

# Can We Trust the Canon?

After people become convinced the Bible is inspired, questions concerning the reliability of the canon arise. How did the Bible come together? Were there some books voted out of the Bible? Do we have everything God wants us to have today?

Let's consider why we can trust that the canon is all the Scripture that God intends.

## What is canonization?

- Canon means "the rule or standard for what we believe and practice."
- Canonization refers to "the process of recognizing that standard."
- The Old Testament canon was settled in the time of Jesus (Matthew 15:8-9; 22:31-32; Mark 12:35-36; Luke 24:27, 44-45).
- Due to false teachers, the New Testament was more difficult to figure out (2 Thessalonians 2:1-2).
- Beyond the 27 books we have in the New Testament today, other materials were being written and passed around among the early Christians. Examples of these materials include "The Shepherd of Hermas," "The Epistle of Barnabas," "The Letter of Clement to the Church at Corinth," and the writings of the Gnostics.
- These additional writings (some claiming to be inspired and some not) made it somewhat difficult for the brethren to figure out what exactly was coming from God.

## How was it sorted out?

- The New Testament books were written in the first century. They were either written by an apostle or prophet (Ephesians 3:4-5).
- These books were then copied and passed around among the churches (Colossians 4:16; 1 Thessalonians 5:27; Galatians 1:1-2).
- Brethren recognized them as Scripture (1 Corinthians 14:37; 2 Peter 3:16; 1 Timothy 5:17-18). Scripture is inspired by God (2 Timothy 3:16).
- Many debates and discussions took place among the brethren about what was and wasn't Scripture.
- As early as the mid-second century, lists were being put together by Christians concerning which materials were to be considered Scripture.
- It didn't take long before all the lists started looking the same!

## There were three important questions that the early Christians had to answer.

- Who wrote the book? Did an apostle or prophet pen the words? When was it written?
- Who all is accepting the book? Do the brethren widely accept it?
- What does the book teach? Is it promoting teaching that contradicts the widely accepted books? This is why the Gnostic writings are not included.

## Take home points:

- The critics are wrong! Men did not determine the canon. The Roman Catholic church or a series of church councils did not give us the Bible.
- The early Christians took Scripture very seriously. Do we do the same?
- We can trust our Bibles! We can trust that we have all the Bible because we can trust in the power of God (Psalm 135:6; 1 Peter 1:22-25).

## Conclusion:

We serve a God who is fully capable of revealing and preserving His word.