

17 April 2022 – Resurrection Sunday

“Evidently The New Testament Is Reliable”

“Why These Books Not Others?”

Introduction

*We’ve taken a look at the reasons to believe that the text of the New Testament we hold today has been reliably brought down to us

We looked at the 3 tests that any textbook should be tested with:

*Bibliographical Test – The documents timing, number, transmission, translation and interpretation

*Internal Evidence – Eyewitnesses, contradictions

*External Evidence – Archeology, other writings

*These were designed to show us that we have excellent reasons to believe the words of the Bible

*Believing the accuracy, events & people of the bible is based on reasons

*Believing what they said about God, death, salvation and more is based on reasonable faith

Tonight, we’ll give you a supplement to answer,

“Why were these 27 books included but not others?”

First: What's special about these 27 books?

1. The church collected these books to distribute them all together
 - a. Christians wanted to be able to completely defend the faith against heretics
 - i. Started w/ Marcion in 140 AD distributing propaganda
 - ii. Even Apostle Paul had a strong desire to give believers ‘all the council of God’ (Acts 20:27 & Rms 15:19)
 - b. Missionary work
 - i. As the gospel spread to other countries, they wanted to know everything that they should bring w/ them
 - ii. This helped them translate into other languages quicker
2. They all confirmed & lined up with each other
 - a. Each of the four Gospel confirm each other
 - b. Eusebius confirms Mark's gospel is thru Peter (*Ecclesiastical History* 3.39)
 - c. Irenaeus confirms in *Against Heresies* 3.1.1

- i. Matthew's gospel was toward the Hebrews
 - ii. Mark's gospel was thru Peter
 - iii. Luke's gospel as he travelled with Paul
 - iv. John's was produced while living at Ephesus
3. The church merely recognized the books that have been inspired since their inception
- a. They are a list of authoritative books not an authoritative list of books
 - i. When the Church Council - The Synod of Hippo in 393 AD recognized these 27 books, it was the last time the issue got seriously raised
 - ii. Athanasius gave us the complete list as early as 367 AD
 - 1. He also attended the First Church Council of Nicea in 325AD
 - iii. The First Council of Nicea in 325 AD
 - 1. They had nothing to do w/ deciding the books for the New Testament
 - 2. Read about those who were there & the record of the events themselves
 - a. Read Eusebius or Athanasius
 - b. Read the creed & the 20 canons from the Council

- b. Look at individual N.T. books
 - i. In the 2nd and 3rd centuries, books were easily proved to be authentic or fraudulent
 - ii. The idea that Constantine in the 4th century could gather up the Gospels & burn them only leaving false gospels is unimaginable
 - 1. Christians would have opposed this vehemently
 - 2. Dan Brown's Da Vinci Code is making this up
- c. Ex: The Academy Awards
 - i. Lord of the Rings won 'best picture' in 2004
 - 1. Did that make it the best picture or did it prove that it already was?
 - 2. The Academy Award just proved that it already was the best picture
 - a. The public thought so
 - b. The Golden Globes thought so

Finally: What about other potential books to include?

1. What about historically known books
 - a. Examples
 - i. Epistle of Pseudo-Barnabas (70-79AD)
 - ii. Shepherd of Hermas (115-140AD)
 - iii. Didache: Teaching of the twelve (100-120AD)
 - b. These only had temporary or local recognition
 - c. No major canon or church council included them as inspired books
 - d. Their limited distribution among churches was b/c they make reference to canonical books
2. What about other 'secret' books only recently being talked about?
 - a. Examples
 - i. Gospel of Thomas
 - ii. Gospel of Peter
 - iii. Gospel of Mary
 - iv. Secret Gospel of Mark

- b. Apply the same tests to these documents
 - i. They weren't written by the purported author
 - 1. Ex: Gospel of Thomas wasn't written by the disciple Thomas
 - a. A few (6) ancient documents refer to this gospel and they make it clear that they knew that it wasn't written by Thomas
 - 2. The four Gospels made no effort to attach the author's name, it would be apparent
 - 3. The Gnostic gospels intentional attached a name of a 1st century figure to try to gain credibility
 - ii. Written in a later period of time
 - 1. There were no differences on any essence doctrine in the first decades of Christianity

2. To choose between the writings of Jesus' hand-picked men and others who wrote a century late is easy
 3. These Gnostic gospels were written about the end of the 2nd century
- iii. Written from other places with alien contexts
 - iv. Inaccuracies at key points
 1. Even the NT shows temporary disagreement about secondary or tertiary issues
 - a. Eating of certain meat
 - b. Circumcision
 2. But the core message of Christianity is 100% united throughout the NT
- c. The Gospel of Thomas
 - i. Most of this gospel quotes from or parallels Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Paul & others
 - ii. Over ½ the NT is alluded to in Thomas
 - iii. This gives it date of not earlier than 100AD

- iv. Exp: Epistles of Ignatius written circa 110AD doesn't have nearly that much NT in them
- v. Syrian form of 4 Gospels applied to Thomas
 1. Tatian, student of Justin Martyr, blended the 4 gospels (175AD) for dissemination to Syrian-speaking Christians
 2. This is called the Diatessaron
 3. In this blending he created some new forms of language
 4. Thomas is also similar in order & arrangement of the Diatessaron
 5. It calls Thomas, Judas Thomas which is only found in the Syrian church
 6. When in Syriac, a series of memorization catchwords emerges giving evidence to the original language
 7. These new forms are inherent in the Gospel of Thomas dating Thomas later than 175AD

vi. Content of Gospel of Thomas

1. Portrays Jesus not as a redeemer but as a wisdom figure telling us that we all have the divine light within us
2. Thomas has quite an awkward ending: Simon Peter says, “Miriam should leave us. Females are not worthy of life.” Jesus answers, “Look, I shall guide her to make her male, so she too may become a living spirit resembling you males. For every female who makes herself male will enter the kingdom of heaven.”

d. The Gospel of Peter

- i. In 1880 this ONE document was discovered from the ninth century
- ii. We have no reason to believe this was written by Peter
 1. If this is the historic Gnostic Gospel of Peter then even church fathers such as Eusebius and Serapion warned against it for its false teaching

- iii. It tends to tell fanciful stories and errors
 - 1. Exp: Jesus' head reaching the clouds, a talking cross while it comes out of the tomb, and a ruling priest spending the night in a graveyard.
 - 2. Over time literature will tend to go from historical, sober accounts to the fanciful, not vice versa.
 - 3. This shows these stories to be later not earlier source documents.
- e. The Gospel of Mary
 - i. Late 100s & certainly not written by Mary
 - ii. Teaching: 'salvation in achieved by seeking the true spiritual nature of humanity within oneself and overcoming the entrapping material nature of the body and the world.'
- iii. Jesus and Mary
 - 1. This book never attests to Jesus and Mary being wed
 - 2. No legitimate scholar believes this

- f. The Secret Gospel of Mark
 - i. Content - Jesus has a secret initiation rite w/ young man that may have included ‘physical union’
 - ii. No document is available to be examined
 - 1. Smith ‘left it in a monastery’ and took a picture of it
 - iii. This gospel was evidently a hoax by Morton Smith in 1960
 - 1. After Smith died in 1991 Stephen Carlson examined the photograph and determined it to be a hoax

Conclusion

So not only are the books we have supposed to be there, but the ones we're not supposed to have aren't.

- 1. The 27 N.T. Books have been examined**
 - a. They were collected for convenience
 - b. They agree w/ each other
 - c. The Church recognized the books that were already seen as authoritative
- 2. Many other books are simply frauds**
 - a. Not written by the purported author
 - b. Written much later in time
 - c. Written from other places w/ alien context
 - d. Have inaccuracies at key points

Be assured that you have the books God wants and needs you to have

...and you have ALL the books God wants and needs you to have