

**Scripture - 2 Kings 22:1-13; 23:1-3 Boy King Finds the Bible**  
**Part 7 - Canon: Who Picked the Books to Be in the Bible?**  
**(Covenant Treaty, Cessationism)**

**High School**

**[Canon]** Who picked the books of the Bible to be in the Bible? How can you know the church got all the right books in the Bible?

In a word this is a question about the **canon** of the Bible. Not cannon with two "n's" like the cannon on pirate ships or like the cannon on the "Come and Take It" Texas Revolution flag. Who picked the books of the Bible - that is a question about the **canon** with one "n".

**What does the word CANON mean?**

In this sense, canon most basically means "the official collection."

Think of Star Wars. It started out as a trilogy. Then people wrote Star Wars books and comics. Then more movies came out. Then spin off tv shows. Are all of these Star Wars *canon*? Are they all a part of the official collection of the Star Wars universe? Think about Marvel Comics and Marvel movies, MCU, and tv shows. Are all of them *canon*? Fans get into heated debates about this stuff.

For the Bible, the **canon** is the authoritative list of the divinely inspired documents that govern God's people. The Biblical **canon** is the official collection of the 66 books of the Old and New Testaments.

**Problem:** *Why are there 66 books in the Bible? Why not 65? Why not 67? How do we know we got them all? How do we know we got the right ones?*

**Bad Answer:** For the Old Testament: some scholars argue that in 100 AD a group of rabbis got together to canonize their Scriptures, what today we call the Old Testament. And apparently that whole canonization process was completed around 100AD at the Council of Jamnia. This group of rabbis debated and asked questions like:

*"What about the Book of Esther? Do we think Esther is inspired or not?" "OK this writing we'll accept and this one we won't." And then they gave authority to the ones they accepted saying, "OK this is the Canon." And so these rabbis created the OT canon.*

For the New Testament: some scholars argue a similar process occurred. At meetings starting with the Council of Nicaea in 325AD and the Synod of Carthage in 397AD the church canonized the New Testament and decided which books and letters were the word of God and which were not.

Basically this argument says the process of canonization took years and years and there's all these council meetings and ultimately it's the voice of the community that decided and said, *"OK we declare these books to be the Word of God and the ones in the canon."* No! Bad answer. Rabbis and church councils don't "canonize" the Bible.

**Who picked the books of the Bible to be in the Bible?**

**Right Answer:** God. Not the church. The church doesn't form the canon. God does.

By the divinely inspired authors writing God's Word in document after document = the **canon** is being formed by the very appearance of these God-breathed Scriptures. So as God breathes out the Scriptures the **canon** is being formed.

The prophets and apostles knew they were writing down the Word of God. Right away, the people of God recognized that these books were the Word of God because the Holy Spirit caused them to recognize their Lord's voice. Jesus says in John 10:27, "My sheep hear my voice." That's it. So, right

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away, each new book was added to the collection that Moses had begun. This process went on during the Old Testament times and continued in the New Testament.

The church did not choose the books of the Bible, the church received them from God.

One scholar put it this way: "To ask the church why it chose certain books would be like asking a kid why he chose his parents." The church recognized those books were inspired by God because those books were inspired by God.

Let's read about Josiah, a boy who became king of Israel when he was just 8 years old. After a few years as king, Josiah makes the most amazing discovery. Read 2 Kings 22:1-13; 23:1-3.

When Josiah and the priests find the Book of the Law they don't hold a council to confer authority on it as divine Scripture. They immediately recognized it for what it is - the Word of God.

**[Covenant Treaty]** So HOW did God choose to form the written canon of the Bible?

God chose to form the written canon of the Bible in a way that was familiar to the Israelites and the apostles and the church.

There was an Ancient Near Eastern practice: two kings would make a solemn agreement, and they would swear to the gods that they would keep the agreement - this kind of agreement was called a covenant. The terms of the whole agreement were written down. That is, the covenant relationship was spelled out and written down in a treaty. Then copies of that treaty were made. Each king gets a copy so if there's any disagreement over the

arrangement each king can refer to his copy of the treaty. And each king would take his copy of the treaty and put it in one of the temples of his gods because this was a sacred treaty, backed up by the gods.

NOW, these kinds of covenants were always made between a great emperor king and a lesser regional king. One of the kings was always more powerful than the other king in this covenant deal. In technical terms: the Suzerain King (BIG KING) made a covenant with the vassal king (little king). And the little vassal king didn't have any right to negotiate the terms, like, "Well I want to sit here and look at various treaties and pick the ones that I think are authoritative." (Kind of like the bogus idea of a council of rabbis or a church council sitting around deciding what they want to make authoritative in the Bible). The little vassal king simply submits. The little vassal king simply receives this covenant and is forced to receive this treaty on the terms that are being imposed by the Suzerain King.

**Did Moses and Israel understand this?**

Yes. The Old Testament Scripture was a treaty between God and his people in which God was the Suzerain and the people are the vassal so there's no negotiation; there's no opportunity for the community to decide what it wants to accept as authoritative. It's all there in Exodus!

**Did Israel make two copies of the treaty?**

Yeah. We read that Moses came down Mt. Sinai with the 10 commandments written on two stone tablets. That doesn't mean 5 commandments were written on one tablet and the other 5 were written on the other tablet. The two stone tablets are two copies of the 10 commandments. And in Israel's case the vassal is worshipping God who is also the

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Suzerain King so because the Suzerain and the vassal have the same shrine the two copies were put in the ark of the covenant.

AND, the vassal/Israel/the church doesn't get to change the treaty. We don't get to annul the treaty (meaning we don't get to get rid or destroy any part of it). We don't get to cut out parts of the Bible. AND we don't get to change the Bible (meaning we don't get to change or alter any part of it, and this would include we don't get to ADD to it)!! And the world can't annul or change the Bible either.

The apostle Paul says that this is obvious to everyone! Gal 3:15, *"To give a human example, brothers: even with a man-made covenant, no one annuls it or adds to it once it has been ratified."*

**BUT does anybody else get to end part of the Bible OR add to the Bible?**

Yeah. The Suzerain King. God. Jesus. In Ephesians 2:15 the apostle Paul says Jesus "abolishes" the law covenant (that is, the Old Testament) in the sense of nullifying it, ending it. Because Jesus has brought and added a New Covenant.

This was also totally normal back in the Ancient Near East. The big Suzerain Kings would come and renew their covenant with the little vassal kings and update the terms of the covenant treaty.

In the OT, the Book of Deuteronomy is a renewal of the covenant God made at Mt. Sinai recorded in Exodus. God renews that covenant because Israel had broken it.

And the New Testament is a renewal of the Old Testament. Circumstances have changed. The history of redemption has

come to a climax because the king is now here to fulfill all the promises made in the Old Testament. So there's continuity between the Old and New Testaments. BUT, there is also something NEW here. Jesus is going to fulfill all the symbolic stuff in the Old Testament that pointed to him. The real thing is here. New Covenant is not Old Covenant 2.0; it's not just an update. There is so much progress here because the New Covenant is the climactic fulfillment of the Old.

But Jesus, God, the Suzerain is the only one who could do this to the canon of the Bible. There are these statements in the Bible called, "documentary clauses", that are statements about the authority of this Bible document and these clauses include curses to warn anyone from altering anything in the treaty covenant. Like Deuteronomy 4:2: *"<sup>2</sup>You shall not add to the word that I command you, nor take from it, that you may keep the commandments of the LORD your God that I command you."*

**And how does the New Testament end?**

With a Documentary Clause! Revelation 22:18-19: *"<sup>18</sup> I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book, <sup>19</sup> and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book."*

**So, what is the Bible?**

**It is a covenant treaty document.**

**[Cessationism]** And that covenant treaty document is now CLOSED. The reformed church believes in **cessationism** = that special revelation has ceased. Christ and the

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apostles whom he empowered to  
inscripturate the gospel word about him and  
his life and his death and resurrection and  
glory - that is the final revelation. SO we don't  
expect any more special revelation today.  
The apostles did not tell us to expect any  
more revelation.

Hebrews 1:1-2, "1 Long ago, at many times  
and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers  
by the prophets, 2 but in these last days he  
has spoken to us by his Son, whom he  
appointed the heir of all things, through  
whom also he created the world."