of the Scriptural masterpiece known as the Bible. The Old Testament (OT) without the New is like a story without an ending. The OT prepares for the New; the New Testament (NT) fulfills the Old. In numerous ways, the OT points ahead to Jesus Christ. He is the thread of hope that winds its way through the first half of the Bible. The record of His life is preserved for us in the four Gospels. The Acts record the church's expansion, the Epistles explain how the power of the risen Christ can transform life's experiences in local congregations of believers, and the Revelation holds out hope that God is in control, and one day He will bring history as we know it to a close, and usher in Christ's Kingdom.

The Structure of the New Testament

Pauline Epistles: Pastors (4)			
	1 Timothy	2 Timothy	Titus
	Philemon		
Pauline Epistles: Churches (9)	2 Thessal.		Rev. (John)
	1 Thessal.		Jude
	Colossians		3 John
	Philippians		2 John
	Ephesians		1 John
	Galatians		2 Peter
	2 Corinth.		1 Peter
	1 Corinth.		James
	Romans		Hebrews
	Acts (Luke)		
	Matthew	Mark	Luke
	John		
	Historical Books (5)		
General Epistles: Churches (9)			

The Authority of the New Testament (NT)

While the OT and NT are linked, there are major differences:

- **Time:** The OT was written over at least a 1,000 year period of time.
- The NT was written over 50-70 years.
- **Language:** The OT was written in Hebrew and a bit of Aramaic (Daniel; parts of Ezra)
- The NT was written in Greek (the common trade language of the ancient world)
- **Length:** The OT is **three times** as long as the NT. The OT contains 39 books. Old (3) Testament (9). The NT contains 27 books. New (3) Testament (9), or 3 X 9 = 27. Total 66.
- **Focus:** The OT centers on a people – **Israel**. The NT centers on a person – **Jesus**.

The NT centers on Jesus, but how do we know we have the actual words of Jesus?

MAPS – This acronym will help you understand the solid reliability of Scripture that we call the Bible (OT = Old Testament; NT = New Testament)

M = Manuscripts

A = Archeology

P = Prophecy

S = Statistics

M – Manuscripts.

After Jesus had ascended, the early Christians chiefly met in synagogues. Following the destruction of the temple in 70 AD as the Christians DID NOT FIGHT along side the Jews against the Romans, Christians and Jews went their separate ways. They began to meet in homes. They would retell the stories about Jesus from first hand witnesses. (See Matthew 24).

Luke 21:24 "They will fall by the sword and will be taken as prisoners to all the nations. Jerusalem will be trampled on by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled."

As the church spread rapidly throughout the Roman Empire, there arose the need for reliable source material to assure that the stories told were factual. The Church lived in a state of expectancy that Jesus could return in the clouds at any moment, yet they did not know for sure as to when.

The needed **trustworthy accounts** of the stories of Jesus' life and teachings. Other people were

See Luke 1:1-4; 1 Cor. 7:10; 2 Peter 3:14-16

Luke 1:1-4 "Many have undertaken to draw up an account of the things that have been fulfilled among us, ² just as they were handed down to us by those who from the first were eyewitnesses and servants of the word. ³ Therefore, since I myself have carefully investigated everything from the beginning, it seemed good also to me to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, ⁴ so that you may know the certainty of the things you have been taught."

Galatians. 1:1 "Paul, an apostle - sent not from men nor by man, but by Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised him from the dead..."

Galatians. 1:6-8 "I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you by the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel which is really no gospel at all. Evidently some people are throwing you into confusion and are trying to pervert the gospel of Christ. But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let him be eternally condemned!"

Galatians 1:11-12 "I want you to know, brothers, that the gospel I preached is not something that man made up. I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it; rather, I received it by revelation from Jesus Christ."

2 Peter 3:14-16 "So then, dear friends, since you are looking forward to this (2nd coming), make every effort to be found spotless, blameless and at peace with him.

¹⁵ Bear in mind that our Lord's patience means salvation, just as our dear brother Paul also wrote you with the wisdom that God gave him. ¹⁶ He writes the same way in all his letters, speaking in them of these matters. His letters contain some things that are hard to understand, which ignorant and unstable people distort, as they do the other Scriptures, to their own destruction.

Of the many (Gospels) in circulation, **four** were approved for use in the churches. Why four? There were four Gospels written by four different authors with different recipients in mind.

- Matthew addressed Jewish concerns.
- Mark is a briefer fast action Gospel—appealed to Romans.
- Luke, a Gentile doctor, wrote to the Greeks.
- John deals with personal theological issues presenting Jesus as divine.

Like a televised game, each camera records the action, but from a different angle and perspective.

How do we know they were Jesus' words being recorded years later?

In an oral culture, story telling was commonplace. When Jesus spoke, He spoke with authority. John wrote, "*no one ever spoke the way this man does.*" His style of story telling (parables) and addresses to the crowd were easy to remember.

Remember that in the NT era (1st Century A.D./C.E.), copies of the OT were hard to come by, only the VERY RICH would be able to buy them. Common people would find portions only in the synagogues. Again, when Jesus spoke He did so in short sentences that were easy to memorize.

They were all hand written. Some of parchments, some on animal skins, most on papyrus. Papyrus is a reed plant that grows on the banks of the Nile. It grows from 6 to 12 feet high and can be as thick as a man's wrist. A single sheet of papyrus was very expensive, worth two days labor for the average worker. Many sheets together were folded in half and stitched to form an early book called a **codex**.

Forming the Canon of the Bible:

Canonicity (Fr. Canon, rule or norm) refers to the normative or authoritative books inspired by God for inclusion in the Holy Scripture. Granted that God gave authority and hence canonicity to the Bible, a question arises: How did believers become aware of what God had done? The accepted/canonized books of the Bible refer to other books that are no longer available:

- Joshua 10:13 - "Book of Jasher"
- Numbers 21:14 - "The Book of the Wars of the Lord"
- Colossians 4:16 - "After this letter has been read to you, see that it is also read in the church of the Laodiceans and that you in turn read the letter from Laodicea."

Did not John (21:25) and Luke (1:1) speak of a profusion of religious literature? Were there not false epistles (2 Thess. 2:2, "*...not to become easily unsettled or alarmed by*

some prophecy, report or letter **supposed** to have come from us, saying that the day of the Lord has already come?")

What marks of inspiration guided the Church Fathers as they identified and collected the inspired books? Five foundational questions:

- **Was the book written by a prophet of God?** The Fathers established the authorship of the book. Once established that it was written by a recognized apostle or prophet, its place in the canon was secure. Historical or stylistic evidence supports the genuineness of a book. Paul argued in Galatians (1:1-24) that his message was authoritative because he was "an apostle not sent from men nor through the agency of man, but through Jesus Christ, and God the Father".
- **Was the writer confirmed by acts of God?** A miracle is an act of God to confirm the word of God given through a prophet of God to the people of God. Moses was given miraculous powers to prove his call (Ex. 4:19), as was Elijah (1 Kings 18). Jesus was attested to by miracles and signs God performed through Him (Acts 2:22). As to the Apostle's messages, "God also testified to it by signs, wonders and various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will" (Hebrews 2:4). Paul gave testimony of his apostleship to the Corinthians, declaring, "The things that mark an apostle --signs, wonders and miracles --were done among you with great perseverance" (2 Cor. 12:12).
- **Does the Message tell the truth about God?** Does the book tell the truth about God and his world as known from previous revelations? God cannot contradict himself (2 Cor. 1:17-18), nor can he utter what is false (Heb. 6:18). No book with false claims can be the Word of God. Moses stated the principle as follows:

If a prophet, or one who foretells by dreams, appears among you and announces to you a miraculous sign or wonder, and if the sign or wonder of which he has spoken takes place, and he says, "Let us follow other gods" (gods you have not known) "and let us worship them," you must not listen to the words of that prophet or dreamer. The LORD your God is testing you to find out whether you love him with all your heart and with all your soul (Deut. 13:1-3).
- The Bereans in Macedonia used this principle when they searched the Scriptures to see whether Paul's teaching was true (Acts 17:11). The Apostle John urged that all purported "truth" be tested by the known standard before it be received (1 John 4:1-6).
- **Did it come with the power of God?** Does the book have power to edify and equip believers? This requires the power of God. The Fathers believed the Word of God to be "living and active" (Heb. 4:12) and consequently ought to have a transforming force (2 Tim. 3:17; 1 Peter 1:23 - "you have been born again through the living and enduring word of God"). If the message of a book did not effect its stated goal, if it did not have the power to change a life, then God was apparently not behind its message (2 Tim. 3:15).
- **Was it accepted by the people of God?** Those who knew the writer, did they accept the teaching as "the word of God?" Paul wrote, "when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men,

but as it actually is, the word of God, which is at work in you who believe" (1 Ths. 2:13). Paul quoted the Gospel of Luke as "*Scripture*" (1 Tim. 5:18). Peter had a collection of Paul's "*letters*" (2 Peter 3:16). The apostles exhorted that their letters be read and circulated among the churches (Col. 4:16; 1 Thess. 5:27; Rev. 1:3).

The Preservation of the Texts:

Since we don't have any of the original books, how good are the copies? Scholars are constantly evaluating the quality of the ancient transmissions.

Work of	Earliest	Interval (between original and 1st copy)	No. of Copies
History by Herodotus (450 BC)	900 AD	1,350 years	8
Gallic Wars by Caesar (50 BC)	900 AD	950 years	10
Annals by Tacitus (100 AD)	1,100 AD	1,000 years	20
Natural History by Pliny (100 AD)	850 AD	750 years	7
New Testament (50 – 100 AD)	250 AD	200 years	5,000+

There are fragments of books dating back as early as 125 AD. There are even two fragments that date back to the **first century!**

A – Archaeology

With every dig in the holy land, we see evidence for the trustworthiness of Scripture.

Jeffrey Sheler writes in his book, *IS THE BIBLE TRUE?*, recent archeological discoveries have not only proven the existence of the Philistines, they have also revealed much about how they lived. There is a remarkable consistency between what the Bible says about the Philistines and what archeologists are finding. This consistency prompted William Dever of the University of Arizona to say: "That all [the archeological findings] 'fit' the many biblical allusions so well...and show that a post-exilic editor cannot simply have invented these passages, that they are genuinely archaic."

Jeffrey Sheler, *IS THE BIBLE TRUE?* (HarperCollins, 1999).
 Randall Price, *THE STONES CRY OUT: HOW ARCHEOLOGY CONFIRMS THE TRUTH OF THE BIBLE* (Harvest House, 1997).

P – Prophecy

- The Church did not have Scriptures of their own. They were dependent upon the Hebrew Scriptures or what we know as the OT. The NT contains quotations from 58 of the 66 books of the OT.

- Jesus' followers were Jews. They were familiar with the OT and believed Jesus to be the fulfillment of many of the prophecies concerning a Messiah/Savior who was to come.
- Over 50 predictions about the Messiah are recorded in the OT. Here are a few:

Fulfillment	Prediction	
He would be born in Bethlehem	Micah 5:2	Matthew 2:1
Born of a virgin	Isaiah 7:14	Matthew 1:23
Cure the deaf and the blind	Isaiah 35:5-6	Matthew 9:35
He would enter Jerusalem triumphantly	Zechariah 9:9	Mateo 21:1-9
Betrayed by a friend	Psalms 41:9	Mark 14:17-21
Sold for 30 pieces of silver	Zech. 11:12	Matthew 26:14-16
Killed amidst criminals	Psalms 22:16	Luke 23:33
He would be crucified	Psalms 22:14-17	Mark 15:20-25
He would be beaten and spit upon	Isaiah 50:6	Mark 14:65
His legs would not be broken	Exodus 12:46	John 19:31-36
He would be buried in a rich man's tomb	Isaiah 53:9	Luke 23:50-53
He would be raised from the dead	Psalms 16:10	Acts 2:22-32
He would sit down at the right hand of God	Psalms 110:1	Luke 24:50-51

S – Statistics

The Bible is unique in its continuity: For example, it was:

- written over a span of **1600 years**
- by **40 authors**, including:
 - Moses, a political leader, trained in the universities of Egypt
 - Peter, a fisherman
 - Amos, a herdsman
 - Joshua, a military general
 - Paul, a Rabbi
 - Daniel, a Prime Minister
 - Luke, a doctor
 - Isaiah, a priest
 - David, a shepherd who became a king
- On **three continents**: Africa, Europe, and Asia
- In **three languages** (Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek)
- On **hundreds of subjects** (love; wisdom; marriage; family; death; hope; faith)
- In **various circumstances** (Moses in the wilderness; Jeremiah in the dungeon; David fleeing for his life; Paul from prison; Luke while traveling; John in exile, alone on an island)

- And yet there is one consistent, non-contradictory theme that runs through it all: God's redemption of humankind; from Paradise Lost (Genesis 3) to Paradise Found (Revelation 21-22)

"All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, ¹⁷ so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work."

2 Timothy 3:16-17