



How did we get the Bible we use today?



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kaboom?!

Canon: (frm Hebrew qaneh; Grk transliteration kanon)
Originally the word meant reed or stalk which was used to measure and make straight lines. Over time a “canon” came to be known as the authoritative standard by which other things were measured. When used in reference to the Bible (i.e. “the canon of scripture” or “the process of canonization”) it means the list of books which were recognized by the nation of Israel, and then the church as supremely authoritative for belief: Scripture.



Autographa: The original manuscripts as they were first written by the author (Moses’ handwritten Pentateuch). When we speak of scripture being “inspired” and “without error” this refers to these documents, not the subsequent copying of them. However, God in his providence has preserved their faithfulness (but not in exactly the same way in each case: Scribal tradition in OT; number of manuscripts in NT)

the old(er) testament



writing/collection

The individual books of the Old Testament written over a long period of time under different circumstances. For example, in Jeremiah 36 we find out that Jeremiah had given some messages orally, and under the influence of the Holy Spirit, decided to have them written so that they will last. He then dictated them to Baruch.

Other books used pre-existing material, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, to be included in their work. For instance, Moses was not around for creation and so would obviously be relying on either a direct account of what happened from God. In

the case of the stories of the Patriarchs he was probably using other written or oral accounts that had been passed on to him. Later, with the death of Moses at the end of Deuteronomy 34, Moses was obviously not able to write this section himself. It is important to remember that the recognition of a book as “scripture” (i.e. God’s words to humans, not just human writings) pertained only to the actual book as it was written on the page, not the sources which were used or the process by which the book was written.

Basically all of the OT books were written by 5th cent B.C. and known about. From the earliest times, these writings were treated as unique and with special, authoritative value. In Deuteronomy 31:24-26 we see that the books of Moses (The Law) were kept alongside ark; and in Joshua 24:26 Joshua’s writings were placed in sanctuary. By the time Daniel 9:2 is written we see the first reference to collected canon of books, although others would be added later.

The order of the Hebrew bible was very different then than it is now. Our English order resulted from the order that was used in LXX and Vulgate, which rearranged and separated books.

24 Book Division of Hebrew OT

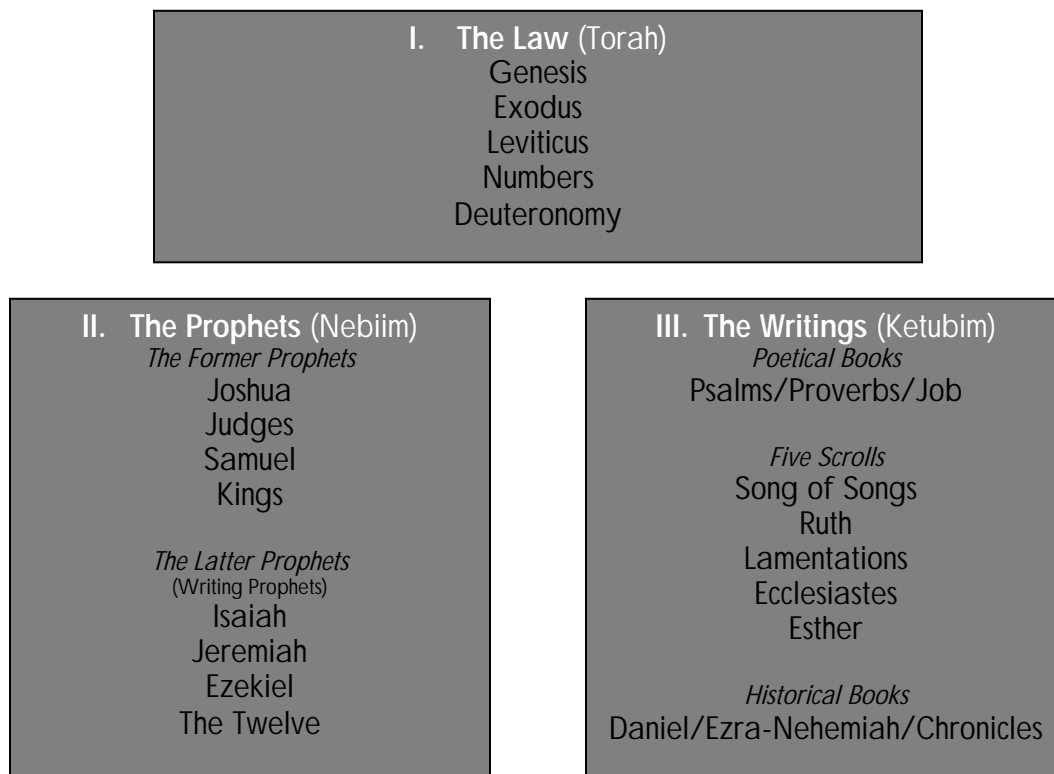


Chart taken from *From Ancient Tablets to Modern Translations*, by David Ewert, p. 31

canonization

At earliest stages, these books had a stamp of divine authority, which is what caused them to be included in the earliest collections unlike other early Jewish literature such as the *Book of Yashar*, *Wars of YWHW* etc. This collection functions as a "de facto" canon.

Later, Council of Jamnia (90 A.D., near Jaffa) more or less fixed the canon of the OT for the NT church. It served as a confirming session. The question was not whether or not to accept new books, but rather should all of the OT books that we have remain a part of the canon. The answer was yes.

"It bears repeating that no human authority and no council of rabbis ever made an OT book authoritative. These books were inspired by God and had the stamp of authority on them from the beginning. Through long usage in the Jewish community their authority was recognized and in due time they were added to the collection of canonical books."

From Ancient Tablets to Modern Translations, by David Ewert, p. 72



All of our OT books were unquestioningly validated by Jesus and Apostles. II Tim 3:16 which says that all scripture is God-breathed primarily had the OT in view.

transmission

Original copies would eventually wear out, be lost/destroyed when a nation was attacked or eventually ignored or lost. We don't really have any information about them pre-100 B.C.



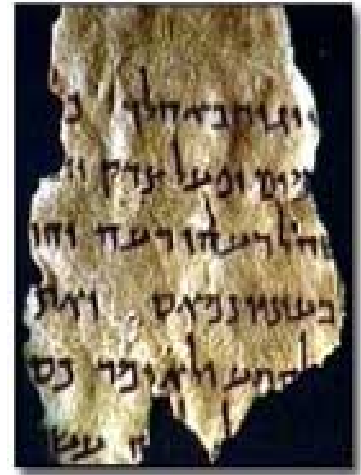
During this time scribes and Talmudic scholars were generally responsible for the copying process. During the Babylonian exile and especially the inter-testamental period, the Law became even more important and more importance was placed on accurate copies.

500 A.D.-1000 A.D. Special scribes know as Masoretes took over function of scribes. They adopted large, complex rules for copying to insure accuracy. They included variant readings when different manuscripts disagreed and made recommendations for which was more authentic. They also added system of pointing and spacing to consonants.

Example of "pointed" Masoretic manuscript

The basis for all modern translations of the Hebrew OT is this “Masoretic Text” and it was those that dated from 850-1100 that were the oldest best manuscripts we had. Until...

Dead Sea Scrolls: Discovered in 1947, in the caves around the Qumran region of Israel, the Dead Sea scrolls contain many manuscripts, but the most important were complete Isaiah scrolls and then the fragments of every book except Esther. All of them date from about the 100’s B.C. and all are in essence exactly the same as MT we have. So you skip almost 1000 years and find we have exact same thing that they did then.



the new(er) testament

writing/collection

The NT books weren’t written immediately after Jesus’ death because the apostles were there to teach and travel along with the eyewitnesses. As the church grew and spread there was a need for written documents so that the teachings were preserved and remained true to the teaching since apostles couldn’t check up on teachers as easily.

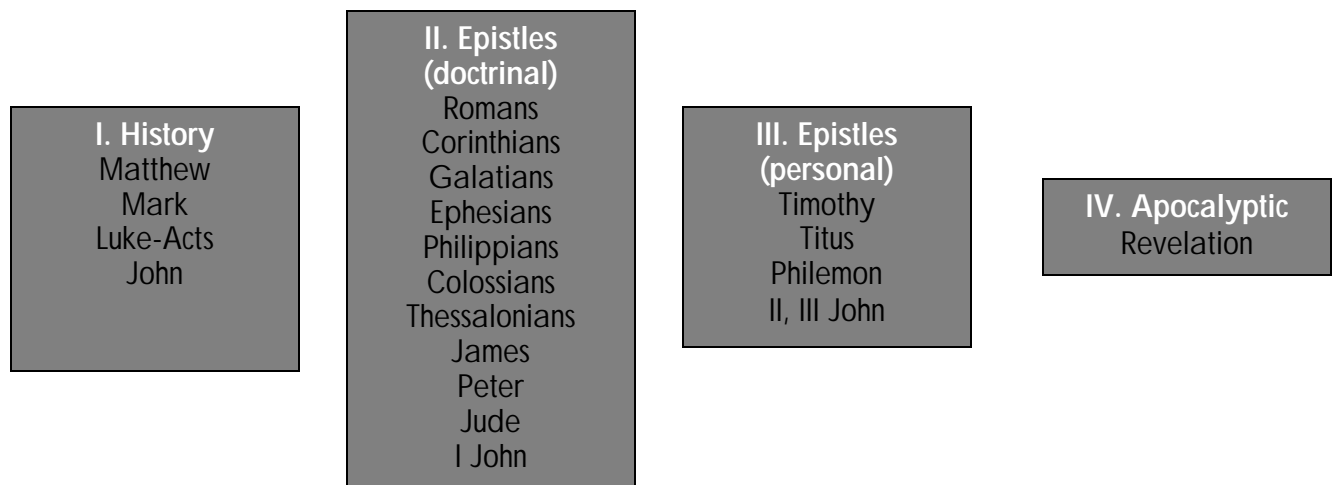
Earliest (early 50’s)

(90’s) **Latest**

Mark (used by Matt and Lk/Acts)
James
Galatians

John
I, II, III John
Revelation

There existed a basic tradition of writing letters where were to be used in church and circulated in churches to others in the area.



The collection of these letters was more or less immediate: For example in 95 A.D. the Bishop Clement is writing to Corinthians and instructing them to take up the letter of Paul.

This makes the assumption that the letter was at this time already written, known about, preserved and had had private copies of it already made.

canonization

Jesus makes a promise in John 14:26 that the Holy Spirit would come and remind them of all things. This is really the NT canon in its inception. As writings appeared, there were threats to orthodoxy from within and outside of the church (e.g. of Gnostics) and a greater need to identify what was authoritative and what was not.

By 185 A.D. Irenaeus and Hippolytus were talking about the widespread acceptance of 22 of the 27 NT books we have today. Those under scrutiny were Hebrews, James, Jude, II Peter, and III John.

In 363 A.D. the Synod of Laodicea forbade the reading of non-canonical books, but does not list them. By implication this meant that the canon was well enough known that it did not need to be explicitly spelled out.

Easter 367 A.D. Athanasius (of Council of Nicea fame) writes a letter to his diocese that includes 27 of 27 and explicitly rejects the Didache and Shepherd of Hermes. This is pretty much considered the end of any questions about what should be included in the NT.

The following councils again agreed on the 27 books of the NT: Hippo (393); Carthage (397) Carthage again (419)

THE MAIN POINT

Nobody proclaimed these writings as canon and in doing so gave status to them. Rather, the writings always had the qualifications and people simply recognized these traits in them.

Some took a little longer for everyone to say 100% yes to, but none were in a situation of maybe they are canonical, maybe they aren't.

The Gospels and Paul's writings were in without question by the year 100 or so.

how do you know?

There were several ways in which the earliest Christians were able to recognize writings as being from God and thereby books that should be included in the NT:

Apostilicity: the books were written by the men who knew Jesus. It was not just that the author knew Jesus, but also the apostolic content which needed to be in evidence.

Regula Fidei: the “rule of faith: which embodied the chief teachings of the apostle’s as they traveled and taught. This basic content was in place very early and allowed people to measure the teachings of the books against something.

Catholicity: the books had to have universal acceptance. It was not just the case that a particular book spoke to a particular person or church but rather it needed to speak to everyone.

Chronology of Composition: once the apostles had passed on it was very unlikely to have any scripture written.

Self-Evidencing Quality of the Book: these books were found to be “alive”; their inspiration is evident. The Holy Spirit speaks through them and makes us able to understand them. This is the same today as it was back then.

Public Worship: these books were regularly used for readings during public worship. Their public role validated their authenticity: they could bring home the power and appeal of the gospel to the entire body of Christ year after year.

Transmission

The NT books were copied over and over as they were spread and passed around and translated into different languages. This abundance of manuscripts makes it very easy to reconstruct the originals.

Work	Number of Copies	Closest Copy to When Events Actually Happened
Caesar’s <i>Gallic War</i> (54BC)	9-10	900 years after
Livy’s <i>Roman History</i> (49BC-10AD)	Only 35 of 142 volumes still exist; mostly only 1 copy	300 years after
Tacitus’s <i>Histories</i> (100AD)	Only 4.5 of 14 volumes still exist, with 2-3 copies	700 years after
Plato	Less than a handful of copies most works; ? lost	1300 years after
Demosthenes	Less than 3 copies most works: ? lost	1200 years after
New Testament books	5000 complete or partial copies of books	By 100-200 A.D. exist the earliest manuscripts (Rlands papyrus of Gospel of John no later than 125 AD) By 300-400 A.D. several complete copies are circulating

COMPARISON OF COMMON TRANSLATIONS (JOHN 3:16)

Literal

Dynamic Equivalent

Greek Text w/Interlinear Trans	NASB	NIV	NLT	<i>The Message</i>
<p>οὕτως γὰρ ἠγάπησεν For thus loved</p> <p>ὁ θεὸς τὸν κόσμον <i>- God the world</i></p> <p>ὥστε τὸν υἱὸν <i>so as the son</i></p> <p>μονογενῆ ἔδωκεν <i>only begotten gave</i></p> <p>ἵνα πᾶς ὁ πιστεύων <i>that everyone believing</i></p>	<p>For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life.</p>	<p>For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.</p>	<p>For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life.</p>	<p>This is how much God loved the world: He gave his Son, his one and only Son. And this is why: so that no one need be destroyed; by believing in him, anyone can have a whole and lasting life.</p>

COMPARISON OF COMMON TRANSLATIONS (ROMANS 3:25)

<i>Literal</i>	<i>Dynamic Equivalent</i>			
Greek Text w/Interlinear Trans	NASB	NIV	NLT	<i>The Message</i>
<p>ον προεθετο ο θεος whom set forth - God</p> <p>ιλαστηριον δια πιστεως <i>a propitiation thr. faith</i></p> <p>εν τω αυτου αιματι, <i>by the of him blood,</i></p> <p>εις ενδειξιν <i>for a showing forth</i></p> <p>της δικαιοσυνης αυτου <i>of the righteousness of him</i></p> <p><i>because of the passing by</i></p>	<p>whom God displayed publicly</p> <p>as a propitiation in His blood through faith.</p> <p><i>This was to demonstrate</i></p> <p>His righteousness,</p> <p>because in the {forebearance of God}</p> <p>He passed over the sins previously committed</p>	<p>God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement through faith in his blood.</p> <p>He did this to demonstrate his justice,</p> <p>because in his forbearance he left the sins committed beforehand unpunished.</p>	<p>For God sent Jesus to take the punishment for our sins and to satisfy God's anger against us.</p> <p>We are made right with God when we believe that Jesus shed his blood, sacrificing his life for us.</p> <p>God was being entirely fair and just when he did not punish those who sinned in former times.</p>	<p>God sacrificed Jesus on the altar of the world to clear that world of sin.</p> <p>Having faith in him sets us in the clear.</p> <p>God decided on this course of action in full public view—to set the world in the clear with himself through the sacrifice of Jesus,</p> <p>finally taking care of the sins he had so patiently endured.</p>