

## **Origin of the New Testament**

### **4-5-15 PM**

Definitions:

**Canon** – literally “a line”; the accepted complimentary books we call the Scriptures

**Pseudepigrapha** – “like writings” from the first century

**Translation** – literally moving from one language to another; used to describe specific versions of the Bible

**Copy** – multiplying identical texts

Understanding the origin of the Bible we have today is important for Christians. First, it is profitable for our confidence that the Bible is in fact God’s Word. Second, it is necessary that we have an answer for the skeptic who challenges our faith. Finally, we need to have these answer to help win the lost who have believed the report of the skeptic.

### **The Composition of the New Testament**

The New Testament is the work of men identified as the Apostles and Prophets (II Peter 1:19-21). Their work is synonymously called the foundation of the church (Ephesians 2:20). It is important to understand that what they present in the New Testament is eyewitness testimony (1 John 1:1-3).

New Testament is synonymous with the New Covenant (Jeremiah 31:31). As this it can be called: The Church (universal); The Kingdom; Spiritual Israel (See Hebrews 12:22-24). We also know that the New Testament is synonymous with a series of books (Matthew – Revelation) which are (four) Gospels, a history, and multiple epistles (and a prophecy). It is both the New Covenant and the authoritative constitution of the New Covenant.

The Gospels are four records of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth. The first two written were Matthew (an apostle) and Mark (a prophet), both eyewitnesses of the events. The third Gospel (known as such because of his reference to existing Gospels in the first verses of his book) was written by Luke (a prophet), who researched these events as opposed to eye witnessing them. Lastly is John (an apostle), an eye witness. Subsequent to this is the book of Acts (once seen as II Luke), an eyewitness account by Luke of the growth of the church and the work of the apostles and prophets. It is also an application of the law of Christ. Finally the New Testament contains the Epistles, letters written by eyewitness apostles and prophets of Jesus Christ.

We do not know entirely what order these books were written. We know that they were written within a 30-60 year gap (AD 40 – AD 100); actually, most were written between the years of AD 50 to AD 70. We know this because many of the authors (Peter, Paul, James) were killed before 67AD, with only John & Jude are the end of the timeline. Here is a possible timeline of the New Testament:



At the end of the first century the canon of Scripture was closed. We know this because of statements made at the end of that time, such as Jude's statement in Jude 3 that the faith have been "once and for all given", or Peter's statement that God had "given all things pertaining to life" (II Peter 1:3). Even while the canon was being composed, the authors spoke about the end of the work of inspiration coming soon (I Corinthians 13:8-10).

### Answering Claims Against The New Testament.

Can we be certain? Some (secularists and liberal denominations) claim that the New Testament "was written much later, more like 100-200AD". Other (fewer) claim that it was a fictional record, or that the original records have been lost. These claims can be demonstrated to be false.

There is considerable evidence that the histories were written by eyewitnesses. While we often read by these points, the New Testaments consistency in accurately naming people and places in their historical context is an enormous testimony to the accuracy of Scripture. In fact, it is Luke in particular who was once considered full of mistakes, but now shines as the greatest evidence for the New Testament<sup>1</sup>:

- Luke's use of the word *Meris* to maintain that Philippi was a "district" of Macedonia was doubted until inscriptions were found which use this very word to describe divisions of a district.
- Luke's mention of Quirinius as the governor of Syria during the birth of Jesus has now been proven accurate by an inscription from Antioch.

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.debate.org.uk/debate-topics/historical/the-bible-and-the-quran/the-bibles-archaeological-evidence/>

- Luke's usage of *Politarchs* to denote the civil authority of Thessalonica (Acts 17:6) was questioned, until some 19 inscriptions have been found that make use of this title, 5 of which are in reference to Thessalonica.
- Luke's usage of *Praetor* to describe a Philippian ruler instead of *duumvir* has been proven accurate, as the Romans used this term for magistrates of their colonies.
- Luke's usage of Proconsul as the title for Gallio in Acts 18:12 has come under much criticism by secular historians, as the later traveler and writer Pliny never referred to Gallio as a Proconsul. This fact alone, they said, proved that the writer of Acts wrote his account much later as he was not aware of Gallio's true position. It was only recently that the Delphi Inscription, dated to 52 A.D. was uncovered. This inscription states, "As Lusus Junius Gallio, my friend, and the proconsul of Achaia..." Here then was secular corroboration for the Acts 18:12 account. Yet Gallio only held this position for one year. Thus the writer of Acts had to have written this verse in or around 52 A.D., and not later, otherwise he would not have known Gallio was a proconsul. Suddenly this supposed error not only gives credibility to the historicity of the Acts account, but also dates the writings in and around 52 A.D. Had the writer written the book of Acts in the 2nd century as many liberal scholars suggest he would have agreed with Pliny and both would have been contradicted by the eyewitness account of the Delphi Inscription.

There are many more evidences by the writers of the New Testament that they wrote of the times that they lived within, demonstrating that they were eyewitnesses of their accounts.

As well, there is also a great deal of corroborating evidence by subsequent writers of the second and third century that the original accounts are accurate. We know that by 115AD there was a universal usage of the expression "Fourfold Gospels". The Muratorian Fragment, which dates to around AD 170, demonstrates that the books we call the New Testament canon were the generally accepted books by many Christians and churches.

Finally, there are many historic evidences of the texts themselves that demonstrate their antiquity. The oldest fragment of the New Testament dates to the year 125; recently archaeologists have found (within the remains of a mummy's funerary mask) what they believe may be fragments of the Gospel of Mark; if so, these remains dates to before 80AD.

### **Did the Catholic Church Give Us the Bible?**

At the end of the fourth century the churches that would become the Catholic church convened church councils to authorize an official canon of Scripture. What they did was to confirm the UNIVERSALLY ACCEPT canon. These councils did NOT "give us" the Bible, they accepted it. As we have already seen, the Old Testament canon was agreed before Christ. We also have seen that the Roman Catholic church adopted a different OT Canon. We can now conclude that the Roman Catholic Church's claim that they made the Canon in 390AD is a FALSE claim; the RCC only accepted what was already considered the universal NT Canon.

## What Is Not In the New Testament

A popular fad today is pulling out “new” Gospels (most recently, the claim that the Gospel of Judas was a newly discovered Gospel account). Many of the Gospels are “Gnostic gospels”, texts created in the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries by Gnostics to contradict the accepted Scriptures (the Bible). They include the Gospel of Judas, the Gospel of Thomas and the Secret Gospel of Mark. Today many books have been published to promote these “secrets”. This reveals the main reason these texts are repeatedly “discovered”: to sell their books!

There are other books that existed in the early 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries that were never seen as (or perhaps even intended to be considered) legitimate. These are books like the Shepherd of Hermes, the Didache, and the Epistle of Barnabas. Writers in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century mention these books as being separate from the inspiration of the first century apostles and prophets. To be clear, NO NEW books have ever been found in the last 2000 years that were not part of the examination process of early Christians in the early 2<sup>nd</sup> century.

Our Certainty of the New Testament is absolute. We can demonstrate that the New Testament emerged in the first century. We can determine that it was the result of EYEWITNESSES to the events. Thus: *we have the prophetic word confirmed, which you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts;* (2 Peter 1:19)