

The Book of God #6

Text : **Deuteronomy 31: 24-29 ; 4: 1-8**

S#1.
S#2.

A. Do you believe in the God of Heaven who created all things ?

1. If so, **WHY ?** Most believers grew up accepting their family's belief.
2. In the past believing in God was deemed the socially acceptable thing.
3. Second hand faith is easily destroyed because it has no foundation.

B. True faith is the fruit of an individual search for truth and inner peace.

1. **Rom. 10: 17** – So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ.
2. True faith is built upon a knowledge of the revealed words of God.
3. Having personally built the foundation enables one to defend his faith.

C. Therefore, one must have complete confidence that his source is truth.

1. One must learn the truth sufficiently to develop discernment.
2. He must have confidence that his truth comes from God and is without error.
3. We must realize that our Bible is unique among holy books and defensible.

D. This lesson will focus on how this holy book came to us from God.

S#3.

1. How the O.T. came to us.
2. How the N.T. came to us.
3. The criteria for determining canonicity.

I. The origin and canonization of the Old Testament.

S#4.

(Canon = reed = measuring instrument)

A. What Christians refer to as the O.T. is one of the oldest writings still in use. **S#5.**

1. Some of the writings predate Jesus the Christ by more than 1,500 years.
 - a. Job was contemporary with Abraham, but no one knows when it was codified.
 - b. The Law was written shortly after the Israelites came out of Israel in 1440 BC
 - c. Israel was liberated approximately 1440 years before Christ.
 - 1) **I King 6: 1** – Now it came about in the four hundred and eightieth year after the sons of Israel came out of the land of Egypt, in the fourth year of Solomon's reign over Israel, in the month of Ziv which is the second month, that he began to build the house of the Lord.
 - 2) Solomon's reign is documented to have started in 961 BC
 - 3) 961 minus 4th yr = 957 BC, 957 + 480 yrs = 1437 BC for the exodus, the Law

B. God personally wrote the first scriptures with His own hand.

1. **Deut. 10: 1-2** – At that time the Lord said to me, 'Cut out for yourself two tablets of stone like the former ones, and come up to Me on the mountain, and make an ark of wood for yourself. **2** I will write on the tablets the words that were on the former tablets which you shattered, and you shall put them in the ark.' S#6.
2. **Deut. 10: 5** – Then I turned and came down from the mountain and put the tablets in the ark which I had made; and there they are, as the Lord commanded me. (*These were the terms of the contract.*) S#7.

C. Moses was the first writing prophet.

1. **Deut. 31: 24-26** – It came about, when Moses finished writing the words of this law in a book until they were complete, **25** that Moses commanded the Levites who carried the ark of the covenant of the Lord, saying, **26** "Take this book of the law and place it beside the ark of the covenant of the Lord your God, that it may remain there as a witness against you." S#8.
2. This established the authority and the value of the writings of the prophets.
 - a. Not being placed **IN** the ark showed they did not replace the Law of God.
 - b. Being directly beside the writings of God established them as authoritative.
 - c. That it was to be carried by the priests established them as ongoing law.

D. Other prophets were commanded by God to write scriptures.

1. Prophets were spokesmen for God.

Ezek. 2: 7 – But you shall speak My words to them whether they listen or not, for they are rebellious. (*Compare ... II Tim. 4: 2*) S#9.
2. God gave them the message that they were to speak in His behalf.

II Pet. 1: 20-21 – But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation, **21** for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God. S#10.
3. God instructed them to write their prophecies down to be read by a wider audience.

Isa. 30: 8 – Now go, write it on a tablet before them and inscribe it on a scroll, S#11.
That it may serve in the time to come
4. Though man resisted, God would not let man prevent His written revelation.

Jer. 36: 28 – Then the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah after the king had burned the scroll and the words which Baruch had written at the dictation of Jeremiah, saying, **28** "Take again another scroll and write on it all the former words that were on the first scroll which Jehoiakim the king of Judah burned." S#12.

E. By the time of Jesus the canon of the Old Testament was complete.

1. **Luke 16: 16-16** – The Law and the Prophets were proclaimed until John; **S#13.**
since that time the gospel of the kingdom of God has been preached, and everyone is forcing his way into it. **17** But it is easier for heaven and earth to pass away than for one stroke of a letter of the Law to fail.
2. **Luke 24: 27** – Then beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, He explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures.

II. The canonization of the New Testament.

S#14.

A. The New Testament writers were aware that they were writing scripture. **S#15.**

1. Paul knew he spoke with the authority of God.
 - a. **I Cor. 14: 37** – If anyone thinks he is a prophet or spiritual, let him recognize that the things which I write to you are the Lord's commandment.
 - b. **I Thes. 2: 13** – For this reason we also constantly thank God that when you **S#16.**
received the word of God which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but for what it really is, the word of God, which also performs its work in you who believe.

2. John was aware he was writing scripture.

Rev. 1: 1-3 – The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show to His bond-servants, the things which must soon take place; and He sent and communicated it by His angel to His bond-servant John, **2** who testified to the word of God and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, even to all that he saw. **3** Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of the prophecy, and heed the things which are written in it; for the time is near. **S#17.**

3. Peter said that, like the prophets, all of the Apostles spoke the commands of God.

II Pet 3: 1-2 – This is now, beloved, the second letter I am writing to you in **S#18.**
which I am stirring up your sincere mind by way of reminder, **2** that you should remember the words spoken beforehand by the holy prophets and the commandment of the Lord and Savior spoken by your apostles.

B. The Apostles instructed that their writings be read and circulated. **S#19.**

1. The Apostle Paul gave specific instructions to circulate letters.
 - a. **I Thes. 5: 27** – I adjure you by the Lord to have this letter read to all the brethren.
 - b. **Col. 4: 16** – When this letter is read among you, have it also read in the church of the Laodiceans; and you, for your part read my letter that is coming from Laodicea.

2. Paul wrote a letter for general circulation in a province.

Gal. 1: 1-2 – Paul, an apostle (...), **2** and all the brethren who are with me, To the churches of Galatia:

S#20.

3. Peter wrote two books for general circulation among the churches.

I Pet. 1: 1 – Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who reside as aliens, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, who are chosen

4. James wrote a book for the church at large.

James 1: 1 – James, a bond-servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, To the twelve tribes who are dispersed abroad: Greetings.

C. The writings of the Apostles were not gathered together in one book.

S#21.

1. Each writing was circulated individually. (*Gospels were the first assembled*)
2. Congregations sought to collect as many writings as they could.

D. It was extremely expensive to get a copy of even one of the writings.

1. Each copy had to be hand written on very expensive materials.
 - a. Few people had the ability to read or write.
 - b. Copies were made on handmade paper (papyrus) imported from Egypt.
 - c. First class copies were made on especially treated animal skins.
 - 1) Parchment was sheep or goat skins especially processed for writing.
 - 2) Vellum was made from the well-tanned skins of young calves.
 - d. The ink was lampblack mixed with a protein gum and diluted with water.
2. It was difficult for an individual to gain access to an original to copy.
3. Even so, thousands of copies were scatter all over the known world.

S#22.

E. Many people quoted significant sections of scripture in personal correspondence.

1. People in our era have lost the skill of correspondence.
 - a. Telephoning became easier than writing. (*Americans were concerned about time.*)
 - b. Email became easier than writing a letter.
 - c. Texting replaced many emails.
 - d. Now tweeting is replacing texting.
2. The roman postal system was used all over the empire.
3. It is said that the entire N.T. could be reproduced from personal correspondences.

F. People other than the inspired Apostles began to write doctrinal treatises. S#23.

1. When the Apostles were all gone well-meaning church leaders tried to fill the gap.
 - a. Those who had been given the gift of prophecy lead their own congregations.
 - b. Those who had been directly trained or associated with the Apostles were looked to for leadership.
 - c. Much of their teaching was correct, but it was neither inspired nor inerrant.
2. The writings of these men were circulated like the writings of the Apostles.
 - a. Polycarp was an elder at Smyrna and a student of the Apostle John.
 - b. Ignatius of Antioch was a very prolific writer to many churches and people.
3. Some of these early extra-biblical writings were given significant credence.
 - a. The Epistle of Barnabas (Codex Sinaiticus)
 - b. The Shepherd of Hermas allegory 95 to 110 AD (Codex Sinaiticus)
(*Barnabas and Hermas were okayed to read in the assembly, but not as scripture.*)
 - c. I & II Clement written in Rome and sent to Corinth. (Codex Alexandrinus)

G. Less than credible writers began to widely publish their writings. S#24.

1. Even in the time of the Apostles there were false teachers seeking to propagate errors.
 - a. Galatians was written to combat the error of legalism.
 - b. I John was written to combat the gnostic heresy.
2. Many books were written under assumed names and widely circulated.
 - a. The Gospel of Peter
 - b. Writing in the name of a well-known person was done to seek credibility.

H. Increasing numbers of spurious writings created a desire for a standard.

1. A strong debate ensued which lasted for more than 200 years.
2. The first one to create a list of acceptable books was a heretic named Marcion
 - a. 140 AD in Rome
 - b. Anti-Semite : Rejected the **Old Testament** and anything Jewish in the N.T.
 - c. He was discredited and his list never gained traction.
3. Origen (185-254) made a list of 21 that were accepted.
 - a. Several books were debated for many years before acceptance.
 - b. Hebrews, James, Jude, II Peter, II & III John, Revelation

III. The criteria was agreed upon for determining canonicity ?**S#25.****A. Does it have “Apostolic Authority?”****S#26.**

1. Was the writer an Apostle or closely associated with an Apostle.
2. For example, Luke was not an Apostle, but he was a companion of Apostles.

B. Antiquity, i.e., is it old enough to be traced back to the Apostles ?

1. If it was not written by an Apostle was it written contemporary to the Apostles?
2. If it was unknown prior to the death of the Apostle John such could not be so.

C. Orthodoxy. Was it consistent with that which was commonly taught.

1. They would not accept anything as from God that contradicted other revelation.
2. Those advocating various heresies had many writings. (Gnostics, Judaizers)

D. Universally accepted by the churches.

1. The book had to be accepted and used by the church as a whole.
2. Some writings were very popular in certain limited areas.

E. Traditionally used as scripture.

1. It was the practice on many churches to read non-scriptural books in the assembly.
2. This provision was to prevent other popular books as being added to the list.

F. The writing must demonstrate the characteristic marks of inspiration.

1. Not written as entertainment ... Jesus found a dead bird and gave it life.
2. Was consistent with the character of God.

**** I strongly believe in god's providential oversight.****S#27.****G. In 367 AD Athanasius first set forth the 27 books as the accepted cannon.**

1. Shortly afterwards Jerome and Augustine followed his example in the West.
2. The church to the East did not accept the final 5 books until 508AD.

CONCLUSION :**A. Lord willing, next week we'll see how the bible was transmitted to us.****B. We have seen that the bible can be trusted as the inspired word of God.****S#28.****C. Are you using it to chart the course of your life ?****INVITATION :****S#29.** ... Communion slide

Lesson Text :**Deuteronomy 31: 24-29**

24 It came about, when Moses finished writing the words of this law in a book until they were complete, **25** that Moses commanded the Levites who carried the ark of the covenant of the Lord, saying, **26** Take this book of the law and place it beside the ark of the covenant of the Lord your God, that it may remain there as a witness against you. **27** For I know your rebellion and your stubbornness; behold, while I am still alive with you today, you have been rebellious against the Lord; how much more, then, after my death? **28** Assemble to me all the elders of your tribes and your officers, that I may speak these words in their hearing and call the heavens and the earth to witness against them. **29** For I know that after my death you will act corruptly and turn from the way which I have commanded you; and evil will befall you in the latter days, for you will do that which is evil in the sight of the Lord, provoking Him to anger with the work of your hands."

Deuteronomy 4: 1-8

1 Now, O Israel, listen to the statutes and the judgments which I am teaching you to perform, so that you may live and go in and take possession of the land which the Lord, the God of your fathers, is giving you. **2** You shall not add to the word which I am commanding you, nor take away from it, that you may keep the commandments of the Lord your God which I command you. **3** Your eyes have seen what the Lord has done in the case of Baal-peor, for all the men who followed Baal-peor, the Lord your God has destroyed them from among you. **4** But you who held fast to the Lord your God are alive today, every one of you.

5 See, I have taught you statutes and judgments just as the Lord my God commanded me, that you should do thus in the land where you are entering to possess it. **6** So keep and do them, for that is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the peoples who will hear all these statutes and say, 'Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.' **7** For what great nation is there that has a god so near to it as is the Lord our God whenever we call on Him? **8** Or what great nation is there that has statutes and judgments as righteous as this whole law which I am setting before you today?