

# SET THE RECORD STRAIGHT HOW WE GOT OUR BIBLE

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*And you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free. (John 8:32, NLT)*

## How Do We Know The Bible Is Real?

Christians claim that the bible is God's true word, this claim is disputed by many others. Most agree that the bible is one of, if not the, most impactful book that has ever existed.

## The Need For The Bible

*When the Lord finished speaking with Moses on Mount Sinai, he gave him the two stone tablets inscribed with the terms of the covenant, written by the finger of God. (Exodus 31:18, NLT)*

*I want you to remember what the holy prophets said long ago and what our Lord and Savior commanded through your apostles. (2 Peter 3:2, NLT)*

- To record God's prophetic words.
- To meet the needs of the early church/Israel.
- To correct heresy.
- To remove spurious writings.
- To enable mission (NT).

## The Biblical Canon (Measuring Rod)

The Bible:

- Contains 66 books (39 OT, 27 NT).
- Is about 611,000 words long.
- Covers a variety of literary styles.
  - Historical
  - Law
  - Wisdom
  - Poetic (including songs)
  - Prophetic
  - Gospel
  - Letters
- Was written in three languages over a period of about 1500 years.
- Was written by more than 40 authors from a wide variety of authors, such as shepherds, kings, farmers, priests, poets, scribes, and fisherman across three continents.
- Addresses hundreds of controversial subjects.

## Criteria For Inclusion

- Was the book written by a prophet of God (Divine inspiration)?
- Does the books message contain the truth about God?
- Is it consistent with the rest of scripture?

- Was it accepted by the people of God? (Christ/Apostolic/Early Church Fathers endorsement).

Note: The apocrypha did not meet these criteria.

### **The Canon Recognised (NT)**

- First recorded in the form we have now by Athanasius of Alexandria in AD367 and confirmed by The Synod of Hippo in AD393.
- Various NT books were recognised by Jerome and Augustine, Polycarp, Justin Martyr, Irenaeus and Ignatius before this.

### **The OT Canon**

- Was probably settled (in the form we have now) before 150BC (evidenced by the acceptance that God had stopped speaking to the Israelites in the Intertestamental period).
- These settled books appear in the Septuagint, which was composed around 250 to 150BC.
- The NT writers witness to the OT we have now.
- Jesus confirmed the OT as we have it now.

### **Is The NT Reliable?**

- There is a large number of ancient manuscripts (25000+) in original languages and translations.
- Early church fathers recognise and quote from the canon e.g. Eusebius (AD130), Origen, Tertulian etc (If we had no original NT MSS we could still recreate most it from their writing).
- Internal consistency and use of primary sources.
- Non-Christian confirmation of biblical events, Tacitus (Pontius Pilate), Suetonius (Chrestus), etc.
- Archaeology - Places, events, coins. Etc.

### **Is Our NT The Same As The Original NT?**

- No original writings of the Bible exist.
- The thousands of extant MSS enable us to recover the original books.
- Due to the copying process there are textual variants across different MSS's.
- 99% of variants are easy to deal with - spelling mistakes, different word orders, obvious wrong words etc.

### **How Do We Deal With The Other Variants In The NT?**

There are three main techniques used when trying to reconcile variants between MSS's.

- Majority text - The most common variant (majority) has priority - WEB
- Critical text - The oldest variant has priority - NIV, NASB, CSB
- Received text - The version that God has preserved over time - KJV

If we put the three versions side by side you will see only minor differences, none of which affect any Christian doctrine even after two millennia! Read them for yourself!

### **Conclusion**

The bible is God's word to us, we have it in the exact form that God wants us to have it. We can read it today with total confidence in its reliability!

*All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives. It corrects us when we are wrong and teaches us to do what is right. (2 Timothy 3:16, NLT)*