

“The Canon of Scripture”

Summarized from *A Ready Defense* by Josh McDowell

*The word canon comes from the root word reed which was used as a measuring rod and came to mean “standard”. As applied to Scripture it means, “An officially accepted list of books.”

*Old Testament Canon-Decided before the destruction of the Jerusalem temple in A.D. 70, but that is when it was made official. Extra-Biblical testimony confirms that the 39 books of the Old Testament were confirmed as authoritative by or before the first century. The meticulous nature of both the Talmudist (A.D. 100-500) and Massorete (A.D. 500-900) scribes is an ironclad guarantee of textual reliability. Also, the Dead Sea Scrolls discovered in 1947, are dated to around 125 B.C. and are almost word for word identical to the manuscripts dated to A.D. 900. In addition, there are numerous prophecies recorded sometimes hundreds of years in advance that are fulfilled in minute detail. Archaeology further proves the Bible’s reliability as not one archaeological discovery has ever controverted a single, biblical statement but instead has confirmed the cities, rivers, people groups, customs, mountain ranges, and practices mentioned in the Old Testament. This fact alone separates it from the fanciful lies of other religious texts.

*New Testament Canon-First century Christian saw in the words of Jesus and the writings of the apostles and authority of divine inspiration equaling that of the Old Testament Scriptures. There are more than 5,300 Greek manuscripts of the New Testament. The best-preserved ancient document (*Iliad*) has less than 13% of the manuscript evidence of the New Testament. In addition, there is less than a 25-year timespan between the date of the New Testament events, when they were written, and the date of the earliest copy (manuscript). That time frame blows away by centuries any other ancient document. Also, the historicity, geography, and cultural components of the events and places mentioned in the New Testament and verifiable which separates it from all other religious texts. Archeology has confirmed the setting, characters, dates, political situation, customs, places, technology, and identity of Biblical authors.

*Tests of a Book for inclusion in the Canon:

- 1) Is it *authoritative*? Did it come for the hand of God?
- 2) Is it *prophetic*? Was it written by the hand of God?
- 3) Is it *authentic*? If the church fathers doubted its validity, it was thrown out.
- 4) Is it *dynamic*? Did it come with the life transforming power of God?
- 5) Was it *received, collected, read and used*? Was it accepted by the people of God?

*What about the supposed “mistakes” in the Bible?

Every supposed mistake or contradiction in the Bible has a solution and most are clear, common-sense answers further revealing just how precisely God has communicated through his inspired Word. When understood, even these testify to the minute accuracy and trustworthiness of the Bible. When people bring up this an objection, we should ask for a specific. Often one cannot be provided but even when an example is provided, a quick analysis provides clear explanation and support for Biblical reliability.

