

The Bible:
 The Canon Of
 The New Testament
 February 15, 2023

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How We Got The New Testament

- The Stories of Jesus and His resurrection can be traced to those who were eyewitnesses and close associates.
- Stories circulated and those in the Early Church wanted His life, teachings, and Apostle’s teachings preserved.
- What evidence do we have that the stories and what was written matched, was accurate, and not changed?
- There is no historical evidence that questions this.
- When the writings were read, they matched what was said, had been said many times before.

2

How We Got The New Testament

- After Christ’s death; about 16 years before early NT writings.
- James (48), Galatians & 1 Thessalonians (50), Mark (55).
- To us, it seems like a long timer before something is written.
- We rely upon reading to remember things. Soon after it happens, we see it on the internet, TV, magazine, or book.
- Jesus’ 1st circulations were oral histories; memorized testimonies of the truth; spread before it was written down.
- The stories of Jesus spread easily because they were shared in a culture of memorization and retelling.

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How We Got The New Testament

- c. 160AD, an unnamed Elder in a church in Asia Minor wrote a fiction novel about Paul but pushed it as a real account.
- This made it around to churches and they had him removed. They were not going to allow heresy to mingle with truth.
- Oral histories circulated when the Apostles were still alive.
- The narratives were passed down when written.
- The eyewitnesses were still alive.
- 1 Cor. 15:1-9 lists eyewitnesses to the resurrection; 500 saw the resurrected Christ and some were still alive.
- "If you don't believe me, go ask them!"

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How We Got The New Testament

- 1 Cor. 15:3 – For I passed on what I also received. . . .
 - 1st century Greek, when these two words were used, oral narrative of repeating exactly what was seen was told under authority.
 - It was stated in a way of its intention to be orally told again and again and memorized.
- Impossible to change the narrative when eyewitnesses are still alive.
- Very early in the Church, if one fabricated something, they were rebuked, disciplined, & removed.
- Also, the NT is in harmony with the OT. Acts 17:11 (Bereans)

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How We Got The New Testament

- NT writings required the following:
- Must be dated from the time of the Apostles.
 - Most Gnostic Gospels (350-400AD) - Gospel of Thomas: 140AD
 - Must be in harmony with other Scriptures; not correct.
 - Must match the words of Moses, Prophets, & Jesus.
 - Written by an Apostle (or his scribe)
 - Written by a close associate of an Apostle.
 - Luke compiled an account and wrote.
 - Mark was close to Peter and likely wrote what Peter said.
 - Hebrews – unknown; early Church thought it was Paul (?).
 - *The NT was written while eyewitnesses were still alive.*

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How Were Books of The NT Chosen

- Not chosen by Emperor Constantine or a powerful Bishop.
 - In 312 came to Christ as a Roman Emperor; no more persecution.
- The Church recognized certain books as Scripture before and after Constantine. He made NO changes.
- The canon was not created by humans; however, books were recognized as inspired (God breathed) early on.
 - 1 Cor. 14:37 – “. . . what I write to is the Lord’s command.”
 - 2 Peter 3:16 – twisting other Scriptures.
 - Matthew begins with a genealogy that links it to the OT as if to present itself as a continuation of the OT.

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How Were Books of The NT Chosen

Did all Christians everywhere recognize the same books as authoritative? For the most part, yes.

- Gospels, Acts, John, Paul’s writings were early recognized (20).
- If only these 20 books; still enough to trust and follow Christ.
- The remaining 7 books were not chosen by an emperor, bishop, or a king; they could be traced back to the source = authentic.
- All writings had to agree with the testimony of the Apostles.
- The Church simply affirmed what it recognized as Scripture.
- In 367, Athanasius, Bishop of Alexandria wrote an Easter letter to the churches & listed the 27 books we recognize today.
- Council of Carthage (397), Church officially recognized the ‘27.’

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How The NT Was Copied

- Before the 15th century, documents were hand copied.
- Since most early Christians were Jews, similar way of preserving the OT texts were followed into the NT Texts.
- Errors that were discovered were not tolerated.
- 5600+ manuscripts/fragments in existence, they are 70 +/-% identical & we have good reason to believe we can know 98-99% of the NT original autographs from these writings.
- Variations do not affect anything we believe about God, Christ, or His work.
- Some of the writings/fragments were likely written when the original writers were still living. (earliest of Mark – c. 90AD)

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