

# *How We Got The Bible*

Understanding the Process  
& History of the  
Canonization of the Bible

Part X

# The New Testament

# Canonization of the New Testament

Whereas the process of canonization of the Old Testament (Hebrew Bible) was uncertain and plagued with speculation, it is more certain but also more complex for the New Testament

# Canonization of the New Testament

- I. Introduction to the NT
- II. Anatomy of the New Testament
- III. Timeline of Writings
- IV. Dynamics of Epistolary Literature
- V. Pauline Letters
- VI. The Gospels
- VII. History of Canonization
- VIII. Canonical Structure

# Introduction to the NT

- One of the foundational promises of God, made through the prophets, was the creation of a new covenant, or testament (Jer. 31:31-34; Ezek. 36-37).
- The central component of this covenant was God's continued commitment to deal with and conquer the problem of human sinfulness

# Introduction to the NT

- God's solution to sin was the horrific and atoning death of Jesus Christ on the cross and His redemptive resurrection.
- The NT records and reflects upon the life and passion of Christ, its significance in our lives, and the gift of God's Spirit to His people.

# Anatomy of the NT

## I. The Gospels (4)

- a. Synoptic
- b. Johannine

## II. History – Acts (1)

## III. The Epistles (21)

- a. Pauline
  - i. To Churches
  - ii. To People – “Pastoral”
- b. General

## IV. The Apocalypse – Revelation (1)

# Anatomy of the NT

- All 27 canonized books of our New Testament were written by the end of the 1<sup>st</sup> century/ beginning of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD
- However, the finalized canon, list of scriptures considered sacred, was not formally finalized until 1546 – Council of Trent/Catholics, 1559-1647 – Protestant Confessions, 1672 – Greek Orthodox

# The Gospels

*Matthew, Mark, Luke, John*

- ✓ Each provide an account of what Jesus taught and did during His life, particularly His three year public ministry, with special attention given to His suffering, death, and resurrection.
- ✓ They were written between 60-90AD
- ✓ The word “Gospel” means “Good News”
- ✓ Attributed to named authors

# The Acts of the Apostles

- ✓ Written by same author as Luke
- ✓ Account of the history of Christianity from the resurrection of Jesus to Paul's imprisonment in Rome (30-62AD).
- ✓ Details: Pentecost, Peter's preaching, the growth and spread of the church, the persecution of Jewish Christians, Paul's journeys

# Pauline Epistles

- ✓ 13 letters written by Paul to named city churches or individuals, written between 49-65AD
- ✓ Address growing issues or problems and show Paul's pastoral concern and his attempt to assist their growth
- ✓ Focus on knowing God, in light of His work in the OT, understanding the significance of Jesus' death and having a relationship with Him, and the role of the Spirit in overcoming our battle with sin

# General Epistles

- ✓ Non-Pauline attributed letters to churches written by five individuals: Hebrew writer (Barnabas, Apollo), James (Brother of Jesus?), Peter, John, Jude
- ✓ Address a variety of topics: Christ as our High Priest, suffering as a Christian, and practical wisdom for daily Christian living
- ✓ Written between 45-90AD

# The Apocalypse / Revelation

- ✓ Written by the Apostle John while exiled on Patmos (~96AD)
- ✓ In response to the reign of the Emperor Domitian who demanded to be worshipped
- ✓ Veiled imagery describing God's triumph over all evil
- ✓ Most difficult and misinterpreted book in the Bible

# New Testament Timeline

Epistles: Pauline & General

The Gospels & Acts

Revelation

# New Testament Timeline

Why did the letters precede the Gospels?

- ✓ The early Church was focused and founded upon the person of Jesus Christ, especially His death and resurrection
- ✓ The stories of Jesus were passed on orally to converts and communities – the Gospel existed before the Gospels did

# New Testament Timeline

- ✓ They read aloud from the Septuagint and believed that it was about Jesus the Messiah and interpreted it from the perspective of Christ as the fulfillment of its promises (Acts 2)
- ✓ They believed, based on the promises of Christ, that He would return within a generation

# New Testament Timeline

As a result there was no perceived need or conscious movement in the early days of Christianity to produce a new collection of sacred scriptures

# Epistolary Literature

# Epistolary Literature

- The New Testament contains 21 letters gathered into two main collections:
  - Pauline (Romans through Philemon)
  - Non-Pauline/General (Hebrews through Jude)
- The letters generally fall into one of two categories:
  - Epistles – intended for a wider audience
  - Letters – intended for an individual

# Epistolary Literature

- Paul's letters can be categorized as:
  - Genuine (written by Paul)
  - Deutero-Pauline (written after his death but in his manner)
  - Prison Epistles
  - Pastoral Letters

# Paul's Letters

## ❑ Genuine:

Romans, I&II Corinthians,  
Galatians, Philippians,  
I Thessalonians,  
Philemon

## ❑ Deutero:

Ephesians, Colossians,  
II Thessalonians, I & II  
Timothy, Titus

## ❑ Prison:

Ephesians, Philippians,  
Colossians, II Timothy,  
Philemon

## ❑ Pastoral:

I & II Timothy, Titus

# Epistolary Literature

- Letters were used as literary substitutes for personal visits. Paul's preference was to address a situation in person but he was not always able to do so (Rom. 1:9-12).
- The epistles were written to be read in public as if the authors were actually speaking to their audiences

# Epistolary Literature

The epistles had several purposes:

- ✓ To instruct and persuade its readers to make decisions that conformed to the faith
- ✓ To give theological instruction and moral counsel to a specific crisis or concern
- ✓ To show Paul's pastoral concern for the newly formed congregations whose faith and witness he was committed to maintaining, nurturing, and growing

# Epistolary Literature

- ✓ (Non-Pauline): To aide persecuted, suffering, and marginalized Christians in remaining faithful to their traditions of faith rather than abandoning them
- ✓ To give theological insight to the issue of theodicy

# Epistolary Literature

The epistles and letters were all written in response to believers who particular socio-historical context provoked a particular crisis that required theological explanation and guidance. The authors did *not* write with the expectation that you and I would be reading their letters.

# Specificity v. Universality

# *Exigence*

Proper interpretation requires an awareness of the letter's exigence and a gathering of as much information as possible regarding the original setting.

Example: I Corinthians & Galatians

# Pauline Letters

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# Pauline Letters

- All of Paul's letters were written during his missionary journeys throughout Asia Minor, Greece, and Italy
- The chronology of Paul's journeys can be constructed from:
  - The latter half of the book of Acts (9-28)
  - Information from within his letters

# Paul's Journeys

(All Dates are AD)

33 – Conversion: Gal 1:17; Acts 9, 22, 26

35 – 1<sup>st</sup> journey to Jerusalem: Gal 1:18-20; Acts 9:26-29

47/48 – From Antioch to Asia: Phil. 4:15; Acts 13-14

48 – 2<sup>nd</sup> journey to Jerusalem: Gal 2:1-10; Acts 15:1-12

49 – Macedonian mission from Galatia to Athens: I Cor. 16:1; II Cor. 11:9; Gal. 4:13; I Thess. 2:2, 3:1; Phil. 4:15-16; Acts 16:6-17:34

49-52 – Corinthian mission: II Cor. 1:19, 11:7-9; I Thess. 3:6; Acts 18:1-11

# Paul's Journeys

(All Dates are AD)

50 – Paul writes I & II Thessalonians

53-56 – Ephesian mission: I Cor. 16:1-8; Acts 19

53 – Paul writes Galatians

54 – Paul writes I Corinthians

55 – Paul writes Philippians and Philemon

55/56 – Paul writes II Corinthians

56 – Paul returns to Corinth: II Cor. 13:2, 10:11, 12:21

57 – 3<sup>rd</sup> visit to Corinth: II Cor. 13:1, Acts 20:1-3

# Paul's Journeys

(All Dates are AD)

57 – Paul writes Romans

57 – 3<sup>rd</sup> journey to Jerusalem: Rom. 15:22-27; Acts  
21:15-23:30

57-59 – Imprisonment and trial in Caesarea: Acts 23:31-  
26:21

58 – Paul writes Colossians and Ephesians (?)

60-62 – Imprisonment in Rome: Acts 28:15-31

62: Killed / Mission to Spain: Rom. 15:22-24

62 Paul writes Timothy and Titus

# Paul's 1<sup>st</sup> Journey



# Paul's 2<sup>nd</sup> Journey



# Paul's 3<sup>rd</sup> Journey

