

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?

(Cessationism)

Middle School

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.

[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.

And some people make the same argument for the New Testament. That after 300 years after Jesus came everyone was confused what was part of New Testament so a bunch of ministers got together and decided which books and letters were the word of God and which were not. At meetings starting with the Council of Nicaea in 325AD and then finally at 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

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?
(Cessationism)

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 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.

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.

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