

An artistic illustration of a person's hands holding an open book. The book's cover is dark blue or black with the text 'WHERE did the BIBLE come from?' written in white. The person is wearing a light-colored, possibly white, garment with blue and gold accents. The background is a vibrant, ethereal mix of yellow, orange, and purple, suggesting a divine or celestial atmosphere. The lighting is dramatic, highlighting the texture of the book and the person's hands.

WHERE did the **BIBLE** come from?

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PART 1. WHAT SCRIPTURE SAYS CLAIMS

Moses, the Mouthpiece of God (Exodus 4:10-17, 21-23)

Key words and concepts: v10 Moses doesn't need to be eloquent, v12 "I will be your mouth," v15 "I will be with your mouth," v22 "thus says the Lord."

- If we would call how God is going to use Moses as God inspiring Moses, how would you define **inspiration**?
- What comfort is there in knowing that when you share God's word, he will be your mouth?
- What role did eloquence play in Moses' message to Pharaoh, and so what role does it play when you share God's Word today?

What's So Special about Scripture?

Read the passages assigned to your group, and then assign the passages to the teachings they support. Be ready to defend why you think a certain passage illustrates a certain teaching.

TEACHINGS:

- The **Old Testament** is God's Word.
- The **New Testament** is God's Word.
- The Bible has **divine authority**: God's Word deserves the same faith and obedience that God deserves.
- The Bible has **divine power**: Only the Holy Spirit through God's Word works knowledge of sin and grace, faith in Jesus, and an inward change in humans. Sometimes this is called **efficacious**.
- The Bible is **Sufficient**: The Bible teachings everything a person needs to know to be saved; nothing needs to be added, and nothing ought to be subtracted.

PASSAGES

2 Timothy 3:15,16 From infancy you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness.

Luke 24:24-27 He said to them, "How foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Did not the Christ have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?" And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself.

Luke 10:16 "Whoever listens to you listens to me; whoever rejects you rejects me; but whoever rejects me rejects him who sent me."

Luke 11:28 As Jesus was saying these things, a woman in the crowd called out, "Blessed is the mother who gave you birth and nursed you." He replied, "Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and obey it."

Matthew 4:4 Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'"

2Co 5:20 We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God."

2 Peter 1:19-21 We also have the prophetic message as something completely reliable, and you will do well to pay attention to it, as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts. Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation of things. For prophecy never had its origin in the human will, but prophets, though human, spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

Romans 10:17 Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ.

1Co 2:13 This is what we speak, not in words taught us by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit, explaining spiritual realities with Spirit-taught words.

Romans 8:7 the sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so.

John 8:31-32 To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, "If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."

What exactly is God's Word?

We can make a distinction between the **materia**, or the letters, words, sentences, etc., and the **forma** or meaning conveyed by the words. In the original documents, both **materia** and **forma** were inspired. In our

translations today, the materia is not inspired, and the forma is only inspired insofar as it reflects the original forma.

PART 2. THE FORMATION OF THE OT CANON

Jeremiah and the Word of the Lord (Jeremiah 1:1-12)

Key words and concepts: v1 The words of Jeremiah, v2 the word of the Lord, v6 “I do not know how to speak,” v9 “touched my mouth”

- How do you know that it’s both what Jeremiah will say and write that will be inspired?
- What were Jeremiah’s excuses for not wanting to speak God’s word, and what was God’s response? How does this apply to you?
- Who decides what is and what is not God’s word?

Terms

Homologoumena: books that have been widely accepted from a very early point as canonical. These books are inspired, and thus are God’s Word.

Pseudepigrapha: books that have been widely rejected from a very early point as canonical. These books are not inspired, and thus have the same status as other historical books.

Apocrypha: books initially widely rejected and later added to the canon by the Roman Catholic Church. These books are not inspired, and thus have the same status as other historical books.

Antilegomena: books that had been widely questioned at an early point, but then later accepted as canonical. These books are inspired, and thus are God’s Word.

How do we know that the Old Testament Canon is the Word of God?

INTERNAL EVIDENCE:

- It is **self-authenticating**. By reading them, the Holy Spirit creates and maintains faith. (He 4:12, Jn 6:63)
- **Jesus** calls them and treats them as the Word of God. (Lk 24:44, Jn 10:35)
- **The apostles** call them the word of God. (2Ti 3:16, 2Pe 1:19-21)

EXTERNAL EVIDENCE:

- **Historical details** recorded in the Old Testament have been revealed to be very accurate. Often, details critical scholars have argued were inaccurate have been demonstrated true by archaeological discoveries.
- The **grammar** of each book matches the time when the book claims to have been written. For example, there are clear grammatical and vocabulary differences among the proverbs Scripture attributes to Solomon and proverbs Scripture attributes to other authors (Agur, Lemuel, and others), and unity in the grammar and vocabulary among the proverbs attributed to Solomon and other writings Scripture attributes to Solomon.
- The **Dead Sea Scrolls** have demonstrated an unprecedented preservation of the Old Testament compared to other ancient books. (We'll have more to say on this in the next lesson.)

Old Testament Antilegomena

Throughout the Old Testament era, rabbis at times raised issues with certain books of the Old Testament not seeming to fit in with the others as canonical. This was always a minority view, and at major councils and events (e.g. Jamnia, the Septuagint), these books were always included in the canon. The proposed conflicts and biblical resolutions are sketched out below.

ESTHER

Proposed conflict: Esther never directly mentions or names God.

Resolution: Esther's theme is clearly God's providence "behind the scenes," as in other books of the same time period (Ezra, Nehemiah). God's providence is an unavoidable part of Mordecai's faith (4:14).

PROVERBS

Proposed conflict: Proverbs seems to contradict itself in places. For example, "Do not answer a fool according to his folly, or you yourself will be just like him. Answer a fool according to his folly, or he will be wise in his own eyes." (Pr 26:4,5)

Resolution: We know circumstance often determines how one ought to answer a fool. Yet, the general principles outlined by each proverb are complementary: Fools often don't deserve an answer, yet answering fools appropriately can humble them. All of Solomon's supposed contradictions are like this, wise statements that, understood rightly, complement each other.

SONG OF SONGS

Proposed conflict: Song of Songs has a clear sensual nature to it, setting it apart from all other books.

Resolution: Although sensual, its application to marriages is very biblical and ought to be celebrated. As an analogy of Christ and the Church, it was one of the most quoted books of the bible during the medieval era.

ECCLESIASTES

Proposed conflict: Ecclesiastes seems overly pessimistic, as well as seems at points to deny an afterlife.

Resolution: Ecclesiastes is unique in its honesty of what life is like without God, and so it is at times utterly depressing. And so this makes Ecclesiastes invaluable as a tool for evangelists and apologists interacting with our own godless society. Further, Solomon, the author, writes about death as other OT writers do (including David), in that physical death is indeed an end of sorts. Yet, Solomon teaches the soul returns to God at death (12:7).

EZEKIEL

Proposed conflict: Ezekiel promotes ceremonies and sacrifices that contradict the ceremonies and sacrifices commanded to Moses by God.

Resolution: Ezekiel is clearly describing a new age in symbolic terms. His vision was meant to describe a reality to come and not yet present in his time.

PART 3. THE PRESERVATION OF THE OT TEXT

Ezekiel's Meal (Ezekiel 2:1-3:4)

Key words and concepts: 2:1 son of man, 2:2 "the Spirit came into me," 2:3 rebellious nation, 2:5 "Do not be afraid," 3:3 "eat this scroll"

- Although it seems hopeless to preach to Israel, God still sends them a prophet. What does that tell you about God and his Word?
- How many times does God tell Ezekiel to not be afraid? What does this tell you about when God gives you opportunity to share his Word in what looks like a hopeless and dangerous situation?
- Why would God command Ezekiel (and other prophets) to eat his word? What do you think is the symbolism behind this?

What the Old Testament Tells Us About the Old Testament

Based on the verses below, describe how the books of the Old Testament were originally written.

Exodus 24:3,4,7 When Moses went and told the people all the LORD's words and laws, they responded with one voice, "Everything the LORD has said we will do." Moses then wrote down everything the LORD had said... Then he took the Book of the Covenant and read it to the people. They responded, "We will do everything the LORD has said; we will obey."

Joshua 24:25-26 On that day Joshua made a covenant for the people, and there at Shechem he drew up for them decrees and laws. And Joshua recorded these things in the Book of the Law of God.

1 Kings 22:39,45 As for the other events of Ahab's reign, including all he did, the palace he built and inlaid with ivory, and the cities he fortified, are they not written in the book of the annals of the kings of Israel? ...As for the other events of Jehoshaphat's reign, the things he achieved and his military exploits, are they not written in the book of the annals of the kings of Judah?

Jeremiah 45:1 This is what Jeremiah the prophet told Baruch son of Neriah in the fourth year of Jehoiakim son of Josiah king of Judah, after Baruch had written on a scroll the words Jeremiah was then dictating.

Based on the verses below, how did the Jews by Jesus' time organize the Old Testament?

Luke 20:41,42 Then Jesus said to them, "Why is it said that the Messiah is the son of David? David himself declares in the Book of Psalms: 'The Lord said to my Lord: Sit at my right hand.'" [Jesus quotes Psalm 110:1]

Luke 16:16 "The Law and the Prophets were proclaimed until John. Since that time, the good news of the kingdom of God is being preached, and everyone is forcing his way into it."

Luke 24:44 He said to them, "This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms."

In the Jewish mind, the Old Testament was organized into 24 books:

The Law (Torah): Genesis thru Deuteronomy

The Prophets (Nebhim): Joshua, Judges, Samuel, Kings, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Minor Prophets

The Writings (Kethubhim): Psalms, Job, Proverbs, Ruth, Song of Songs, Ecclesiastes, Lamentations, Esther, Daniel, Ezra-Nehemiah, Chronicles

How the Old Testament Was Preserved

From 200 AD to 1200 AD, Jewish scribes in Israel followed a strict copying method that preserved the Masoretic Text, which was the basis for European translations of the bible from 200 AD to 1900 AD. Famous copies of the Masoretic Text include the Aleppo Codex (c. 930 AD) (www.aleppocodex.org) and Leningrad Codex (1009 AD) (www.seforimonline.org). The discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls (200 BC-70 AD) in the 1900s demonstrated that the Masoretic Text had been faithfully preserved from the early 1st century up to today.

The Greek translation the Septuagint (250 BC) was widely used in the Jewish community and had considerable impact on the Jewish and Christian communities until around 400 AD.

PART 4. THE FORMATION OF THE NT CANON

Jesus Promises Us the New Testament (John 14:15-27)

Key words and concepts: v15 “Keep my commands,” v16 advocate, v17 the Spirit of truth, v26 “teach you,” v26 “remind you”

- This is Jesus’ last chance to talk to his disciples before his crucifixion. What does he want to make sure they know before he dies?
- What does Jesus mean when he says, “My peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives”?
- Look at v26. What’s the difference between teaching and reminding? What is Jesus promising the disciples will happen?

How Do We Know?

How do we know that the New Testament Canon is the Word of God? Consider what truths emerge from the passages below.

John 14:16,17,26 “And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever—the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you...But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.”

John 16:12-15 “I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear. But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come. He will bring glory to me by taking from what is mine and making it known to you. All that belongs to the Father is mine. That is why I said the Spirit will take from what is mine and make it known to you.”

1 Corinthians 2:12-13 We have not received the spirit of the world but the Spirit who is from God, that we may understand what God has freely given us. This is what we speak, not in words taught us by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit, expressing spiritual truths in spiritual words.

2 Peter 3:2 I want you to recall the words spoken in the past by the holy prophets and the command given by our Lord and Savior through your apostles.

2 Peter 3:15,16 Bear in mind that our Lord’s patience means salvation, just as our dear brother Paul also wrote you with the wisdom that God gave

him. He writes the same way in all his letters, speaking in them of these matters. His letters contain some things that are hard to understand, which ignorant and unstable people distort, as they do the other Scriptures, to their own destruction.

Ephesians 2:19,20 Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone.

2 Thessalonians 2:1,2 Concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered to him, we ask you, brothers, not to become easily unsettled or alarmed by some prophecy, report or letter supposed to have come from us, saying that the day of the Lord has already come.

1 Thessalonians 2:13 And we also thank God continually because, when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but as it actually is, the word of God, which is at work in you who believe.

Based on the passages above, three points come through: (1) Jesus chose apostles for him to speak through, (2) the apostles said their words were from God and as trustworthy as the Old Testament, and (3) The early church recognized them as the as the Word of God (1Th 2:13). Therefore, the early church did not decide which books were the Word of God, but in discussing the Canon noted what marks God's chosen books had.

New Testament Antilegomena:

HEBREWS

Proposed conflict: The writer of the epistle was forgotten and remains anonymous, as well as the letter's target audience. Luther also wrote concerning its teaching that someone who has fallen away cannot regain their faith (6:2-6).

Resolution: Despite its anonymous author and audience, Hebrews' doctrinal content was recognized early on as orthodox, edifying, and deserving of its place in the New Testament. Before Origen (185-254) questioned its authority, many other respected ancient sources were quoting it as Scripture. (Pseudo-Barnabas 70-130 AD, Clement of Rome 95-97 AD, Shepherd of Hermas 115-140, Irenaeus 130-202 AD, Clement of Alexandria 150-215, Tertullian 150-220).

Regarding the letter's teaching regarding falling away, the writer is describing the sin against the Holy Spirit in which a person wilfully refuses repentance and the work of Christ. And where there is no possibility of repentance, there is no possibility of salvation. This harmonizes with the rest of Scripture's teachings (cf. Mk 3:28-29, Mt 12:31-32).

JAMES

Proposed conflict: Luther wrote the letter “is flatly against St. Paul and all the rest of Scripture in ascribing justification to works,” and emphasizes faith over the object of our faith, Jesus.

Resolution: James’ language is different from other books of the bible because James had in mind a very narrow focus: dealing with phony faith and cheap grace. When read in the light of the rest of Scripture, James fills an important niche for directions on mature Christian living. Although Luther struggled with the canonicity of James, he did write many positive things regarding the epistle, including that it could be understood correctly. (See *Sermons of Martin Luther 2:2:308.*)

2 PETER

Proposed conflict: There is a dramatic difference in style between the writing of 1 Peter and 2 Peter. Many also think 2 Peter was also written too late to be included in the Canon.

Resolution: In ancient times, as today, authors used secretaries (amanuensis) who did the writing. Peter’s first epistle was written with the help of Silas (1Pe 5:12). The second epistle may have been written by a different scribe or Peter himself. Regarding how late it was written, 2 Peter is cited by very early 1st century sources (Pseudo-Barnabas 70-130 AD, Clement of Rome 95-97 AD), demonstrating its early acceptance as an apostolic writing.

2, 3 JOHN

Proposed conflict: The early church did not initially consider them authoritative.

Resolution: 2 and 3 John were written to individuals, are very short, and contain little theological content compared to other epistles, therefore it is not surprising that we find little evidence of their circulation in the early church. Yet, we find some very early sources demonstrating their acceptance as apostolic writings (Polycarp 110-150 AD, Shepherd of Hermas 115-140).

JUDE

Proposed conflict: Jude cites the apocryphal Book of Enoch.

Resolution: Scripture at times cites non-inspired sources, such as when Paul cites pagan poets (Ac 17:28; 1Co 15:23; Ti 1:12). Yet Scripture does not cite them as inspired, only as true statements from fallible sources. The same is the case for Jude’s use of apocryphal literature.

REVELATION

Proposed conflict: The early church was troubled by chiliasts, Christians who taught the false view that Christ would reign 1000 years prior to the final judgment. If Revelation could be removed from the Canon, perhaps chiliasts would be easier to deal with.

Resolution: The solution to dealing with false interpretations of Scripture is not to remove that section of Scripture, but rather interpret the difficult passage in light of clearly understood Scripture. Despite its seeming difficulties, Revelation becomes an edifying revelation once read in the light of all Scripture.

Why did it take so long for the Church to produce an established Canon?

- Compared to the other books, almost all antilegomena did not receive wide dissemination until much later.
- An authoritative list does not appear in Scripture or was not passed down by the apostles.
- Scrolls were not large enough to contain all the books, and codices did not become accessible until the 4th century.
- The Church was heavily persecuted during its inception, and Christians were scattered across a large empire. Thus councils could not be effectively organized until the 4th century.
- Given the above, it is astounding that the Muratorian Canon (150 AD) lists all but four New Testament books.

PART 5. THE PRESERVATION OF THE NT TEXT

Paul Makes Known the Wisdom of God (Ephesians 3:2-11)

Key words and concepts: v3 revelation, v5 “revealed by the Spirit,” v5 apostles and prophets

- Underline/highlight all the phrases Paul uses to describe himself as God’s tool and messenger.
- What is the clearly understood here regarding apostles and prophets?
- In what way are we called to unveil the mystery of God?

When was the whole NT recognized by the church?

The end of the Bible ends with the completion of the work of Jesus and his revelation to his prophets and apostles.

Hebrews 1:1-3 In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe. The Son is the radiance of God’s glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven.

John 17:20 “My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message.” [Jesus to his apostles]

Ephesians 2:19-20 Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God’s people and members of God’s household, ²⁰ built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone.

At the end of the apostolic age, the early Church quickly gathered the New Testament together. Within a few decades from the time the last book of the bible was written, almost the whole NT has been circulated and was recognized as authoritative by the Apostolic Fathers. Within a few decades from the end of widespread persecution, church councils officially canonized the NT (not for the purpose of deciding what was Scripture, but to defend the Canon from claims that there were other scriptures). See the following chart.

How do I know my Bible is based on the originals?

God promises us he will never leave us, but will stay with us in his Word.

Mark 13:31 Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away.

Matthew 4:4 Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'"

Matthew 28:19-20 Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

Matthew 16:18 And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it.

We cannot deny that God has preserved his Word throughout history. Someone may tell you that the New Testament we've received today has as many as 200,000 errors. The truth is that when we remove manuscripts with the same variants, there are a total of 10,000 variants, most from spelling and word order differences. There are less than 40 variants where the original is seriously contested, and not one variant affects bible teaching. Scholars agree that at least 99.5% of the original text is known. Why can we say this? Because God has preserved over 5,000 manuscript copies of the New Testament for us to study today. We have more documentary evidence for the New Testament than almost all other Roman-era works combined. See the following page for more info.

Comparison of the N.T. with Ancient Secular Writings

“From the standpoint of a documentary historian the New Testament has vastly superior evidence to that of any other book from the ancient world. The following chart will reveal the superior number, dating, and degree of accuracy of the New Testament over other books. Several observations are pertinent to the chart.

- No other book is even a close second to the Bible on either the number or early dating of the copies. The average secular work from antiquity survives on only a handful of manuscripts; the New Testament boasts thousands.
- The average gap between the original composition and the earliest copy is over 1,000 years for other books. The New Testament, however, has a fragment within one generation from its original composition, whole books within about 100 years from the time of the autograph, most of the New Testament in less than 200 years, and the entire New Testament within 250 years from the date of its completion.

The degree of accuracy of the copies is greater for the New Testament than for other books that can be compared. Most books do not survive with enough manuscripts that make comparison possible. A handful of copies that are 1,000 years after the fact do not provide enough links in the missing chain nor enough variant readings in the manuscript to enable textual scholars to reconstruct the original.”¹

Author	Date Written	Earliest Copy	Number of Copies
Caesar	1 st Cent. BC	900 AD	10
Livy	1 st Cent. BC		20
Tacitus	1 st Cent. AD	1100 AD	20
Thucydides	5 th Cent. BC	900 AD	8
Herodotus	5 th Cent. BC	900 AD	8
Demosthenes	4 th Cent. BC	1100 AD	200
Homer	6 th Cent. BC		643
New Testament	1 st Cent. AD	130 AD	5,000+

¹ This page is taken from Norman Geisler, *Christian Apologetics* (Prince Press), 307-308.

PART 6. THE APOCRYPHA

John tells us to test the spirits. (1 John 4:1-6)

Key words and concepts: v1 test, v2 “Jesus Christ has come in the flesh,” v6 “whoever knows God listens to us”

- John is called the Apostle of Love, and the word “love” occurs at a much higher rate in 1 John than in any other book of the Bible. But the word “love” doesn’t appear in this text. Where’s John’s love?
- There are many people today claiming to be speaking words from God or from a spirit. How does John tell us to test them?
- Consider the following words from the Apocryphal book of Tobit. How does it score according to John’s test?

“It is better to pray sincerely and to please God by helping the poor than to be rich and dishonest. It is better to give to the poor than to store up gold. Such generosity will save you from death and will wash away all your sins. Those who give to the poor will live full lives, but those who live a life of sin and wickedness are their own worst enemies.” (Tobit 12:8-10)

Where did the Apocrypha come from?

After the last prophet of the New Testament, Malachi, the Jewish people began to spread out over the Mediterranean (the Jewish Diaspora). As many Jewish people began to stop using Hebrew, the Old Testament was translated into Greek (the Septuagint, or LXX), and several theological works written after Malachi began to be appended to LXX. These extra works were never meant to be considered canonical, and to avoid confusion, at the Jewish council of Jamnia (c.90 AD) it was decreed that Scriptures from that point on could only contain the books from Malachi and before. The remaining works were called the Apocrypha.

Why does the Roman Catholic Church keep the Apocrypha?

Since the widespread circulation of the Vulgate (c. 400) up to the Reformation, the Catholic Church has included the Apocrypha in the Bible. After the Reformation at the Council of Trent (1545-1563), the Catholic church officially canonized the Apocrypha and now calls it Scripture. What arguments do they give to keep the Apocrypha in the Bible?

- The NT contains allusions to the Apocrypha: for example, 2 Maccabees 6:18-7:42 and Hebrews 11:35.
- The Septuagint, which contains the Apocrypha, is most often cited by NT writers rather than the writers' own translation of the MT.
- The earliest Greek manuscripts of the Bible contain some of the Apocrypha alongside the OT books.
- In some places, the Apocrypha was read regularly in worship.
- Art in the catacombs in Rome reflect a knowledge of the Apocrypha.
- The church fathers, even those that rejected their canonicity, made use of the Apocrypha in their preaching. (E.g., Athanasius, Cyril, Epiphanius, Jerome)
- Augustine (A.D. 354-430) believed the Apocrypha to be canonical (Rome, 382; Council of Hippo, 393; Council of Carthage, 397). “

Why does the Protestant Church reject the Apocrypha?

During and subsequent to the Reformation, the Lutheran and Protestant churches have not included the Apocrypha in the Bible and wholeheartedly reject it as God's Word. Why?

- The Apocrypha contains unbiblical teaching, such as magical incantations (something never found in the OT), prayer for the dead, and explicit salvation by works (Tobit 12:9).
- The Apocrypha contains historical inaccuracies.
- The Apocrypha was rejected by the Jewish people before and during Jesus' time (Cf. Josephus, *Against Apion* 1:8, Council of Jamnia, Talmud VII-VIII, 24). Documents found at Qumran do not demonstrate their canonical acceptance.

"It is true our history has been written since Artaxerxes very particularly but has not been esteemed of the like authority with the former by our forefathers, because there has not been an exact succession of the prophets since that time." Josephus, ~100 AD

- The Apocrypha rejects itself as prophetic, teaching prophesy ended with Zechariah and Malachi (1Mac 4:46; 9:27; 14:41). No book claims to be prophetic.

- Jesus and his apostles never treat Apocryphal books as inspired. Although the NT contains allusions to the Apocrypha (and Pseudepigrapha), it does not directly quote either.
- The church fathers' acceptance of the Apocrypha was not universal or clear. Citation of selected verses did not prove acceptance of entire books as canonical.
- Catacomb paintings depicting apocryphal scenes do not prove the canonical acceptance of the Apocrypha.
- Inclusion of the Apocrypha in a separate section of their Bibles did not constitute acceptance of the Apocrypha as equal to Scripture. Apocryphal books were often simply used to fill up empty space at the end of codices.
- Numerous church fathers argue for the “22” (our “39”) OT books, including Melito (A.D. 170), Origen (210), Hilary of Poitiers (360), Athanasius (365), Cyril of Jerusalem (386), the Council of Laodicea (391), Gregory of Nazianzus (390), Epiphanius (400), Rufinus (410), and Jerome (410).
- Jerome, author of the Vulgate, did not want the Apocrypha in his translation of the Bible, but was rather over-ruled by the Councils of Hippo and Carthage, small councils with no Hebrew scholars apart from Jerome. Jerome did not translate the Apocrypha, yet after his death the Apocrypha was brought into his Vulgate.
- The Apocrypha was not considered officially canonical by any major church council until the Council of Trent. The decision came more than 1500 years after the Apocrypha was written and constitutes an obvious polemic against Protestantism. Trent granted official support to 2 Maccabees for its apparent support of prayers for the dead.

BEFORE TRENT, DID THE CATHOLIC CHURCH CONSIDER THE APOCRYPHA INSPIRED?

The Catholic church did not consider the Apocrypha of the same caliber as the typical canon for decisions in doctrine before the Council of Trent. Cardinal Cajetan (1469-1534) wrote a century before the Council of Trent:

Here we close our commentaries on the historical books of the Old Testament. For the rest (that is, Judith, Tobit, and the books of Maccabees) are counted by St Jerome out of the canonical books, and are placed amongst the Apocrypha, along with Wisdom and Ecclesiasticus, as is plain from the Prologus Galeatus... Now, according to his judgment, in the epistle to the bishops Chromatius and Heliodorus, these books (and any other like books in the canon of the bible) are not canonical, that is, not in the nature of a rule for confirming matters of faith. Yet, they may be called canonical, that is, in the nature of a rule for the edification of the faithful, as being received and authorised in the canon of the bible for that purpose. By the help of this distinction thou mayest see thy way clearly through that which Augustine says, and what is written in the provincial council of Carthage. (Cardinal Caietan (Jacob Thomas de Vio), *Commentary on all the Authentic Historical Books of the Old Testament*, In ult. Cap., Esther; taken from William Whitaker, *A Disputation on Holy Scripture* (Cambridge University, 1849), p. 48.)

PART 7. LOST BOOKS OF THE BIBLE

Don't Mess with John's Revelation (Revelation 22:16-21)

Key words and concepts: v16 "I have sent my angel," v18 "if anyone adds," v19 "if anyone takes away"

- Based on what you know about the book of Revelation, what phrase from these final verses could be used for a theme for the book of Revelation?
- Why is the final phrase, "The grace of the Lord Jesus be with God's people. Amen." a fitting final sentence for the Bible? Where do you hear phrases similar to this on a regular basis?
- Why would God speak so strongly regarding tampering with his words? Does this make you more or less confident to share the gospel?

What Are the "Lost Books of the Bible"?

Supposed "Lost Books of the Bible" fall into several categories. These include:

PSEUDEPIGRAPHA

- They claimed to be written by apostles, when clearly they were not. This makes them frauds or forgeries, certainly not the infallible Word of God.
- We know they were not written by apostles because of their late dates of authorship. (E.g., Acts of John: 225, Acts of Peter: 185, Apocalypse of Peter: 150-250, Gospel of Thomas: 100-180)
- They claim to record history, but are not based on eyewitness accounts. And so some include historical inaccuracies.

EARLY CHRISTIAN TEXTS

- These texts were written around the same time as the New Testament and at times circulated with New Testament books.

- They do not claim to be inspired or written by apostles.
- Christians wrote these manuscripts to disseminate early Christian teaching and aid in Christian worship (e.g. the Didache).
- Some claim to be recording special revelation, but were not accepted as canonical or infallible by the Early Church (e.g. Shepherd of Hermas).

“Hermas wrote the *Shepherd* very recently, in our times, in the city of Rome, while bishop Pius, his brother, was occupying the [episcopal] chair of the church of the city of Rome. And therefore it ought indeed to be read; but it cannot be read publicly to the people in church either among the Prophets, whose number is complete, or among the Apostles, for it is after [their] time.” (*Muratorian Fragment*, 180 AD, 74-80)

Case Study: The Gospel of Judas

WHAT IS THE GOSPEL OF JUDAS?

Written c. 150-170 by a Gnostic sect, discovered in the 1970s, and first published in 2006, the Gospel of Judas claims to be an account written by Judas of conversations between Jesus and himself. It proposes new twists to what the Bible tells us about Judas and Jesus, including the betrayal of Jesus by Judas was possibly planned by both.

WHY IS THE GOSPEL OF JUDAS NOT A “LOST GOSPEL”?

Recall why we like the New Testament: It was written by apostles (or associates) and has divine authority, it contains the the gospel sufficiently, it is historically accurate and edifying, and it demonstrates an unbreakable chain of God’s revelation from the beginning of history to the apostles. Compare this to the Gospel of Judas:

- The Gospel of Judas is **pseudepigrapha**, that is, it claims to be written by Judas, but it is certainly not. All historians agree the Gospel of Judas was not written by an apostle, nor carried apostolic authority.
- Gnosticism, the religious view the Gospel of Judas espouses, is not Christian, but an early Christian heresy. Gnosticism teaches Jesus came to reveal secret knowledge about an unknown god, and that within each of our physical bodily prisons is a spark of of this secret divinity that we ought to seek to release. Gnosticism also teaches Docetism, that Jesus seemed to be human but was not. Gnosticism

is **not** about Jesus dying for our sins. “Gospel” means “good news,” and the Gospel of Judas is not good news.

- The Church Father Irenaeus (130-202) reports that very soon after it was written, the Church recognized it as heretical and certainly not canonical.

"Others again declare that Cain derived his being from the Power above, and acknowledge that Esau, Korah, the Sodomites, and all such persons, are related to themselves. On this account, they add, they have been assailed by the Creator, yet no one of them has suffered injury. For Sophia was in the habit of carrying off that which belonged to her from them to herself. They declare that Judas the traitor was thoroughly acquainted with these things, and that he alone, knowing the truth as no others did, accomplished the mystery of the betrayal; by him all things, both earthly and heavenly, were thus thrown into confusion. They produce a fictitious history of this kind, which they style the Gospel of Judas." (Heresies, 31,1)

BUT WIKIPEDIA SAYS...

Critique the following passage from Wikipedia based on what we've learned these past several weeks:

Pagels and King argue that a more nuanced, contextualized understanding of alternative interpretations of the Christian tradition should inform discussions of Gnosticism. In the centuries following Jesus's death, many differing views of the meaning of his life and death existed. Nicene Christianity (i.e. the views which came to be summarized in the doctrines contained in the Nicene Creed) existed alongside various cults (one of which was labelled 'Gnosticism') for centuries, until the Nicenian interpretation became accepted as "mainstream" Christianity. (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Judas)