

The Bible: What it is and How we got it

RCF Academy

Lesson 5: Old Testament Canon pt. 2

Inter-testimonial period

- Timeframe between the writing of Malachi and the arrival of Christ
- Septuagint
 - Greek translation of the OT, made up of various collections.
 - First translation was of the Torah around 275 BC
 - “King Ptolemy once gathered 72 Elders. He placed them in 72 chambers, each of them in a separate one, without revealing to them why they were summoned. He entered each one's room and said: "Write for me the Torah of Moshe, your teacher". God put it in the heart of each one to translate identically as all the others did.”
 - Earliest compilations are called “Uncials”
 - Codex Sinaiticus (4th century)
 - Codex Vaticanus (4th century)
 - Codex Alexandria (5th century)

Inter-testimonial period

- Septuagint
 - Non canonical books included in later editions
 - 1 Esdras (Vulgate 3 Esdras)
 - 2 Esdras (Vulgate 4 Esdras)
 - Tobit
 - Judith ("Judeth" in Geneva)
 - Rest of Esther (Vulgate Esther 10:4 – 16:24)
 - Wisdom (Wisdom of Solomon)
 - Ecclesiasticus (also known as Sirach)
 - Baruch and the Epistle of Jeremy ("Jeremiah" in Geneva) (all part of Vulgate Baruch)
 - Song of the Three Children (Vulgate Daniel 3:24–90)
 - Story of Susanna (Vulgate Daniel 13)
 - The Idol Bel and the Dragon (Vulgate Daniel 14)
 - Prayer of Manasseh (Daniel)
 - 1 - 4 Maccabees

Inter-testimonial period

- Septuagint

- It is written (בְּכַתּוּב, Γέγραπται)

- “They set the altar in its place, for fear was on them because of the peoples of the lands, and they offered burnt offerings on it to the Lord , burnt offerings morning and evening. And they kept the Feast of Booths, **as it is written**, and offered the daily burnt offerings by number according to the rule, as each day required,” Ezra 3:3-4 ESV
 - “Let the high praises of God be in their throats and two-edged swords in their hands, to execute vengeance on the nations and punishments on the peoples, to bind their kings with chains and their nobles with fetters of iron, to execute on them the **judgment written!** This is honor for all his godly ones. Praise the Lord !” Psalm 149:6-9 ESV
 - “Since we have the same spirit of faith according to **what has been written**, "I believed, and so I spoke," we also believe, and so we also speak,” 2 Corinthians 4:13 ESV

New Testament Era

- Jesus

- “Then he said to them, "These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled." Luke 24:44 ESV
 - The Psalms that are referred to are the entirety of the Ketuvim since it begins with this book and it is the most used book of the writings.
 - Philo used this term in a similar manner
 - “Laws, and Oracles given by the inspiration through Prophets, and Psalms, and the other books whereby knowledge and piety are increased and completed.”

New Testament Era

- Jesus

- “Therefore also the Wisdom of God said, 'I will send them prophets and apostles, some of whom they will kill and persecute,' so that the blood of all the prophets, shed from the foundation of the world, may be charged against this generation, from **the blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah**, who perished between the altar and the sanctuary. Yes, I tell you, it will be required of this generation.” Luke 11:49-51 ESV
 - Abel is the first prophet martyred (Genesis 4)
 - Zechariah was the last prophet martyred in the scriptures (2 Chronicles 24)
 - “Then the Spirit of God clothed Zechariah the son of Jehoiada the priest, and he stood above the people, and said to them, "Thus says God, 'Why do you break the commandments of the Lord , so that you cannot prosper? Because you have forsaken the Lord , he has forsaken you.'" But they conspired against him, and by command of the king they stoned him with stones in the court of the house of the Lord . Thus Joash the king did not remember the kindness that Jehoiada, Zechariah's father, had shown him, but killed his son. And when he was dying, he said, "May the Lord see and avenge!" 2 Chronicles 24:20-22 ESV
 - This ordering of the scriptures and its contents were not unique to Jesus since the Pharisees and scribes were silent when he stated these things

Church Fathers

- Melito of Sardis
 - Bishop of Sardis around 170 AD
 - Paschal Homily (Easter Sermon)
 - “Having learned accurately the books of the old covenant, I set them down and have sent them to you. These are their names: Five books of Moses-Genesis, Exodus, Numbers, Leviticus, Deuteronomy. Joshua the son of Nun, Judges, Ruth, four books of Kingdoms, two books of Chronicles. The Psalms of David, the Proverbs of Solomon (also called Wisdom), Ecclesiastes, the Song of Songs, Job. The Prophets: Isaiah, Jeremiah, the Twelve in a single book, Daniel, Ezekiel, Esdras.”

Church Fathers

- Origen

- Headmaster of the Catechol school of Alexandria around 200 AD
- Compiled an interlinear bible containing six different translations called the “Hexapla”
 - The Hebrew text
 - Hebrew transcribed into Greek letters
 - Aquila’s Greek version
 - Symmachus’ Greek version
 - The Septuagint
 - Theodotion’s Greek version
- “We should not be ignorant that there are twenty-two books of the OT, according to the tradition of the Hebrews, corresponding o the number of letters in their alphabet...These are the twenty-two books according to the Hebrew: That which among us is entitled Genesis, but among the Hebrews, from the beginning of the book, that is ‘in beginning’. Exodus, that is, ‘these are the names’. Leviticus, ‘and he called’. Numbers. Deuteronomy, ‘these are the words’. Joshua the son of Nun. Judges, and Ruth therewith in one book. 1 and 2 Kingdoms, one book with them, Samuel, ‘the called of God’. 3 and 4 Kingdoms in one book, that is ‘the kingdom of David’. 1 and 2 Chronicles in one book, that is ‘words of days’. 1 and 2 Esdras in one book, that is ‘helper’. The book of Psalms. The Proverbs of Solomon. Ecclesiastes. Song of Songs (not, as some suppose, Song of Songs). Isaiah. Jeremiah with Lamentations and the Epistle in one book. Daniel. Ezekiel. Job. Esther. Outside these are the books of Maccabees.”

Church Fathers

- Athanasius

- Bishop of Alexandria from 328-373 AD
- Expected of the Bishop of Alexandria to notify the churches as to what day Eastern would be on that particular year. These notifications were called “festal letters”
 - “Inasmuch as some have taken in hand to draw up for themselves an arrangement of the so-called apocryphal books and to intersperse them with the divinely inspired scripture, concerning which we have been fully persuaded, even as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word delivered it to the fathers: it has seemed good to me also, having been stimulated thereto by true brethren, to set forth in order the books which are included in the canon and have been delivered to us with accreditation that they are divine. My purpose is that each one who has been led astray may condemn those who have led him astray and that those who have remained untarnished may rejoice at having these things brought to remembrance again.
 - The books of the OT, then, are twenty-two in number, for (as I have heard) this is the traditional number of letters among the Hebrews.”
 - The books he includes are
 - Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1-2 Kingdoms, 3-4 Kingdoms, 1-2 Chronicles, 1-2 Esdras, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs, Job, The Twelve Prophets, Isaiah, Jeremiah with Baruch-Lamentations and the Epistle, Ezekiel, and Daniel.

Church Fathers

- Jerome

- Influential scholar at the end of the 4th century
- Known for his latin translation of the OT called “The Vulgate”
- In one of his prefaces, he was very clear about the distinction between canonical books and apocryphal ones
 - “This preface to the Scriptures may serve as a helmeted [i.e. defensive] introduction to all the books which we turn from Hebrew into Latin, so that we may be assured that what is outside of them must be placed aside among the Apocryphal writings. Wisdom, therefore, which generally bears the name of Solomon, and the book of Jesus the Son of Sirach, and Judith, and Tobias, and the Shepherd [of Hermes?] are not in the canon. The first book of Maccabees is found in Hebrew, but the second is Greek, as can be proved from the very style...Therefore as the church indeed reads Judith, Tobit and the books Maccabees, but does not receive them among the canonical books, so let it also read these two volumes for the edification of the people but not for establishing the authority of ecclesiastical dogmas.”

Other Testimony

- Josephus

- Famous Jewish historian who lived from 37 - 100 AD
- Known not only for his historical pedigree, but also his knowledge of the scriptures.
- He records the canonical list with good detail
 - “We have not a countless number of books, discordant and arrayed against each other; but only two and twenty books, containing the history of every age, which are justly accredited as divine; and these five belong to Moses, which contain both the laws and the history of the generations of men until his death. This period lacks but little of 3000 years. From the death of Moses, moreover, until the reign of Artaxerxes, king of Persians after Xerxes, the prophets who followed Moses have described the things which were done during the age of each one respectively, in thirteen books. The remaining four contain hymns to God, and rules of life for men. From the time of Artaxerxes, moreover, until our present period, all occurrences have been written down; but they are not regarded as entitled to the like credit with those which precede them, because there was no certain succession of prophets. Fact has shown what confidence we place in our own writings. For although so many ages have passed away, no one has dared to add to them, nor to take anything from them, nor to make alterations. In all Jews it is implanted, even from their birth, to regard them as being the instructions of God, and to abide steadfastly by them, and if it be necessary to die gladly for them.”

Other Testimony

- Jamnia
 - The School of Jamnia was established after the destruction of the temple in 70 AD
 - Rabbinical discussion occurred in the school around 90 AD
 - The debates concerned two of the five disputed books: Ecclesiastes and Song of Solomon
 - Several evidences of Jamnia not being a canonical council
 - The books were not believed to be non-canonical before this time
 - The gathering was not a council, but a group of scholars
 - The only books that were discussed were Ecclesiastes and Song of Songs

Other Testimony

- Aquila's Translation

- Aquila was a Jewish proselyte and disciple of the famous Rabbi Akiba
 - Rabbi Akiba was known for being a strict orthodox Jew who helped write and edit much of the Mishna
- Translated the Hebrew text into Greek to usurp the Septuagint
- Jews were not wanting to use the Septuagint any longer since many Christians were using it
- This translation contained the traditional ordering of the Tenak and was accepted by many Jewish communities as the standard version going forward.