**The Canon of Scripture, No. 2 – BD44-01**

We are depending upon the fact that we have in our Bible today the written revelation from God. After all the decisions that determine which books are included in our Bible and which books were excluded almost 2,000 years ago. It is necessary for you to understand that Christianity is housed within a structure of history. Christianity took place on the historical scene. There actually was a person who was a God-man named Jesus Christ. He came into this world through a miraculous birth. There actually was a moment when He hung on the cross and died for us, both spiritually and physically, in behalf of our sin, and was raised as the demonstration that God has been satisfied, and salvation is available. All this took place in history. All that we have takes place in history, including the book upon which we base all of this. All of this came about in certain historical sequences. What I’m trying to do is to inform you of this historical background so that you understand realistically that we have a book indeed produced by men but in such a way that God was in it directing, superintending, and protecting, and that you do indeed have the mind of God in this revelation.

**The Canon**

So we’re studying the canon of Scripture. The word “canon” you will remember “a standard” or “a measuring rule.” It is used in a technical sense to refer to the standard which determined which writings qualified as Scripture. That is, which writings were inspired and thus a revelation from God. Now when we use the term “the canon of Scripture,” we are referring to the 66 books which we have in our Bibles which forms God’s Word. We have looked at the Old Testament canon and we found that the Jews recognized the same 39 books as we have in our Bible today in the Old Testament. They had some of the books combined so that they arranged them differently and they amounted to 24 books. They were so arranged that the Jewish Bible begins with Genesis and it ends with 2 Chronicles. But in between those books are all the 39 books that we have in our Old Testament.

**The Old Testament Canon**

The Jews divided the Old Testament into the Law (which consisted of the first five books—the writing of Moses), the Prophets, and the Writings. The liberals claim that this three-fold division indicates to us that the Old Testament books were not received at first a s being the Word of God, but that over a period of centuries began to so venerate their Hebrew writings that the canon of Scripture gradually developed, and these three divisions indicate the three gradual developments, the stages of development that brought about this three-fold division, and it took place between 444 B. C. through 90 A. D. However, the truth of the matter is that the three-fold division rather reflects the status of the writers. Moses was in a class by himself, so his books are classified alone as in the Law. Then there were some men that had the gift of prophecy, and they also held the official position of a prophet among the Jewish people. Their books were placed in a second segment called the Prophets.

Then there were those who had the gift of prophecy, like David and Daniel, but who were not in the official position of the office of prophets. Their books have been placed in the category called the Writings. These books did not evolve into a canonized form. They were accepted and recognized as the Word of God immediately shortly after they were written.

Divine inspiration is what makes a book canonical. It was recognized by the Jews as such, gathered into one unit which we now have as the Old Testament Scripture. We reported to you that the historian Josephus, in the 1st century, A. D., that no books were added to the Old Testament Scripture after 424 B. C., that is after the writing of the book of Malachi. After that there was no prophet in Israel in the 400 years between the Old and New Testament, and therefore no further Scriptures could have been written.

**The Apocrypha**

There is a class of writing however that has come from this period in history called the Apocrypha. The Apocrypha are not accepted as canonical scriptures by the Jews and they are not accepted in our Bible today. The word “Apocrypha” is a plural word. So you must speak of “the Apocrypha were” such and such, not “the Apocrypha was.” We often slip into that. It’s hard not to do that but it is a plural word. It’s a neuter adjective. It means “hidden” or “secret.” The word simply means “non-canonical” or “unrecognized,” lacking the authority of the classification of Scripture.

Since the Reformation, this word has been used of 14 religious writings from the Old Testament era specifically. They were written after the Old Testament canon was closed in 424 B. C. The Apocrypha are included in the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Old Testament, and in the Latin Vulgate version, the Latin translation of Jerome upon which the Roman Catholic Church has based its Scriptures and from which its translations have been made.

So here are the apocryphal books. When a Roman Catholic speaks to you and challenges what you have to say to him on the basis that you have your own Bible and it’s different from his, this is what he’s talking about. He means that of these 14 books, 11 of these books are included in his Bible as being the official authoritative Word of God, and they’re not simply put at the end. When our King James Bible was translated, the Apocrypha were recognized as being books of certain value, as some of them are very valuable as historical books, but they were not recognized as Scripture. However, because they were recognized as valuable books giving us information about Bible times, when our King James Version was translated they were put between the two testaments, or at the end. They were never included in the body of Scripture. But in the Roman Catholic Bible you’ll be reading along and these books are interjected, interspersed, within the 39 canonical books of the Old Testament. You’ll simply be reading along and all of a sudden you’ll be slipping off into some of the apocryphal writings. So it is necessary that we have a little bit of insight as to what these books are really like. Now if you want to get the full picture, you’ll have to get a copy of an English translation, which is available, and read them through for yourself. I think you’ll see that they have a totally distinct flavor and climate than the canonical books.

**1 Esdras**

Number one is 1 Esdras. This is largely a compilation of 2 Chronicles, Ezra, and Nehemiah from our Old Testament. It has some historical value. Sometimes the name “1 Esdras” in scriptures that include the Apocrypha is actually used for our book of Ezra, and then 1 Esdras is called “3Esdras.” So if you see 3 Esdras, you know that it’s this one, and 1 Esdras is our book of Ezra but not called that.

**2 Esdras**

2 Esdras is the next book. It has a series of seven visions. It’s called the Apocalyptic Esdras because it’s similar in style to our book of the Revelation. Sometimes 2 Esdras is the name given to the book of Nehemiah. Instead of Nehemiah being called “Nehemiah,” it’s called 2 Esdras, and then this 2 Esdras is called “4 Esdras.”

**Tobit**

Number three is a book called Tobit. This is a religious romance which took place in the Babylonian captivity. It’s not pure history but it does give a good picture of Jewish life. It reports miracles and it has a pretty good moral tone.

**Judith**

Number 4 is Judith. Judith is a romance story in the time of King Nebuchadnezzar. It seeks to show Jewish bravery and devotion to the Law. It has little historical basis and it has a pretty low tone. This book will, for example, justify the concept that the end justifies the means. This is one of the problems why we reject the Apocryphal books, because they teach things that contradict what is taught in the canonical books. This one teaches that the end will justify the means. No matter what you do, it’s alright as long as it’s going to be for a good purpose. So if you want to charge fifty cents for the people who come to the Wheaton concert here tomorrow night to park on the parking lot, just read the book of Judith and it will salve your conscience because you’re going to give all that money to the Lord.

**Rest of Esther**

Number five is the rest of the book of Esther. This is written in Greek and is purportedly the remainder of our canonical Esther. It’s a series of visions, letters, and prayers, explaining difficulties and enlarging on the books of Esther. This book contains several contradictions within itself.

**The Wisdom of Solomon**

Number six is The Wisdom of Solomon. This is an ethical book commending wisdom and righteousness and condemning iniquity and idolatry. It is a book that impersonates the writings of King Solomon. It imitates his style of wisdom writing.

**Ecclesiasticus**

Number seven is Ecclesiasticus, and notice the “cus” at the end. This is not our Ecclesiastes, the canonical book. This is Ecclesiasticus. It’s also called Wisdom of Jesus, Son of Sirach. It is a valuable book of instruction on conduct. It has Proverbs and wise sayings from many sources. It is quite a long book, and again it’s patterned after the books of Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Job in our Bible.

**Baruch**

Number eight is Baruch. This is a weak imitation of our book of Jeremiah. Baruch, the author, is called a scribe. It consists of prayers and confessions of the Jews while they were in Babylonian exile, and of promises of their restoration. The Epistle of Jeremiah is another little segment which is attached to Baruch, and it contains warnings to the Babylonian captives against idolatry.

**The Song of the Three Holy Children**

Number nine is The Song of the Three Holy Children. As you can probably guess, this has to do with the friends of Daniel. It is one of three apocryphal additions to the book of Daniel. There was something about the book of Daniel that made people want to add to that book. Three of these apocryphal writings were deliberately written to be added to the book of Daniel and this is one of them. In the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Old Testament, this is inserted after Daniel 3:23. It contains a prayer of Azariah, one of the three who were cast into the furnace by Nebuchadnezzar. It tells about their miraculous deliverance, and then it records their song of praise.

**The History of Susanna**

Number ten is the History of Susanna. It is a religious romance of the delivery of a pure woman from the schemes of two immoral men. She escapes their designs through listening to the advice of Daniel. This therefore again is added to the book of Daniel. It’s actually placed at the beginning of the book of Daniel in the Septuagint, but it’s placed at the very end in the Latin translation, the Latin Vulgate.

**Bel and the Dragon**

Number eleven is Bel and the Dragon. Bel is an idol worshipped along with the Dragon by the Babylonians. This is a rather thrilling story about the destruction of Bel and the Dragon, and the hero is Daniel. This records Daniel’s deliverance also from the lion’s den. This is the third apocryphal segment which is added to the book of Daniel. So if you were to read the book of Daniel in the Roman Catholic Bible, you would have not only our Daniel, but you would also have these additions of the Song of the Three Holy Children, the History of Susanna, and Bel and the Dragon.

**The Prayer of Manasses**

Number twelve is the Prayer of Manasses. This is a deeply penitential prayer purportedly by Manasseh the King of Judah while he was in prison. It’s usually placed after Psalms and it’s supposed to be a supplement after 2 Chronicles 33:18-19.

**1 Maccabees**

Number thirteen is one of the more valuable books of the Apocrypha and well worth reading—1 Maccabees. It is valuable as a historical narrative covering the 40 years from the coming to reign of Antiochus Epiphanes to the death of Simon Maccabeus who lived from 175 to 135 B. C. In 171 B. C., the Syrian King Antiochus Epiphanes who is referred to in the book of Daniel (Daniel 8:9 as the little horn) plundered Jerusalem, he profaned the temple, and he killed many of the Jewish inhabitants. In 168 B. C., Antiochus offered a sow on the altar of the temple, and he erected an altar to Jupiter in the Jewish temple. This is referred to in Daniel 8:13 as the desolation. Antiochus forbad the temple worship and he forced the Jews to eat pig’s meat which was a very hideous and offensive thing to them.

This raised such furor against the tyranny of Antiochus Epiphanes. Remember that Antiochus is a type of the antichrist who is coming on the historical scene after the church has been removed in the rapture. The antichrist will be in the form of the tyranny and have the loathsome qualities toward that Antiochus Epiphanes had. Well he raised such a furor that it caused the Jews to rise up in revolt. They did this under the leadership of Mattathias Maccabeus who was a godly priest. He was followed in this by his sons. In 165 B. C., one of his sons, Judas Maccabeus, regained possession of Jerusalem, and purified and rededicated the temple. Judas was later slain in battle and he was followed by his brothers Jonathan and Simon, and his nephew John Hyrcanus. This established what was called the Hasmonean line of priest rulers by treaty with Rome. Out of this eventually came the Herodian line of rulers which were in existence in Palestine when Jesus was born. It was through marriage, a family relationship.

Now 1 Maccabees gives a complete and generally trustworthy account of this great Maccabean War. It was one of the more brilliant eras of Jewish history, and was an era when they had gone back to God, had gone back to doctrine, and God was blessing the efforts of the Jews toward freedom at this time. It is a record here in 1 Maccabees of the fierce struggles for Jewish independence from Greek paganism, and it is filled with heroics and martyrdom. It is an important book on what took place between the Old and New Testaments.

**2 Maccabees**

Then the last book in the apocryphal group is 2 Maccabees. This supplements 15 years of history of 1 Maccabees, 176 – 161 B. C. It is prefaced by two fake letters to Jews in Egypt. It contains a lot of fanciful and supernatural features. It stresses moral and religious lessons, resurrection, and future life. It is not as trustworthy as history as is 1 Maccabees.

Now the Roman Catholic Church accepts eleven of these books as canonical. It eliminates 1 Esdras, 2 Esdras, and The Prayer of Manasses. The rest are included, and they’re interspersed throughout the Hebrew Old Testament canon as we have it. The writers of these apocryphal books are unknown. None of them claim to have been inspired or to be a prophet. All the apocryphal books exist in Greek though some are thought to have been written in Hebrew originally. They were written from about 200 B. C. to 100 A. D. They have a value and importance as part of Jewish literature. They do fill the gap between the testaments after prophecy had ceased and inspiration was closed. But because they are not inspired Scriptures, as you might expect, and purely human writings, and that’s what they are, they contain certain inaccuracies. They have contradictions. They have absurdities. They have conflicts in doctrine with the canonical books, but their value about information concerning Jewish life and Jewish feelings is very great. They do throw light upon conditions which existed in New Testament times. They describe for us how it is that certain things that existed when Jesus was here gradually came about in the Jewish experience.

For example, the Jews had finally weaned themselves off of their habit of turning to idols. These books give us the picture of their progression of how the moved finally to rejecting the practice of idolatry. They tell us how strong Messianic hope developed. When Antiochus Epiphanes came on with his tyranny, it bestirred the old hopes that God was going to send the Jews a Messiah, which was very strong when Jesus was born.

The doctrines of the resurrection and of future rewards and punishment developed strong devotion during this time. There was extensive study of the Word of God and it enlightened the Jews.

**The Roman Catholic Church**

Now in the western and the eastern portions of the Roman Empire, the almost universal verdict of both individuals, churches, and councils, and of what we call the church fathers, the religious leaders of the church who followed the apostles—the almost universal verdict is against the Apocrypha as being Scripture. The Reformation which came on the scene in the 16th century shook Europe to the core. The Roman Catholic Church at that time took a beating. Luther had translated the Bible into German, and he declared only the Hebrew canon to be Scripture. He did include the Apocrypha between the testaments as non-canonical books, but useful information. The Roman Catholic Church was back to the wall. People were deserting by the scores and the hundreds and hundreds. They were deserting Roman Catholicism. They were delighted with the refreshing introduction to Bible doctrine which had been overlaid by superstition, ignorance, and neglect for centuries during the Dark Ages. Now the Word of God was in print. It was made available to people. It was in the language of the people, and doctrine was again being instructed. The people were responding. The Roman Catholic Church knew it had to do something very quickly or it would not survive.

**The Council of Trent**

So it called a Council at Trent in 1546 to take steps to resist the Lutherans, and in the process of this, to settle the question of the canon. The Reformers were turning back the Scriptures, and they were saying that it is what the Word of God says that is what God says—not what the pope says, and not what tradition says. Only the Word of God has authority to speak. So this forced the debate as to what was the Word of God. After one stormy session of this Council at Trent, there were only 53 of the prelates, of the delegates present. None of these who were present were scholars of canonical history. But at this stormy session, they ended the session by declaring and passing the decree under papal authority that the Apocrypha were canonical and were to be accepted as Scripture, along with the unwritten traditions of the church. With that one blow, eleven of these books were placed as authoritative Scripture as well as all of the traditions that have come down, unwritten, as being equal with what the Word of God says.

That’s why you have trouble sometimes speaking to Roman Catholic people because they will quote their traditions or they may quote, for something like purgatory for example, the books here of the Apocrypha. This was necessary for the Roman Catholic Church to do in order to preserve certain doctrines. Purgatory, incidentally, was one of them. It is these books that teach the custom of praying for people who are dead which is the idea from which purgatory was developed.

Now the Roman Catholic Church has prided itself on the fact that it does not change, and all of a sudden here they were being bombarded by the reformers with the authoritative Word of God, and they had no place in the canonical books to prove much of what was done as authoritative doctrine in the Roman Catholic Church. It had come out of the Apocrypha. For this reason, the Roman Catholic Church, in order to save face, had to declare these books as being canonical if they were to salvage the doctrines that the reformers were bringing under attack. The Protestant churches all along rejected the Apocrypha, and though they were included in our excellent King James Version for a while, by the year 1827 they were removed permanently.

**The Rejection of the Apocrypha**

Now there are certain reasons, and we will summarize them, therefore that we reject these books which are held in such high esteem by millions and millions of people who are in the Roman Catholic tradition. They esteem these books, but here’s why we reject them as non-canonical:

1) It is universally acknowledged that they never had a place in the Hebrew canon.

2) They are never quoted in the New Testament by Christ or the apostles or any New Testament writers, nor do they themselves claim to be inspired. Jesus quoted very frequently from Scriptures, but He never quoted from the Apocrypha. The apostles also quoted from Scriptures but they never quoted from the Apocrypha, and the apocryphal writers themselves do not claim that they were inspired in their writings.

3) Josephus, the Jewish historian, limits the Old Testament books to the 22 of the Hebrew Bible and our 39 books. The Apocrypha thus are excluded. He excludes the Apocrypha completely.

4) Philo was a great Jewish philosopher of Alexandria. He lived in about 20 B. C. through about 50 A. D. He wrote extensively and he frequently quoted from the Old Testament, but he never even mentions the Apocrypha.

5) There is no list of the Old Testament canon which was made during the first four centuries, A. D., which included the Apocrypha. Periodically, Christian writers would make a list and say, “These books constitute Scripture.” They would make lists of Old Testament books that were Scripture. Always our 39 books were in there, and the Apocrypha was never included.

6) Jerome, who translated the Bible into Latin, held to the Hebrew canon. He emphatically rejected the authority of the Apocrypha.

7) No writer of the Apocrypha claims divine inspiration and authority. Some even disclaim it.

8) No line of prophets existed at the time that the Apocrypha were written between the testaments.

9) The Apocrypha contains many historical, geographical, and chronology errors and distortions of Old Testament stories. These contradict themselves. The contradict Bible and secular history.

10) These teach doctrines and practices contrary to the canonical Scriptures. This is one of the strongest points against the Apocrypha. For example, one of the apocryphal books sanctions lying under certain situations. Another place in the Apocrypha sanctions suicide and assassination. Another verse teaches salvation by works through almsgiving (Ecclesiasticus 3:30, if you give to the poor). 2 Maccabees 12:40-45 teach prayers for the dead from which the concept of purgatory comes. The Apocrypha teach that the Samaritans should be hated. The Apocrypha teach in Ecclesiasticus 33:26 that if you have slaves, you should treat them cruelly. The Wisdom of Solomon 8:19-20 teach the concept of the preexistence of souls, and that souls can meet in the world before they’re born. So if some of you think you’ve known each other someplace else in another life, you got that from the Wisdom of Solomon, which is dumb.

11) The style of the writings of the apocryphal books is often imitating the canonical books of Scripture. It is just an artificial attempt to sound like the canonical books.

12) Much of the Apocrypha are legendary with stories containing many absurdities.

13) Miracles—Descriptions of persons and deeds of supernatural beings contain much that is fantastic, grotesque, and downright silly.

14) The spiritual and the moral level as a whole is far below the canonical books. You think you’re in another world when you read these.

15) The apocryphal books were written long after the New Testament closed, so they are later than the Old Testament books.

16) The Apocrypha has value as background information, but it is not considered authoritative for doctrine, and it never was considered authoritative for doctrine until the Roman Catholic Church passed the decree at the Council of Trent in 1546.

17) The New Testament church accepted only the Old Testament of Jews.

18) Jesus referred to the Scriptures in ways that imply that it was a well-defined collection. In Matthew 23:35, Jesus referred to two incidents, one of which was in the book of Genesis, and one of which was in 2 Chronicles, and thus He covered the whole gamut of the Old Testament Scriptures which included the regular canon.

**The New Testament Canon**

Now, we want to look also this morning at the formation of the New Testament canon. This is vital. This is the section with which we deal primarily. 2,000 years ago somebody made some decisions. Have we a ground to thinking that they made right decisions that we can depend upon? Here’s the growth of Christian literature:

For about 20 years after the ascension of Jesus Christ, from 30 to about 50 A. D., the gospel narratives were preserved only in oral form. They were repeated and repeated and cast in a certain stereotype form, and people simply memorized the stories of the gospels—His birth, His life, His death, His resurrection, and so on. Some fragmentary writings were made. These were not inspired writings, but attempts by people to put into writing some of this oral record. After the year 50 A. D., the need arose for this oral record of the gospels to be put into written form. One of the reasons was that the people who could speak about Jesus from personal experience were dying off. It was evident that in time there wouldn’t be anybody left who was actually on the scene when these things took place.

Christianity was spreading throughout the Roman Empire, far beyond contact with the group of apostles who were leading the New Testament church. Therefore, it was necessary to have something safer than memory to transmit the Word of God, especially in the hustle and bustle of the Greco-Roman world as it lay beyond Palestine.

So the four gospels of our New Testament were produced to preserve in permanent form the oral tradition handed down. God the Holy Spirit led these four writers to produce a gospel from a different slant, each from a different slant, to serve a distinct purpose. The gospel of John is the one that is distinctively designed for our use as believers in the church age.

The New Testament epistles were written to meet various needs, to answer practical questions, to comfort those in persecution, and to present doctrinal statements of truth.

The book of the Revelation was written by the apostle John about 96 A. D. He was the last of the apostles, and as far as we know died a natural death.

**The Basis for the New Testament Canonicity**

So, in other words, by the year 100 A. D., all of the 27 books of our New Testament were written and on the scene. Now, what was the decision to decide what should be included and what should be excluded as Scripture? Here’s the basis of New Testament canonicity:

The first requirement was apostolicity. For a New Testament book to be canonical, it had to possess apostolic authority. The books had to be either written by an apostle or by men who were closely associated with those apostles in their ministry, such as Mark was with Peter, and Luke was with Paul.

The second basis of being accepted into the New Testament canon was whether these books were received by the churches. The phrase “read in the churches” is often repeated in the writings of the church fathers—the religious leaders after the time of the apostles. When it says this, “read in the churches,” it means that these books were read in the churches as a whole, not just some scattered churches. Christians thus demonstrated the recognition of these books as being inspired. Some were read for a while and then they were dropped and they were no longer read in the churches because only that which could qualify as God’s Word was to be read in the churches. Now there was existing in the New Testament times the temporary spiritual gift of discernment. This gift was brought to bear at this time to recognize what was indeed God’s written revelation and what was spurious.

The next requirement was the use of the book by the church fathers in their writing. In other words: confirmation by pastor-teachers in their teaching ministry, recognizing these books as having the stamp of inspiration upon them.

Number four was consistency with doctrine received orally from the apostles. This doctrine was called the rule of faith, and no book would be accepted which contradicted what the apostles had taught. Today the question for you and me is that we want to look at a doctrine that we hear about, and we go back to Scripture and say, “Do we find this doctrine in the Scriptures?” If it is there, then we confirm the doctrine.

Number five was the internal conviction and guidance of God the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit superintended the writings of the New Testament Scripture and He guided in the selection of the 27 books which we have in our New Testament today.

So today there’s agreement among Roman Catholics, Greek Orthodox, and among Protestants on these 27 books. There is no debate. There is no question. No segment of Christendom uses any other books than these 27. Now there is challenge to these books, but they only come from liberals who doubt that any book is inspired from God.

The development of the Canon is again couched in history. This evolved on the historical scene. It went something like this: By the end of the first century all 27 books were finished. They had spread over a wide area of the Roman Empire. The churches to whom they had been sent treasured these as indeed the Word of God. They were treated as comparable to the Old Testament Scripture. The New Testament canon thus was gradually brought together so that by the end of the 4th century it was firmly established that 27 book made up the New Testament.

**1st Century Confirmation**

In the first century, the writings of the New Testament leaders were immediately recognized as bearing spiritual authority on the par with the Old Testament. These writers claimed to be speaking the mind of God, as His witnesses and as His representatives. The epistles of the New Testament were interchanged among the various churches of the New Testament times and they were viewed as being by all the Word of God. The New Testament Scriptures testify to each other’s authority. For example, Peter calls the epistles of Paul “Scripture” in 2 Peter 3:15-16. Paul quotes Luke’s gospel as Scripture in 1 Timothy 5:18, quoting Luke 10:7. Jude 18 quotes 2 Peter 3:3 as authoritative.

The New Testament itself claims special authority. In 2 Thessalonians 3:14 and 2:15, Paul’s writings are said to be obeyed, meaning that God has spoken through him. In Colossians 4:16 we have the command for public reading of this book which means it is canonical. If it’s to be read in church, it’s because it’s God’s Word. 1 Corinthians 14:37 says that Paul’s writings are the commandments of the Lord. And one of the outstanding verses of the New Testament about itself is Revelation 22:18-19 that warns anybody who would dare to change whatever is written in that book. And what is said about the book of the Revelation applies to all of the Scripture.

**Clement of Rome**

Now parts of the New Testament were quoted by the apostolic fathers here in the first century. One man was a man named Clement of Rome. In 96 A. D., he quoted from Matthew and Luke and several epistles. He says that Paul wrote the Corinthian epistles under the inspiration of the spirit. Now in 96 A. D., John, the last of the apostles, was still alive, and here was Clement of Rome declaring these writings of the apostles equal to the Old Testament Scriptures.

Another writing that we have from this time is called the Epistle of Barnabas. It quotes from the Old and New Testaments and calls both of them Scriptures.

**2nd Century Confirmation**

Then we come to the second century and we have a book called The Teaching of the Twelve, or the “Didache.” It quotes 23 times from Matthew and Luke. We have this from about the year 100 A. D. We have a man named Polycarp who was a student and disciple of the apostle John, so we have someone who was a second generation believer here. Polycarp lived from 69 to 155 A. D. He was martyred. He quotes freely from the New Testament books in his writings and he treats them as Scripture. Justin Martyr, 100 to 165 A. D., quotes from New Testament books more than anyone before him. Now this is in the second century. He says that in his day the memoirs of the apostles were called “gospels,” and that they were read on Sundays in church along with the Old Testament, meaning that the New Testament Scriptures were accepted on an equal plane with the Old Testament. He refers to the book of the Revelation as being written by John. This is a rather important testimony because the book of the Revelation was first accepted, then it was one of those books in the “antilegomena,” that is the questioned books, because of the authorship. Someone questioned that John wrote it, and finally it was established that he did write it, and it was again received. Justin Martyr was one of the strong testimonies to that fact that John did write it.

**Irenaeus**

Another man named Irenaeus, about 125 to 192 A. D. He wrote very extensively and much of his work has been preserved. The chief work is a five volume treatise called Against Heresies, mostly against the heresy of Gnosticism. He uses quotes from all of the New Testament books except Philemon and 3 John. He treats all of these quotations from all of these 25 books from which he quotes as being Scripture. He has a very scholarly use of the New Testament books, and he implies that they are authoritative, and he indicates from the way he uses them that they were recognized as Scripture for some time.

**Clement of Alexandria**

Another man was Clement of Alexandria, 150 – 217 A. D. He speaks often of the Old and New Covenants, that is, the Old and New Testaments. He calls the New Testament books “the divine Scriptures and the holy books. Tertullian, 150 – 220 A. D. was a North African writer and a teacher. He quotes hundreds of times from 23 of our New Testament books.

**Heretics**

Even the heretical teachers in the 2nd century give us a strong confirmation of what was accepted as God’s Word in these New Testament books. The heretics were brilliant. There were a great number of them and they were very strong. If you read church history in the 2nd century period, you’ll be amazed at how many heretical teachers there were on the scene. You’ll have a little better feeling and understanding of a book like Jude warning against apostasy, and of all that Paul has to say as to how you treat a person who is false relative to basic doctrines of the Word. John is very strong, as you know. He says that if some guy comes in and he denies the basic truth of the Scriptures, you don’t even sit down and eat with him.

Now we have come a long way today from that kind of a separation from heresy. But the heretics of the 2nd century were powerful, numerous, and brilliant. And they dealt with the believers that they were attacking, and trying to promote false doctrine, they dealt with them on what? On the same 27 books that we have in our New Testament. Why? Because they recognized too that here was a ground of authority. Some of these other books that were floating around were downright silly. Nobody was going to take them seriously on that ground. So they warped these books. They twisted them. They mutilated them. They did everything they could in order to talk to Christians on the basis of the books that a Christian would listen to them—namely, these 27. So they give us a testimony as to what was authoritative.

**The Muratorian Fragment**

Then we have a fragment called the Muratorian fragment. This is a copy written in 170 A. D. listing books that were accepted in the New Testament Scriptures. This thing was mutilated at both ends. Both ends were chopped off, but it starts with a reference to Luke as the third gospel, so we know that Matthew and Mark are implied as coming before that. The same at the end: It has all of the New Testament books in it except Hebrews, James, and 1 and 2 Peter. The scholars believe that the reason those are omitted, because they are included in other records of the time, that these were excluded in this little fragment which copied a list of authoritative books because the scholars believe there was break in the manuscript that was being copied, and these books therefore were missed, though they probably were in there. This fragment does exclude all of the forgeries. It has a question on a book called the Apocalypse of Peter that it is sympathetic toward, but which we know today was not in the authoritative Scripture.

By the time after the 2nd century, all over the New Testament world, our 27 books were in operation, they were being copied, they were in use, and they were recognized. The 3rd century and the 4th century finally crystalize the study of the canon.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1971