GROVE BIBLE

COMPLETE CANON OF SCRIPTURE

BIBLIOLOGY PAPER





The Complete Canon of Scripture

The Complete Canon of Scripture refers to the 66 books of the Christian Bible and the Hebrew Scriptures which collectively comprise the written Word of God. Canon comes from the Greek word kanōn, meaning reed or rule which was used as a standard to measure. The canon is, “the summary of Christian teaching, believed to reproduce what the apostles themselves taught”(F.F. Bruce). "The idea of canon–[is] a fixed set of documents which God's people recognize as the authoritative Word of God" (Derek Thomas).

Canon

It is important to note that as soon as the Holy Scriptures were written, they were part of the canon. This is critical because the canon was recognized, not determined. The church discovered the marks of divinity that the Scriptures possess, it did not decide what would comprise the canon. It was like a treasure hunter brushing away dirt and discovering a glittering treasure rather than like a metallurgist producing an alloy. Scriptures bear the high marks of canonicity not because the Church produced them, but because the Scripture produced the Church (Rom 10:17, 1 Pet 1:23) and the Church recognized/s God's Word for what it is, God's actual Word (1 Thess 2:13). "Christ [established and built] His church by causing the church to accept just this canon and, by means of the assistance and witness of the Holy Spirit, to recognize it as His" (H. Ridderboss). "[The canon] was the foundation for the church, not the consequence of the church” (Kostenberger/Kruger). The treasure of the Lord's Truth reveals itself to be so as it's received by the people of God whom it produced. The authority of Scripture wasn't bestowed upon the Bible by church councils, but was innately present in the documents themselves when God breathed out the canon (2 Tim 3:16).....



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Canon (Continued)

"Neither individuals nor councils created the canon; instead they came to recognize and acknowledge the self-authenticating quality of these writings, which imposed themselves as canonical upon the church" (Bruce Metzger). God's people know the voice of the Shepherd (John 10:4,27). The canon is not an external standard that the 66 books measure up to, but rather, are themselves the highest standard and are revealed to be so through intrinsic marks of divinity. God used the proximate cause of men to pen His truth but this is not to be mistaken with the ultimate cause of God’s primary authorship (2 Pet 1:21). We don't declare that the earth should exert the force of gravity and then make it a reality. We simply observe gravity's effects and recognize that the law exists.

Jesus' View of the Canon

The canon was inaugurated when Moses began writing God’s revelation (Ex 24:3-4). Jesus viewed the OT canon as authoritative (Luke 24:27), the phrase "it is written " was used repeatedly by Christ as the final word, as He held to the authority of the canon to settle doctrinal matters (Matt 26:24, Mark 14:27). There was no ambiguity regarding whether or not God's people had a clear set of documents that were recognized as authoritative. Jesus viewed the entirety of the OT as an authoritative account that pointed to Him (Luke 24:27,44). The same principle applies to the New Testament canon. Our Lord not only affirmed the Jewish canon of the OT, He also promised to give additional revelation to His church through His authorized representatives, the Apostles (John 14-16, Acts 1:8). The NT documents were a fulfillment of Jesus' promise to carry forward His ministry by the power of The Spirit through the Apostolic witness (John 16:13-15), The NT canon was preauthenticated by Christ.



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Apostles View of the Canon

Both the Old and New Testaments were recognized as Scripture by the Apostles and the Church. The canon of Scripture was inspired by God through Apostles or close counterparts. B.B. Warfield said, "We rest our acceptance of the New Testament Scriptures as authoritative… It is clear that prophetic and apostolic origin is the very essence of the authority of the Scriptures," (B.B. Warfield). The Apostle Paul quoted both the Old and New Testament as Scripture (Deut. 25:4, Luke 10:7). Peter referred to the Apostle Paul's writings as "Scriptures" (2 Peter 3:15,16).

Closed/Complete

The canon of Scripture is complete, it is no longer being added to (Rev 22:18-19). The canon is closed and was brought to completion by the foundational ministry of the Apostles (Eph 2:20). NT revelation HAS been revealed in Christ, and was ONCE FOR ALL delivered to the saints (Heb 1:1,2, Jude 3). The Scriptures have been accepted by the covenant people of God, and come to beautiful consummation through John's Revelation of redemptive history drawing to a close (Rev 22). We have the complete and authoritative record of God's canon and recognize the Bible to be so, "the heavenliness of the matter, the efficacy of the doctrine, the majesty of the style, the consent of all the parts, the scope of the whole (which is, to give all glory to God), the full discovery it makes of the only way of man's salvation, the many other incomparable excellencies, and the entire perfection thereof, are arguments whereby it doth abundantly evidence itself to be the Word of God: yet notwithstanding, our full persuasion and assurance of the infallible truth and divine authority thereof, is from the inward work of the Holy Spirit bearing witness by and with the Word in our hearts" (WCF 1.5).