**The Canon of Scripture, No. 1 – BD43-02**

This morning we’re going to look at the Canon of Scripture—the books that are in the Bible, why they are there, and how they came to be there. The modern theories of inspiration give a very large place to the activity of man and a comparatively minor role to God in the writing of the Bible. The real issue facing you and me as Christians today is whether the Bible is to be regarded and accepted as a trustworthy teacher of doctrine; whether it has divine propositions of truth that we can depend upon.

In the past, all doctrine was drawn from the Bible. If we reject today, as is commonly done, what the Bible teaches about its own inspiration and about its claims to authority, it raises the question as to how we can depend upon anything it teaches at all. How can we depend upon what the Bible says about there being one living and true God if we can’t trust what it says about its own inspiration? How can we depend upon what it says about Jesus Christ and the redemption He has provided on the cross? How can we depend upon the divine standards of morality—that these work, that these are important, and that we should subject ourselves to these? You and I cannot dismiss the Bible as being in error on the subject of inspiration and still claim that God can bless us, can save the sinner, and can bring us to a knowledge of Himself. The only way we know these things is through the bible itself. Once we reject its authority we have nothing to believe in.

Now the objection that the critics have been leveling against the believers in inspiration is that we have been assuming that the Bible is the Word of God. The critic raises the question, “What if that’s not true? What if the Bible is really not the Word of God?” Then everything that we build on the Bible is necessarily so. You may not say, “Oh, I don’t believe that the Bible is the Word of God,” but if you ignore it and you neglect it and your daily feeding upon it, you are in effect saying that it really is not that important, and it in effect to you is not the Word of God.

God the Holy Spirit has to bring understanding to each person concerning the inspiration, the authority, and the origin of the Bible as God’s Word. This cannot be intellectual proven. There are evidences from the Scriptures and its content and its prophetic fulfillment and so on, but ultimately God the Holy Spirit witnesses to our Spirits that His book is indeed the Word of God. Man alone cannot identify what is God’s Word. It takes the help of God the Holy Spirit to do that.

God has not revealed to us in the Bible how He has taken these human writers, and how He used them to bring about His choice of words without stifling their personalities and their personal expressions. The liberal assumes that once anybody touches a human hand to a writing, that writing automatically must be in error. The liberal says it is not possible for a human hand to produce a writing and that writing not to contain error. However, we know that even a good businessman knows when a secretary can’t produce letters in the way she should, and he knows how to fire one and find one that does produce and perform as he needs her to. It is ridiculous to think that an omnipotent God could not prepare writers whom He could guide to produce writings without error even though they were human. If God cannot keep His writers from cluttering up His book with all kinds of errors, then He certainly is not omnipotent. This is why we have said to you that the doctrine of inspiration involves very definitely your doctrine of theism—your concept of the nature and the essence of god. When you reject inspiration, and when the rejects inspiration, he is also rejecting the God which is revealed in the Bible. That’s why we say that the God of modern theology is not the God of the Bible. It’s a totally different personality altogether.

If any part of the Bible is fallible because men wrote it, then all of it is fallible and in doubt. There is no way for a fallible man today to separate what is true and what is false. You and I can confirm some parts of the Bible from archaeology, from geography, and from ancient secular records, but we can’t confirm all of it. So when the liberal says that some parts of the Bible are true, he is contradicting himself in effect because He is thereby declaring that somehow God managed to use a human instrument without recording error in some parts. Why he could he have not done it in all parts? That’s what we would expect from an omnipotent God.

So the general view that people have consequently of the Bible today is that human reason on its own is competent to decide what is right and what is wrong in the Bible. Human reason can pass judgments on the Word of God. So it is incredible to people today that anyone would feel, for example, bound by the biblical rules for the use of sex. This is considered unreasonable to abide by the Bible rules on this. All you have to do is listen to some of these talk programs. When this subject is explored, the Bible is never brought into the picture as having anything to say on this subject. When anybody suggests pursuing biblical standards of morality, the panel director is almost always just about ready to swallow his teeth. He can’t believe that anybody would go through his whole life on the basis of biblical sexual morality.

People approach the Bible as a human product that’s filled with clear-cut serious errors. We have gone through many of these and have tried to show you that these errors are not irrefutable and that in effect there is not place in the Bible where there is a clean-cut contradiction and error. The Bible’s claim to be the absolute Word of God cannot simply be dismissed as the claims of over-zealous disciples.

Now of course it’s not easy for you and me to buck this climate. This is the general attitude toward the bible. As a matter of fact, it is not easy for you and me to buck any popular movement today which contradicts portions of the Word of God. When we may have something critical to say about some popular movement today, we expect you to be a mature object Christian who is able to stay within the confines of the objection and to not interpret this as a wholesale condemnation of the movement. We are saying that within this movement which may be acceptable and which we may improve in its goals and in general, there is this feature that is a contradiction of sound doctrine and which bears the seed of bitter fruit. It is that particular feature of which we are critical and of which we condemn because we have justified scriptural ground for that condemnation. We expect you to limit what we say in order to caution you and alert you to the limits of which we are speaking, and not to broaden out beyond your own.

Those of you who are positive will do that. But those who are negative and who are looking for a club are going to go beyond what is said. So it isn’t easy to buck the climate of something popular and still be understood in what it is that we are resisting. The Christian who knows the Word of God is certainly aware that there are difficulties in the Word. We have given you an example or two where we’re just not sure at all what the answer is of the difficulty that we find in the Scripture, but on the basis of our knowledge we cannot say that we are dealing with something that is an outright error. Nor can the liberal say that he is dealing with an outright error because he doesn’t have that much knowledge. The Christian knows that if he rejects the Word of God, he is out of touch with God completely. That’s a far greater difficulty than accepting the Bible and recognizing that we have some difficulties that we can’t exactly resolve. The believer who is operating on divine viewpoint would rather stand with the Bible than to stand against what it claims.

This raises the question as to why we have 66 books in the bible and only those. In both Old and New Testament times there were many other books which were written and these were rejected and not included in the Word of God. Why these 66? Millions of Christians have simply accepted that these books should be included in the Word of God. Some do not hold to these books alone. The Muhammadans will add the Koran. The Christian Scientists will add Science and Health with the Key to the Scriptures. The Mormons will add the Book of Mormon. The Roman Catholics will add 14 books to the Old Testament called the Apocrypha. So you and I today are confronted with whether or not the Bible is a closed book. Has God completed His revelation and do we have everything in it that is supposed to be in it. That’s what I would like to pursue with you in closing up this series on our Bible.

Today the liberal finds God speaking to him in many other places besides the Word of God. The Word of God is viewed as merely one means of divine revelation. So it’s necessary for us to answer certain questions. Why was each book of the Bible placed there? Why have certain other books been excluded from the Bible? Why have all of these approved books been brought together in on volume called the Bible? Does the Bible have any books in it which do not properly belong there? Have any inspired books been omitted which do belong there? To provide a permanent written source of divine viewpoint, God had to take some writers, give them information, and produce a sacred Scripture.

**Canon**

We refer to the books that belong to the Bible as the *canon* of Scripture. It comes from the Greek word “kanon.” “Kanon” simply means a measuring stick, a rule, a standard, or a rod. So the word is used of anything that serves to regulate or determine other things. It’s a testing rule.

The word “canon” has come to have a technical meaning in connection with Scripture. It refers to the testing rule or the standard which determines whether a book qualifies as Scripture or not. Writings that meet this standard are admitted into the Bible. Those that do not are viewed as non-canonical and they are rejected.

So when we speak of the canon of Scripture we are actually referring to the collection of books which has met the standard to qualify as Scripture. This is the official collection that we refer to as the Bible. When we speak about the canon of Scripture, we’re talking about the 66 books that compose our Bible.

**Divine Authorship**

There were certain tests for canonicity. One, there was the test of divine authorship. Is a book inspired by the Holy Spirit or is it just a human product? The early Jewish believers and the early Christian believers looked at the books which came into their hands and they examined the authorship. They looked to see whether this book had upon it divine authorship—whether it was inspired or whether it was just a human product. Some they decided one way and others they decided the other way.

Also they looked at human authorship. Was the book written, was it edited, or was it endorsed by a spokesman from God; that is, was he a prophet, or was he an apostle, or someone closely associated with an apostle.

**Genuineness**

They looked at genuineness. Are we able to take this book and trace it back to the time in which it claims to be written and from the person from whom it professes to come? Some of these books were written later and they were given the name of some famous previous author, but they were not really written by that person. They were forgeries.

**Authenticity**

Then there’s authenticity. Is it a true record of the facts? Does what the book presents actually represent the facts or is it filled with falsehoods. Then there was the testimony, both of the Jewish people that endorsed this book and the church later that confirmed this book. The ancient versions of Scripture also followed through on this.

Now there’s a reason for the canon of Scripture. It is necessary that we know what books are actually the books from God in order to give mankind a revelation from God. Certain books were prepared by God for inclusion. Until these books were recognized we could not have Scripture, so we had to have some means of recognizing what was indeed from God.

Well, with the completion of the book of Revelation in 95 A. D. the canon of Scripture was closed, and there was no more Scripture to come. God speaks to us today through this completed canon of Scripture. What does this mean? If the canon of Scripture is closed, then God is no going to speak to you in a vision in the night. You are not going to go home and eat ice cream and pickles before you go to bed, and have a dream from God that gives you direction for your life. You may have a nightmare, but you will not have guidance from God. The only way you’re going to get guidance from God is through the canon of Scripture—these authoritative books that have been proven to be inspired records.

Consequently, you and I, if we’re going to learn anything from God have to learn the Word of God. This is why you should be a fanatic for Bible doctrine, for learning the propositions of divine truth. I read an article by a radio preacher this week in which he was decrying the fact that the Scripture calls upon pastors of local churches to be teachers of the Word. He said if this requirement of the Word of God were enforced today, 85% of people who are in the people would have to resign. This means that maybe 15% are performing the only function God ever called a pastor-teacher to, and that is to communicate the Word of God.

It is sad that most people don’t understand this, and consequently they’re sitting out there in those 85% of the churches where they’re getting nothing, or worse than that, they’re getting something that is downright detrimental and poisonous to them. If you value the learning of the Word of God, then you will not belittle the supreme importance of the teaching ministry of the local church. I also recognize that there is an ignorant type of accusation that goes around that usually comes from that 85% who doesn’t want to prepare and doesn’t want to get ready to teach God’s people something. That is that, “Oh, you can learn doctrine but it won’t make you a godly person. Sure you can learn doctrine but this won’t lead you into godly living. It doesn’t mean you’re going to act right.”

Now whoever said that, and I read this in another article, I don’t really know that I’ve ever heard anybody say that. That if you will just learn the Bible you will do what is right. I’ve heard many people say that if you learn Bible doctrine, you will have the principles upon which you may now proceed to do what is right, but you will have to decide to be positive toward the Word of God. Obviously, if you are negative toward what you learn, or you receive it with mental reservations which is the same thing, then it will not function in your life. So when the 85% tries to dissuade you from the importance of the Word of God and tell you that all we need is love, which incidentally because nobody has communicated the Word of God to them they don’t understand that word either. “All you need is love:” You just understand and you just remember the frame of reference from which they’re speaking. They’re trying to cover up the lack of instruction in the Word.

So for this reason God said, “I have to provide you with a canon, a standard, so that you may know when I am speaking, and you may know where to go to find the mind of God.” We have a permanent written source as our textbook and guideline. To preserve the manuscripts from corruption and destruction, it was necessary in the hostile days of the persecution of Christianity for the believers to know what was Scripture, what constituted the canon, because sometimes they had to put their lives on the line. If you were a believer under persecution and you were going to preserve the Word of God, it would be very important to you to know what was the Word of God, and you weren’t going to hazard your life for some forgery.

So it was necessary for the believers to immediately decide what was Scripture and what was not. In 302 A. D., the Roman Emperor Diocletian ordered all sacred books of the Christians to be burned. It would have been a waste of a Christian’s life to die defending a non-canonical book.

Also we needed to have a canon in order to prevent inclusion into the Bible of uninspired books which claimed to be Scripture. There was much spurious literature. In 330 A. D., the Roman Emperor Constantine order 50 copies of the Bible made for use in the churches. That raised the question as to what should be included in these copies as the official Bible.

**The Old Testament**

So we’re going to look this morning, first of all, at the Old Testament canon and the organization of the Hebrew Old Testament. Remember that this is the Bible which was used by Jesus Christ and the disciples. In the Hebrew Bible the arrangement is different than the English Bible. The Hebrew Bible begins with the book of Genesis and it ends with the book of 2 Chronicles. The Hebrew Bible contains 24 books. The ancient Hebrew arrangement was 24 books, but these 24 books are identical to the 39 books which you and I have in our Old Testament today. They just combined certain books that we divide, like 1 and 2 Samuel, 1 and 2 Kings, and 1 and 2 Chronicles, and so on. So though we have 39 books, they’re identical to their 24.

**The Law / The Pentateuch**

The arrangement began, first of all, with the first section which was called the Law. The law contained five books: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. The Christians referred to these five books as the “Pentateuch,” which means “five books.” The Jews called it the “Torah,” meaning the Law. These books were written by Moses and they constituted one-fourth of the Old Testament. Before Moses wrote, there was no Scripture. God spoke to people directly. The Bible many times calls these five books the Law of Moses. He is often quoted in Psalms and in the prophets. The higher critics reject the Mosaic authorship, as we have learned. Instead they substituted that documentary hypothesis theory, that these documents, JEDP, were put together 1,000 years after Moses purportedly wrote these books.

The New Testament writers report that Jesus Christ repeatedly said that Moses wrote the Torah (John 5:46-47, Luke 16:31, Luke 22:44). The Pentateuch, these first five books of the Law of Moses were accepted as canonical because of God’s unique prophet Moses who wrote these books. They were not accepted because of their antiquity, because of their literary style, because of some royal decree, or because of some ecclesiastical decision. They were canonical because of who wrote them—a spokesman of God.

**The Prophets**

The next section is called the Prophets. In the Prophets we have eight books. The Jews called this section the “Nevi’im.” It was broken down into two sections. First of all, the Former Prophets which constituted four books: Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and Kings. These are largely books of history, of God’s guidance of the Jews, from the Law books to the end of the kingdom. God told Moses in Deuteronomy 18:15-22 that a line of prophets would follow him, ending in the great prophet Jesus Christ. So, following Moses, Joshua was raised up as a prophet to continue the story that Moses had begun (Joshua 5:13-15). Judges was combined with Ruth by an unknown author written in the time of Samuel. This followed Joshua in the tradition of continuing the revelation from God.

**The Former Prophets**

These Former Prophets are not considered separate histories, but they’re considered to be a continuous story. Each writer views himself as adding on to the section… When the book of Joshua came along, Joshua viewed himself as picking the story up from where Moses left off, and attaching himself to the previous book. Jesus and the apostles spoke of the Old Testament as a unit, and that’s why they refer to it as “the Law and the Prophets,” or just “The Law.” The Holy Spirit under inspiration led each consecutive writer to add his part to it. For this reason, a writer will in some way often hook his book onto the one that precedes it. In Joshua 24:26 we read that he wrote in the book of the Law of God, meaning that he was adding to the book of the Law of Moses. So Joshua’s writings actually begin in Deuteronomy 34.

The critics have often liked to scoff about Deuteronomy 34 because it describes the death of Moses. This is one of the attacks concerning errors in the Bible: How could Moses have written this chapter about his death? Well, he could have written it, of course, by sheer unadulterated revelation from God as to what was going to happen to him. But the truth of the matter is, apparently, that Joshua was the one who received this information, having been there on the scene, and he completed the last part of Deuteronomy and thereby tied his book into the Law of Moses.

Actually, Joshua ends in Joshua 24:28 because the next verses, Joshua 24:29-33, tell us about the death of Joshua. Who wrote that? Not Joshua, but evidently the writer of Judges. He added that and completed the book of Joshua and tied his book in to the continuous series that they were writing. So it went down the line that the Old Testament writers were conscious of writing the continuous story. Often they would add an appendix, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, to the previous book.

Someone probably added the genealogy of David in Ruth 4:17-22. The last two verses of 2 Chronicles, for this reason, are identical with the first three of Ezra—for this reason of attaching to the previous book.

Samuel and Kings is a continued history of the kings of Judah and Israel. Over 400 years this formed the basic source book for the book of Chronicles.

The Former Prophets were accepted as canonical because the writers were confirmed with the same miracles and the same fulfilled prophecy as had been Moses.

**The Latter Prophets**

The other section of the prophets are the Latter Prophets. In them we have the Major Prophets—Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel—three books. Then the Hebrews call it one book called the Minor Prophets, but we divide it into twelve books called our twelve minor prophets—“minor” because they are short books. These are largely prophetical in character. These books contain quotations from each other, showing that they were accepted by their contemporaries as canonical books.

**The Writings**

The final section of the ancient Jewish arrangement of their Scriptures was called “The Writings.” The Hebrews called this the “Ketuvim.” These books are classed as various miscellaneous writings. Three of them are poetical books—Psalms, Proverbs, and Job.

Then there is another segment called The Five Rolls (or The Five Scrolls), the “Megillot.” The Five Rolls are the Song of Solomon, Ruth, Lamentations, Ezekiel, and Esther. These were kept separate. They were the Five Rolls treated as a unit but kept separate for readings at specified Hebrew feasts. Song of Solomon would be read at the Passover Feast. Ruth would be read at Pentecost. Ecclesiastes would be read at the Feast of Tabernacles; Esther at the Feast of Purim; and, Lamentations at the anniversary of the destruction of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar.

Then there were three books in the last segment of The Writings—Daniel, Ezra-Nehemiah, and Chronicles. These were unclassified general books, mostly historical, and they close the Jewish order of the Old Testament.

So they formed 24 books of the Hebrew Bible and they have the same content as our books.

In the Greek translation, the Septuagint, Samuel, Kings, Chronicles, and Ezra-Nehemiah, each are divided in two, and they add four books. The twelve books are divided into twelve separate books. Then 15 more books are created, making our 39 books. The Septuagint used the 39-book division. The Latin Vulgate followed and it came into our English Bible in this way.

So the modern Hebrew Bible today may be divided into these 39 books but the ancient order was these that we have indicated. Then there were 14 apocryphal books in the Old Testament which we’ll look at a little later, and these were not canonical.

Now the liberal rejects this idea that God has created a canon of Scripture and given us an authoritative declaration that here are my books. When the liberal looks at these three divisions that the Jews have presented, and the Jews claim that here are books that have come from God, the liberal says that these were not written as authoritative books from God. He claims that they were not received as true and as divine by the authors or by their contemporaries. He says that the reception of the Old Testament was canonical was something that evolved in time because the Jews loved these books, then they began venerating them, and then they made them canonical.

So the critics say that what the three divisions indicate are evolving stages of the canonization of the Old Testament Scripture. They say that the Law became canon about 400 to 444 B. C., in Nehemiah’s time. They say that the prophet section became a second canon about 200 B. C., and that the writings became a canon in 90 A. D. But the Dead Sea Scrolls that have been found in recent years have shown that the Old Testament books were all viewed as canonical much earlier than the critics have been claiming. The historian Josephus, who wrote about 100 A. D., declares that nothing was added to the Old Testament Scriptures after the death of King Artaxerxes in 424 B. C. No more prophets appeared on the scene. This was that inter-testament period of silent 400 years.

Now Josephus lived at a time when these things were understood as to what the Jews thought about their books and the antiquity of their books. As a matter of fact, Josephus, while he was a Jew and an historian, was very very pro-Roman. He was a personal friend of Titus, the conqueror of Jerusalem. While Titus took for himself much of the furniture of the temple, he gave to his friend Josephus the sacred scrolls out of the temple, so Josephus was in a position to be a very reliable historian and informant to us in these matters. The declaration of Josephus of that with the close of the writing of Malachi, 400 years passed. From 400 B. C., the canon of Scripture was closed. It was not evolving as the liberals declare and theorize.

Scholars as a matter of fact show good evidence that some of the books that the liberals say are in the third section here were actually written before some of the books that are in the second section. The liberal builds his theory on the classification of these books. The arrangement comes from the Jewish Talmud in 400 A. D., but we have listings that are earlier. These listings change. In other words, the liberal comes along and they find Daniel in the writings. They say, “Aha, you see, Daniel was a prophet, yet Daniel was not in the second section which is the section of the Prophets. Why is Daniel not listed with the Prophets?” They say, “I’ll tell you why. Daniel was written in 168 B. C. and the canon of the Prophets was closed in 200 B. C. Daniel came along too late to get into that section.” That’s the kind of thing they make a great deal of.

Josephus in his day said that Daniel was in the section of the Prophets. What the Jews did was to reshuffle the books from one section to another, often for use in their synagogue services so that the thing was not crystalized, and the liberals really have less and less ground to make any attacks of this nature. The Dead Sea Scrolls have gone a long way in demonstrating that all the books were equally reverenced and they were equally regarded as authoritative. As a matter of fact, for a long time the Jews viewed them as being in just two divisions—the Law and the Prophets, and they are so referred to in the New Testament.

Probably the real ground to answer the question as to why certain writers are placed in certain ones of these three divisions was not an evolution of a canon as books were accepted at a later date, but simply the fact that there was a status of the writers. This probably is the best answer. Moses was the unique law giver. He was the founder of the Jewish nation. Therefore he is in a category by himself in the Law. The prophets were of two kinds. Everybody who wrote a book of the Bible in the Old Testament had to have the prophetic gift. Everyone who wrote a canonical book had to have the gift of prophecy. He had to be a communicator from God. But he did not have to have the office of a prophet. He did not have to have the official function of the role of a prophet. We find that we have the writings of people like Solomon, David, and Daniel who are in the third section called the Writings. They were prophets, and they are called prophets in the Scripture, but they did not have the official office of prophet. Only those who were officially in the office of prophet are the ones who are put in the second section, and that seems to fit pretty well down the line.

There is no evidence for the liberal’s theory for a three-stage canonization as a result of the canon being closed at certain periods.

Now what’s our basis for the acceptance of the Old Testament canon? Some people say it’s because the books are so old, but there were many old Hebrew writings that were not accepted. Some claim that what was written was the test. If it was written in Hebrew it was accepted. But some of the apocryphal books were partly in Hebrew and they were not accepted. More was included in the canonization of Scripture than just human judgment or choice. Here again God the Holy Spirit was superintending. Just as he superintended the writing of the books in the first place, then he protected the copying of the books and the preservation of them so He guided the people at the time to make the right selections as to which books should be in the Bible. Again the omnipotence of God came into play.

**Inspiration**

So here are the steps in canonicity. First of all, a book was written under divine inspiration. That’s what makes it canonical. God used divinely inspired men as His spokesmen to write these books. The divine character of inspiration of a book was easily recognized by the people who read it. Now if you wonder about that, I would suggest that you go home and get a copy of the Apocrypha. Just sit down and read the Apocrypha through and you will readily see what we mean that there was upon the books themselves, as people read them, the various obvious stamp that this book was inspired and another book was not. The contrast between the Apocrypha and the other Old Testament books is absolutely fantastic. You wonder how on earth the Roman Catholic Church can keep a straight face and declare the Apocrypha are canonical books. We will get to that a little later.

**Quotations as Scripture**

The books that were accepted and recognized as being canonical by the believers were also confirmed later by quotations in the New Testament from these Old Testament books—quotations as Scripture (Matthew 22:29, John 5:39, John 10:35).

**Recognition of Inspiration**

The second step after you had a canonical book written was the human recognition of this inspiration and of this authority—that people recognized that this book was inspired. First the book was written, then step number two was to recognize that it was inspired or that it was not inspired. People knew the writers. They knew whether or not they were spokesmen from God. They read the writings. They recognized that they were of God. Then they were accepted in worship and as authority for the teaching of doctrine.

**Books Combined Into a Single Volume**

The third step was that these books were collected into one volume as the canonical writings. These decisions were necessitated by the times in which these people lived. They would come into times of national disaster, as the Jews did in their Babylonian exile, and it was necessary for them to recognize what God had done in the field of communication. After the Babylonian exile from 586 to 516 B. C., there was a resurgence of Bible study among the Jews. The Jews realized that the reason they had come under the fifth stage of their cycle of discipline, which was being taken not only under a military power, but being dispersed out of their land. They recognized that the reason this had happened to them was because of their ignoring of the Word of God more and more and more. Consequently, after the Babylonian exile there was a resurgence back to the Word of God. That raised the question as to what constituted the Word of God. So immediately, leaders, particularly Ezra, Nehemiah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi, proceeded to crystalize the canon. By 424 B. C., with the writing of the book of Malachi, everyone understood what constituted the Old Testament canon of Scriptures. The Jews understood that with Malachi the line of prophets had ceased. If you didn’t have prophets, if you didn’t have people with the gift of prophecy, you could not have any more Scripture. So they recognized that with Malachi the book was closed and the Old Testament was finished. Then for 400 years, as Josephus pointed out in his histories, the Jews realized that there was no prophet to be heard among the Israelites in that period before the New Testament.

Flavius Josephus wrote a book called Contra Apionem (Against Apion) defending the Hebrew Scriptures, and he pointed out very strongly that after Artaxerxes I in 424 B. C. there was no more Scripture written. Nothing has been added since, to his day, to those Scriptures.

The Septuagint was the translation of the Hebrew into Greek in Alexandria in about 280 B. C. This also confirms to us that the canon of the Old Testament as set. What did they have in it? Our 39 books. Now it did include the Apocrypha, but not as part of the Scriptures. This was translated into Greek. It was actually a transitional Greek from the classical Attic Greek to the New Testament Koine Greek. Again, when they were going to translate this for the Jews who no longer could understand Hebrew very well, it was necessary that they clarify what were the books of Scripture. Jesus Christ approved the whole range of the Old Testament canon as you and I have it today in the Jewish order when in Luke 11:51 and in Matthew 23:35, He referred to “from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah.” “The blood of Abel” was referred to in Genesis, the first book of the Bible. “The blood of Zechariah” was referred to in 2 Chronicles 24:20-21, which is the last book of the Old Testament in the Jewish arrangement of the Scriptures.

**The Talmud**

The Talmud is another evidence of the closing of the canon of Scripture. This was made up of comments written by rabbis from 400 B. C. to 500 A. D. Throughout the Talmud there is common agreement on the 39 books as we have them today. In 900 years of the writing of the Talmud by hundreds of rabbis, not one ever recorded a question or a doubt or a challenge to the books which we have in our Old Testament. Also, not one of them ever approved the Apocryphal books.

Eusebius was a famed historian in the period of the early church fathers following the Apostles. He said that all of the Old Testament canon was accepted in his day.

Now after the canon was closed, there were four categories of books that developed, and we’re just going to introduce these to you this morning. This was after the time of the founding of the church. This was in the 3rd and 4th centuries, A. D. Some of the Jews began to have some question about some of the books of the canon. The books were divided, first of all, into what was called the “homolegomena.” These are the books which everybody said the same thing about. From the “homolegeo,” confession, they all agreed that these books were canonical. There was no question. This included 34 of our 39 books.

But there was another category of books called the “antilegomena,” and these are five books that were spoken against. Some of the Jews questioned these in the 3rd and 4th centuries, A. D. that they belonged in the canon. These were Esther, Song of Solomon, Ecclesiastes, Ezekiel, and Proverbs. The reason they questioned them was not because they failed to meet any of the tests of canonicity, but because they weren’t sure about the content. They read the book of Song of Solomon and they thought that it was a pretty sexy book and it shouldn’t be in the people. Some people think that today. The same for these other books—it was the content. For some reason or other they were questioning that this ought to be in the Bible, but it was not because they were not canonical books.

Then there was another one called “pseudepigrapha.” This simply means “written by unknown authors.” This was done 200 B. C. to 200 A. D. They were written under the name of some other famed well-known prophet. They were forgeries. The “pseudepigrapha” were written in order to support some heretical viewpoint.

Then there was a fourth category. That was the one that we have been referring to—the Apocrypha. The Apocrypha are the books which the Roman Catholic Church today declares are equal in authority and in inspiration with the 39 books that are in the Bible that you and I accept. The Roman Catholic, when he speaks to you, will often say to you, “Well, don’t talk to me. You have a different Bible than I do.” That kind of scares people off. Well, the truth of the matter is that he doesn’t have a different Bible when it comes to the issues of Christianity that we want to talk about because his New Testament is the same as ours. A Roman Catholic Bible varies in these Old Testament books, and we’re going to look a little bit into what these books teach. I think you’ll see why at the Council of Trent in 1545 the Roman Catholic Church felt compelled to make a declaration that the Apocryphal books were canonical Scripture. Nobody had done it up to then. It was in 1545 A. D. that the Roman Catholic Church said, “This is the Word of God.” As we look into the content of a few of these books, you’ll see why they had to do this because the church was up against the wall. They were being shot to pieces by Calvin and Zwingli and Luther, and they had to save face, and it was necessary for the Roman Catholic Church to sustain itself that they include these false forgeries and call them “Scripture.” We’ll pick that up next week.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1971