



The Canon  
Of Scripture

# Lost Gospels

- PBS radio / TV
- Bookstore: lost books of the Bible

Tertullian [AD 196]:

two ways to nullify Scriptures –

1. Marcion's way (the knife)
2. Valentinus (entire *instrumentum*, by misinterpreting)

# I. What Is A Canon?

# Rod (measuring rod), ruler, staff

- Probably from OT term (Ezk.40:3).  
Ga.6:16, *rule*
- Two links in chain of revelation:  
*from* God . . . *to* us
  1. **Inspiration** concerns authority of Scripture
  2. **Canonization** concerns acceptance of Scripture

# Inspiration determines canonization

- Mt.23:35, endorses **Genesis** through **Chronicles**
- Lk.24:27,44, every section of OT (Law, Prophets, Psalms) prophetic; His stamp of approval
- Jesus endorsed persons, events, books that moderns reject -

Eden, Noah (flood), Sodom...  
Jonah, Adam and Eve, Moses,  
David, Isaiah . . .

I. What Is A Canon?

II. Early Christians  
Were Aware of  
Counterfeits

## 2 Th.2:1-2

- People like to talk about lost books of the Bible – an **impossible** position
- Only two ways to view Bible –
  - From God: He oversaw its production
  - From man: he oversaw . . .

If from God: how to  
lose His own book?

Balaam  
Col.1:17

If from man: early  
church leaders  
discarded books...  
Gospel of Thomas

# Principles That Guided Canon Formation

**1. Is it authoritative** (does it speak with authority)? **Mk.1:22**

– ‘Authority precedes canonicity’

– NT writers had to be apostles, followers of apostles, or at least eyewitnesses of the things they wrote. **2 Pt.3:15-16**

- John Mark and Peter
- Luke and Paul



# Principles That Guided Canon Formation

1. Is it authoritative

**2. Is it prophetic** (written by man of God)?

Gal.1

- From early 2<sup>nd</sup> century, Paul's letters circulated as a collection in descending order of length. 2 Pt.3:15-16
- Clement of Rome (AD 95)
- July 17, AD 180: books

# Principles That Guided Canon Formation

1. Is it authoritative
2. Is it prophetic
- 3. Is it authentic** (does it tell truth about subjects it discusses)? Gal.6:16
  - Luther: Paul and James
  - Augustine: ivy or gourd?

# Principles That Guided Canon Formation

1. Is it authoritative
2. Is it prophetic
3. Is it authentic
4. **Is it dynamic** (come with power of God)?  
Hb.4:12; 2 Tim.3:16-17
  - Song of Solomon
  - Ecclesiastes
  - Esther

# Principles That Guided Canon Formation

1. Is it authoritative
2. Is it prophetic
3. Is it authentic
4. Is it dynamic
5. **Was it received** (accepted generally by people of God)? 1 Th.2:13; Col.4:16

## 1 Thessalonians 2:13

For this reason we also thank God without ceasing, because when **you received** the **word of God** which you **heard from us**, you welcomed it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the **word of God**, which also effectively works in you who believe.

## Colossians 4:16

Now when **this epistle** is read among you, see that it is read **also** in the church of the Laodiceans, and that **you likewise** read the epistle from Laodicea.

“But what’s remarkable is that even though the fringes of the canon remained unsettled for a while, there was actually a high degree of unanimity concerning the greater part of the NT within the first two centuries. And this was true among very diverse congregations scattered over a wide area... It was, if I may put it this way, an example of ‘survival of the fittest’” – Metzger

- “The most traveled roads in Europe are the best roads; that’s why they’re so heavily traveled” (Arthur Darby Nock)
- “It is the simple truth to say that the NT books became canonical because no one could stop them doing so” — Barclay

“The canon is a list of authoritative books more than it is an authoritative list of books. These documents didn’t derive their authority from being selected; each one was authoritative before anyone gathered them together’ – Metzger

People didn’t determine what would be in the Bible.  
They discovered what God intended to be there.



I. What Is A Canon?

II. Early Christians Aware Of Counterfeits

**III. What Is The  
Apocrypha?**

# Some assert Alexandrian Canon was wider than Palestinian

[Wrong: Josephus . . . Susannah . . .]

- The Wisdom of Solomon (c. 30 B.C.)
- Ecclesiasticus (Sirach) (132 B.C.)
- Tobit (c. 200 B.C.)
- Judith (c. 150 B.C.)
- 1 Esdras (c. 150-100 B.C.)\*

# Alexandrian Canon

- 1 Maccabees (c. 110 B.C)
- 2 Maccabees (c. 110-70 B.C)
- Baruch (c. 150-50 B.C.)
- Letter of Jeremiah (c. 300-100 B.C.)
- 2 Esdras (c. A.D 100)\*

# Alexandrian Canon

- Additions to Esther (140-130 BC)
- Prayer of Azariah (Song of Three Young Men) (2nd or 1st cent. B.C)
- Susanna (2nd or 1st cent. B.C.)
- Bel and the Dragon (c. 100 B.C.)
- Prayer of Manasseh (2nd or 1st cent. B.C.)\*
- [\* books not included by R. Catholics]

# Reasons to Reject Apocrypha

## 1. Oldest versions of LXX date to 4th century

- We don't know if earlier copies that Jesus & apostles used included the apocrypha
- We do know they never quoted from it. [They quote hundreds of times from all parts of OT]
- Jude may allude to it (v.14), but not as authoritative. Ac.17:23, 28; Tit.1:12-13

2. The Apocrypha itself never claims to be the word of God

3. Unbiblical concepts

Prayer for the dead, 2 Macc.12:45-46

4. Historical inaccuracies

– Tobit (alive when Assyrians conquered Israel (722 BC), **and** when Jeroboam revolted against Judah (935 BC), yet he lived only 158 years (14:11; 1:3-5)

– Tobit has Nebuchadnezzar reigning in Nineveh (1:1)

# NT Apocrypha

- Teaching of the Twelve Apostles
- Epistle of Barnabas
- First Epistle of Clement
- Second Epistle of Clement
- Shepherd of Hermas
- Apocalypse of Peter
- Acts of Paul

# NT Apocrypha

- Epistle of Polycarp to the Philippians
- Seven Epistles of Ignatius
- Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew
- Protevangelium of James
- Gospel of the Nativity of Mary
- Gospel of Nicodemus
- Gospel of the Savior's Infancy
- History of Joseph the Carpenter



# Pseudepigrapha: Forgeries

**(Falsely claim to be produced by biblical writers or in biblical times)**

- Gospel of Andrew
- Gospel of Bartholomew
- Gospel of Barnabas
- Gospel of Matthias
- Gospel of Thomas
- Gospel of Peter
- Gospel of Philip

# Pseudepigrapha

- Acts of John
- Acts of Paul
- Acts of Peter
- Acts of Andrew
- Acts of Thomas
- Acts of Matthias
- Acts of Philip
- Acts of Thaddaeus

# Pseudepigrapha

- Epistle of Paul to the Laodiceans
- Apocalypse of Peter
- Apocalypse of Paul
- Apocalypse of Thomas
- Apocalypse of John, the Theologian

“Totally absurd and impious”  
– Eusebius

# Nag Hamadi, Egypt, 1945

- **Ebionites:** Only Jews can follow Jesus. They ate only kosher foods, took ritual baths, and required circumcision.
- **Marcionites:** God of OT was too strict, therefore rejected OT; believed in two separate gods. They replaced judgment with love and salvation.

# Nag Hamadi, Egypt, 1945

- **Gnostics:** Lesser God created world, all material things, including our bodies.
- **Thomasines:** We share in divinity; Jesus teaches us to rediscover it in us. This pursuit is more important than believing in His atoning sacrifice. 114 saying attributed to Jesus.

# Gospel of Thomas

- Some sayings slightly modify what Jesus said. E.g.—
  - 100: “Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, render to God the things that are God’s, *render to me the things that are mine*”

# Gospel of Thomas

- **Other sayings make no sense**
  - 2: “Jesus said: He who seeks must not stop seeking until he finds; and when he finds, he will be bewildered; and if he is bewildered, he will marvel, and will be king over the All”
- **Other parts contradict NT**
  - 108: “Jesus said: He who drinks from my mouth will become as I am, and I myself will become he. And the things that are hidden shall be revealed to him”

# Gospel of Thomas

- 77: "...Split the wood; I am there. Lift up the stone, and you will find me there"
- 114: "Simon Peter said to them: Let Mary go away from us, for women are not worthy of life. Jesus said: Lo, I shall lead her, so that I may make her a male, that she too may become a living spirit, resembling you males. For every woman who makes herself a male will enter the kingdom of heaven"



# Canon Conclusions

1. 'Gnostic schools lost because they deserved to lose' – Bruce
2. Feb.23, AD 303: Diocletian's imperial edict
3. Can we believe Bible's claims?

## Triad:

1. Archaeological remains
2. Epigraphic remains
3. Literary / Historical traditions