

Wrapping up our Observation Phase

We're about to move into the next phase of studying, interpretation, but first the...

6 things to look for in every passage:

- Things that are emphasized
 - Things that are repeated
 - Things that are related
 - Things that are alike
 - Things that are unlike
- and
- Things that are true to life

① Things that are Emphasized

- Amount of space.

This tells you a bunch about what the author is emphasizing. For example, Genesis 1-12 takes the reader through a couple thousand years, with very little information given about individual people. Genesis 12-50, however, takes you through a hundred or so years, with lots of details...about the people God would chose to carry out His program.

Of Matthew's 1,062 verses, at-least 342 of them—1/3 the book—are on a discourse of Jesus.

In Paul's epistles, usually about the first half the book emphasizes doctrine (ex., Eph. 1-3), and the other half application (Eph. 4-6). However, in Romans the ratio is 11 (doctrine) to 5 (application). What do you think the point of Paul's book is?

- Stated purpose

John 20:30-31 tells us the point of this book...

And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name.

Proverbs starts out telling us 7 benefits of reading this book.

- Order

What comes first? For example, in Gen. 2, God places Adam and Eve in the garden to "cultivate and keep it." Then in Gen. 3 comes the fall and curse, whereby they are kicked out of the garden. What does this order tell you about the necessities of work? Was it a result of the fall of man? Nope.

Things that are emphasized (cont.)

- Movement from lesser to greater, and vice versa.

In the life of David, for example, everything hinges on 2 Sam. 11-12. IN these chapters are recorded the sin with Bathsheba and murder of her husband. Everything leading up to this is good, everything after goes down hill.

Remember Acts 2—the day of Pentecost? This is the pivot for the whole book... without which you couldn't have the book.

② Things that are repeated...

- Terms, phrases, clauses

Examples:

Ps. 136 “His mercy endures forever”... repeated 26 times.

Hebrews 11: _____ (18x)

1 Cor. 15:12-28: _____ (7x)

- Characters

For example, we don't know much about Barnabas, except that his given name was Joseph, and the apostles called him Barnabas, meaning *Son of Encouragement* (Acts 4:36). That's the most important thing about him...every time the church needs a little encouragement, he pops up again (to help Saul—Acts. 9:27, the believing Gentiles at Antioch—Acts. 11:22; and John Mark—Acts 15:36-39).

- Incidents and Circumstances

The book of Judges, the author repeats this circumstance, “Then the sons of Israel did what was evil in the sight of the Lord.” This refrain sets up the situation in which God raises the judges who will lead the people back to God.

- New Testament uses of Old Testament Passages

Helpful Tip:

Mark repeated terms in your Bible. Come up with a symbol you'll stick with (and write it down in the front of your Bible as a reference point), and use that symbol every time you see something you've noticed is oft-repeated.

Now that you've got that computer program, you don't use your Bible?

Here's a tip: **don't totally abandon your print Bible.** The reason: many people remember passages not by the reference, but position on the page, **plus** you usually don't have your computer with you, but your Bible you may.

③ Things that are r _____

By this, we mean to look for things that have some connection, some interaction with each other-look for the tie that binds things together.

Keep your eye out for 3 kinds of relationships in Scripture:

1) **Movement from the g _____ to the s _____**

This is the relationship between the whole and its parts, a category and its individual members, the big picture and the details. Whenever you see a general principal, or description given, look to see if the author follows that with specific details.

Example:

Genesis 1:1, “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth”
 Gen. 1:2ff: Day One....., Day Two....., Day Three....., etc...

2) _____ **and** _____

This is a powerful means to grab your attention. When you see a question, doesn't that force you to think?

Example:

Rom. 6:1, “Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?” “God forbid”

Sometimes the questions are so weighty they require no answer.

In Job, God spends 2 chapters barraging questions of Job, like, “Were you there when I created the earth?” No answer needed.

Jesus asks of His disciples, “Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life?”

3) **C _____ and E _____**

This is the pool table effect: strike the cue ball with your cue (cause) in order to knock the colored balls into the pockets (effect).

Examples

Acts 8:1 - 8:4

Cause _____ Effect _____

Deut. 28-30: “...if you disobey you'll...”, well, sure enough, the people did not obey, and they were.

Psalm 1

Cause _____ Effect _____

Cause _____ Effect _____

④ Things that are alike:

- Similes

Look for the terms, "as" and "like."

Examples

Ps. 42:1, compare _____ to _____

1 Peter 2:2, compare _____ to _____

Isaiah. 44:6-7, compare _____ to _____

- Metaphors

Another comparison device, this time **without** the terms, "as," or "like."

Examples:

John 15:1, compare _____ to _____

John 3:8, compare _____ to _____

⑤ Things that are unlike:

- Use of but (or now)

Acts 8:4-8, 26

- Irony and Metaphors

The woman who touched Jesus.

⑥ Things that are true to life

As we read the accounts of others in Scripture we have a tendency to overlook that similarities between those characters and ourselves. We may not experience the same events, but we do have the same general experiences: emotions, feelings, questions, problems, temptations are all the same. When we read we need to ask of the person: what were his ambitions? Her goals? Problems? Response? What would my response be?

This is where we, as the student, and especially as teacher, have a great opportunity to keep the Bible from being just another academic book (on Monday - Friday I study Math, Science, and Reading; on Sunday I study the Bible). We need to pick up on the lesson's God has for us. We must make the Book come alive!

© Things that are true to life (con't)

Examples:

Abraham, as he's about to sacrifice his only legitimate son, the promised seed, the one he loves.

Moses, the quintessential leader of all time, never gets to enter the promised land, why? Because he lost his temper and struck a rock 2 times with his rod. How do you suppose he felt by that stupid reaction? Toward God? Toward life? How should/do you respond to sin in your life?

David, the one man in the Bible described as, "a man after my [God's] own heart." Israel's great king, a great poet, phenomenal leader, and godly man. He blows it all in one event: instead of being where he should have been (in battle with his men), he's at home and one quick yield to temptation with a woman (when he had hundreds of wives) and its all wiped out. What kind of warning should this yield in our lives? What flags does it wave about our humanity?

Peter, willing to fight off a hundred men for Jesus, but can't defend Him against one girl, and denies Him 3 times...right after telling Jesus, "You can depend on me." Ever feel like Peter?



STOP TALKING SILLY GUYS, YOU KNOW THAT WE HAD IT WAY WORSE IN THE MALL OF EGYPT ... TRUST MOSES, HE WILL FIND US A WAY OUT OF HERE

40 Years later...



Bible Translations and Versions

If you thought the *Textus Receptus* was the name of the place Santa Anna fought for the state of Texas, then this section is for you. **Other Bible Translation Enigmas:**

What's the difference between the NIV, NAS, KJV, NKJV and other versions? What's with the King-James-Only movement.

What's the translation process entail? What is a *canon*? What's the *Apocrypha*? What happened to the original manuscripts, and if we don't have them, how can we trust our translations?

What about those notes in my Bible that indicate this part of the verse is not found in the *Majority Text*. What is the *Majority Text*, and is there a *Minority Text*?

What is *Koine Greek*? What is the *Septuagint*?

The Original Writings

When God gave His message to man, he superintended the human authors of His Word, so that they composed and recorded, without error, His message. This process speaks of the inspiration of Scripture. The Bible itself attests to its own authenticity as God's word in many places:

2 Timothy 3:16-17 All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, 17 that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.

Luke 1:1-4 Inasmuch as many have taken in hand to set in order a narrative of those things which have been fulfilled among us, 2 just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word delivered them to us, 3 it seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write to you an orderly account, most excellent Theophilus, 4 that you may know the certainty of those things in which you were instructed.

1 Corinthians 2:12-13 Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God. 13 These things we also speak, not in words which man's wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual.

1 Corinthians 14:37 If anyone thinks himself to be a prophet or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things which I write to you are the commandments of the Lord.

1 Thessalonians 2:13 For this reason we also thank God without ceasing, because when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you welcomed it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which also effectively works in you who believe.

1Thessalonians 4:1-2 Finally then, brethren, we urge and exhort in the Lord Jesus that you should abound more and more, just as you received from us how you ought to walk and to please God; 2 for you know what commandments we gave you through the Lord Jesus.

Rom 3:1-2 What advantage then has the Jew, or what is the profit of circumcision? 2 Much in every way! Chiefly because to them were committed the oracles of God.

1 Timothy 5:18 For the Scripture says, "You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain," and "The laborer is worthy of his wages."

The first quote is from the OT (Deut. 25:4), the second quote from the NT (Luke 10:7), thus equating the two as Scripture.

2 Peter 3:16 (speaking of Paul's writings) as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which untaught and unstable people twist to their own destruction, as they do also the rest of Scriptures.

So, God gives His words to men, who write them down on various materials, depending upon the age of the writing (more on this later). But, at some point, someone had to organize these writings into what we consider the Bible.

This is what's known as **Canonization**. The Word *Canon* originates with a Hebrew word (*qaneh*), meaning "reed" or "stalk". The Greeks took over this word as *kanon*, using it to denote a rule, or measuring stick. In the modern vernacular its like the term *plumb line*. A plumb line is a tool used to make a straight line, that straight line is then used to measure the "straightness" of other lines. The term *canon* denotes the same idea: the canon of Scripture are those books which are measured as authoritative.

Canon of Scripture: (Def)

The list of books that belong to the Holy Scriptures and that are reckoned as supremely authoritative for belief and conduct.

Old Testament Canonization:

The questions are:

Who decided this collection?

What was the criteria?

When was it done?

Actually, none of these questions can be specifically answered regarding OT canonization. We have some information in the Bible itself about various parts of this process.

Jeremiah chapter 36 gives us some insight into how he dictated the book to Baruch, a scribe, it was give to the royal house and read in the presence of King Jehoiakim, who cut it in pieces and burned it. God then instructed Jeremiah to write it again, this time with additional information.

Most of the books of the OT include a credit for who wrote, or penned the book, but very little other information is given regarding the recordings of the OT books.



The OT includes references to the storage of the OT writings. In Deuteronomy 31 we read that the books of Moses were stored alongside the ark of the covenant. Joshua's words were also stored there (Josh. 24:26), as were Samuel's (1 Sam. 10:25). A revival broke out in the days of Josiah when the Law of Moses was found in the temple, repaired and brought before the people (2 Kings 22-23).

While parts of the OT are referred to as coming from God throughout the OT, the first record of the OT as a whole, referred to as Scripture, and thus considered canonical, is found in Daniel 9:2.

Also, many of the prophets quoted from the other prophets, and from this we can safely conclude that they were considered as Scripture as well. However, not every book referred to

in the OT became a part of the Bible. The following references are to books not found in the Bible: the Book of Yashar (Josh. 10:13), the Book of the Wars of Yahweh (Num. 21:14), or the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel (2 Chr. 33:18f)—which does not refer to itself. Therefore, since not all references are considered Scripture, then there must have been a determination of canonicity.

The key is the stamp of diving authority on the books. **It was not, originally, the inclusion of the books in the canon** that made them authoritative, rather, it was their diving stamp of authority that made them canonical.

We see from many events in the OT, that the writings were recognized as authoritative even before being combined into a collection. When Moses read the “book of the covenant” to the people, they recognized this as God’s word. Again, at the revival in the days of Josiah, we see the people responded to the word as God’s word. The people recognized, in the days of the exile, that this was a fulfillment of God’s prediction regarding their sin. Therefore, while we do not know how and when the books came to be collected into a canon of Scripture there are many references to these books in the life and worship of Israel.

Of-course, do to the predictive nature of much of the OT, the prophetic rule must have been a significant aid in the determination of canonicity:

Deut 18:21-22 And if you say in your heart, ‘How shall we know the word which the LORD has not spoken?’— 22when a prophet speaks in the name of the LORD, if the thing does not happen or come to pass, that is the thing which the LORD has not spoken; the prophet has spoken it presumptuously; you shall not be afraid of

him.

The Collection Process

As of the 4th century, B.C., the Jewish people considered the giving of Scripture by God to have ceased—thus the 400 years of silence. Zechariah 13:3, the next to last recorded book of the OT, tells of this coming silence:

Zech 13:3 It shall come to pass that if anyone still prophesies, then his father and mother who begot him will say to him, 'You shall not live, because you have spoken lies in the name of the LORD.' And his father and mother who begot him shall thrust him through when he prophesies.

There is no specific information available, but it has been established that some time during these 400 years, the books of the OT were decided upon. Of-course, all our information from this period comes from extra-biblical information (and much of it from the Apocryphal books—more about those later). Some of the evidence of this completed canon follows:

Around 250 B.C. the creation of the *Septuagint* was begun. This is the Greek translation of the Hebrew OT. It was evidently complete ca. 120 B.C. (More below)

In the writings of 2 Maccabees (ca. 165 B.C.) there was talk of a collection of books having been organized by the post-exilic community, under the leadership of Nehemiah.

There is a mention, in the *Prologues to Ecclesiasticus*, (ca. 131 B.C.), to the three-fold division of the OT, known as the Writings, the Law, and the Prophets.

In A.D. 90, 20 years after the destruction of Jerusalem, a council Jewish rabbis convened to debate the question of canonicity of certain books of the OT. The council was not concerned with the acceptance of new books, rather the right of certain books to remain in the canon.

The Jewish historian, Josephus, around A.D. 100 testifies that the Jews, unlike the Greeks with their vastly contradictory books, held strictly to a 22-book canon (which is the same as our 39 books, because they combined the 5 books of the law into one, put the 12 minor prophets together, as well as Ruth with Judges, and Jeremiah with Lamentations).

None of the original manuscripts, or tablets, or any of the original forms of the OT remain, however there are a vast number very old

No human authority and no council of rabbis ever made an OT book authoritative. These books were inspired by God and had the stamp of authority on them from the beginning. Through long usage in the Jewish community their authority was recognized, and in due time they were added to the collection of canonical books.³

The Septuagint and the Apocrypha

The Septuagint

The Septuagint, the translation of the OT from Hebrew into Greek, was made by a group of Jews living in Alexandria, Egypt. In 250 B.C., the time the translation began, there was quite a community of Jews living there, estimated at nearly 1 Million. Because the language of trade was Greek, the majority of Jews could no longer communicate in Hebrew, and very few could read it, so a translation was undertaken.

There is a certain amount of myth surrounding the actual translation, and very little historical information is available. But, it is believed that 72 scribes were chosen, 7 from each of the 12 tribes of Israel, to do the translation work. Eventually the number was rounded to 70, and thus the term LXX (Roman numerals, equalling 70) is most often used as an abbreviation for the Septuagint.

There was likely some resistance to a non Hebrew version of the Torah at first. However according to one ancient account, once it was read to the Jewish community it quickly caught on and was widely accepted. Eventually all throughout the dispersion the Jews accepted the LXX. This was all, of-course, in God's timing, because by the time the first Christian missionaries would with arrive on the scene some 300 years later, there would already be several Bibles present in the communities of the peoples they would greet –in their own tongue.

Actually, the LXX took on such popularity that this is the text most quoted by Christ and the apostles in the NT. However, when the Jews saw that the Christians of the early church had accepted the Jewish translation they lost interest in it. Also, by A.D. 100 a kind of standard Hebrew text emerged. These two factors eventually led to the full-fledged rejection of the LXX to the point that they eventually called it the work of Satan.

So, the Jewish people are to be credited with a great work that would be greatly used to further the gospel; but it was the Church that preserved the LXX, and the reason we have so many copies of it, some dating back to nearly the original.

The Apocryphal Writings

Interestingly, the LXX contains several books the modern Protestant church does not consider canonical. Interesting, because the Jews would agree with our assessment. These non-canonical books are called the Apocrypha.

The term Apocrypha has come to mean something different than its origin. At first, the word denoted that which is lofty...indeed too lofty to be read by the normal reader. Those books bemarked as Apocryphal often contained fantastical stories and events that the Protestant church, and modern Judaism, consider fictitious. Thus, the term today is derogatory, and denotes those books we do not hold as canonical. There are some protestant Bibles that contain the Apocrypha, and, because Jerome grudgingly included them in his translation of the Latin Vulgate in the fourth century A.D., they are also a part of the Catholic Bible.

Reasons we reject the Apocryphal Books:

- The Bible itself indicates that the end of prophecies was at hand (Zech. 13:3).
- They were never part of the Hebrew canon.
- Although they were included in the LXX, there were Alexandrian Jews, such as Philo (died ca. A.D. 50) who rejected these books altogether.
- There are no NT quotes from these books.
- In the *Walk-Thru* of Acts, Luke gives an

account of the OT beginning with Abraham and ending with the fulfillment of Christ, with no mention of the intertestamental period.

- The nature of many of them being fantastic and mystical.
- Persistent uncertainty about these books suggests they did not have the stamp of God on them, as

did the canonical books.

The Apocryphal books, while not considered as the inspired Word of God, do provide us with some useful insight into Jewish history during those 400 years of silence.

The Text of the Old Testament

Until the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls, in 1947, the oldest manuscript of the Hebrew Old Testament text, except for a small fragment of one book, was circa A.D. 900. This is not surprising, however, for a number of reasons:

- Normal wear and decay would eliminate most of them.
- The twice destruction of Jerusalem, once in 586 B.C., and again in A.D. 70.
- The dispersion of the Jews throughout the world.
- The greatest reason is the destruction of the text by the Jews themselves, because, ironically, of their high regard for it. As a text would wear out, the rabbis, because of their high esteem of the Scripture, (or, at least the ownership of it) would destroy them. And, because of the meticulous care they took in copying the texts, they saw no advantage in keeping the old ones.

The rules for copying the texts:

1. Only clean animals could be used to make the parchment.
2. Each column of the scroll had to have exactly 48 to 66 lines.
3. The page was first ruled, then letters suspended from these lines.
4. The ink was only black, made from a very specific recipe.
5. No word or letter could be copied by memory. Each word was to be pronounced

aloud as he wrote them.

6. The pen was to be wiped before writing the name of Yahweh.
7. The new copy was to be revised within 30 days. If more than 3 errors were found on any sheet, the entire roll was condemned.
8. Every word and letter was counted.
9. There were rules on the form of letters and spaces between them.

During the intertestamental era, a group of Jewish scribes emerged as the official scribes of Jewish literature. From there on, there are two major eras of Jewish Scribes who contributed to the Hebrew OT text we have today. There are those before, and those of the Masoretic period.

During the time leading up to the Masoretes, who Scribed from A.D. 500-1000, two major contributions were made to the text. First, the division of words. Until A.D. 100 all words of the OT ran together. Imagine the difficulty this can make for reading, and understanding. Consider, for example, the following English text: GODISNOWHERE. This could be read, "God is no where," or, "God is now here." You can see how important the word breaks were. The other contribution they made was paragraph breaks.

The Masoretic Period

The Masoretes, took great care in copying the text handed down to them. Because of the rules regarding copying, few mistakes would have

been made in the copy process, but mistakes were bound to show up. After all, the text they were now using (starting ca. A.D. 500) was now hundreds of generations old. One of the common errors would occur when letters looked similar. For example, Nebuchadnezzar, the accepted spelling of the Babylonian King, is more accurately spelled Nebuchadrezzar, a mistake caused by replacing an “n” with an “r”. Sometimes, copyists would omit a letter, or double a letter. And occasionally, neglect to write an entire word. For example, 1 Samuel 13:1 reads, “Saul was ... years old.” An omission of the age.

The Masoretes, because of their regard for this text, upon finding such errors could have done two things: make the corrections as they saw them, or leave the errors, and make notes about them. The latter was preferred, and fortunately followed, because doing the earlier always leads the copyists to make interpretational errors. Thus, the text we now have as the basis for the Old Testament, includes 500 years of straight, trustworthy copying, with many marginal notes where the copyists saw what they felt were errors.

Keep in mind that over this period of 500 years, there were multiple scribes working on multiple copies. Therefore, of the hundreds of remaining ancient copies there are slight variances amongst them. How then do we decide which one is the right one? That’s the science of Textual Criticism, and that’s discussed later.

Suffice it to say, that you may have 500 different texts, none of them in perfect agreement all throughout. But, given any one passage, 495 of them will be exactly the same. Therefore, we might conclude that the 5 are wrong, in this verse, and trust the 495. That’s an oversimplification, as we’ll see when we get to textual criticism later, but that’s the general ideal of how it works.

But the real determination of the trustworthiness of Scripture is in the manner God prescribed for us to interpret it: By comparing all Scripture with all other Scripture. This way, even with an error in the text, we can be sure to get the right answer, because **all Scripture must agree!**

New Testament Canonization

Introduction

The early church, for several decades, did not have a written, compiled New Testament. Certainly, many individual churches had the writings of Paul or Peter or John, etc., but the collection of books into a Canon did not come for some time. The Gospels were not begun until probably 30 years after Jesus' ascension.

During this span of time, much of the sayings of Jesus were kept through oral tradition. This was neither an uncommon, nor an unaccepted practice of the day. In fact, the second-century bishop, Papias writes, "I do not think that I derived so much benefit from books as from the living voice of those that are still surviving."

The acceptance of oral tradition was granted also by the writers of the New Testament, as well as Jesus. Many times Jesus says to his audience, "You have heard..." in reference to the OT, whereas when speaking to the Scribes he would ask "Have you not read?" Much of the general public was illiterate, but oral or not, the words were still God's. Paul exhorts the church at Thessalonica to hold that which they have received, whether by word or epistle. The church at Corinth is praised for keeping the traditions of Paul passed to them...that which he had learned of Jesus's saying by many eyewitnesses.

As trustworthy as this oral tradition was, there was a need for the written Word. And so it was that we have the writings of the gospels, for which we are very thankful. And a collection of the New Testament books into a canon.

The purpose of canonization, of-course, is to discover those books which are authoritative, or God's words. Again, the emphasis is not on a group of men declaring canonization, rather discovering. Remember, these either **are**, or are not, God's books. In this process of canonization we are attempting to discover those that God has stamped as authoritative.

Parallel Literature and the Agrapha

Much of the need for this declaration came because of the flood of early church literature. There were some writings that were most likely the actual sayings of Jesus, known as the Agrapha, but which were not canonical. Paul's quote in Acts (20:35) of Jesus who said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive" is an example of a quote of Christ that is not found in the gospels. Much of what Christ said is not recorded in the Gospels (John 21:25), but was recorded by others. However, because these writings are not canonical, they cannot be fully trusted, and cannot be taken as authoritative — although there are *probably* several actual sayings of Jesus recorded.

Besides the Agrapha, we have many individuals writing during this early church period four types of text: Letters, Gospels, Acts, and Revelations (the same 4 types of books we have in the New Testament). In other words, each category of writing was being duplicated both by authoritative writers and those who were not. Many of these have been preserved for us, and a very few were even included in a couple of early collections, or Canons of the New Testament. Thus, the need to determine what books really were stamped with the approval of God.

The Early Collection Process

Paul's Writings Collected

The church received the writings of Paul, most likely, before any others. As such there is considerable evidence that as early as the end of the first century Paul's writings had been collected into a single corpus.

In the Bible itself, Peter casually mentions Paul's writings, as if they were already known by his readers (2 Peter 3:16).

Early church fathers also attest to Paul's writings.

Clement of Rome (Ca. A.D. 95) writes to the Corinthians, telling them to “take up the letter of the blessed Apostle Paul” (1 Clem. 46:1). A letter to the Ephesians by Ignatius (ca. A.D. 110) reminds them that Paul remembers them in every epistle. As is the case of Polycarp and Marcion. With the exception of Peter’s mention of Paul’s writings, we have no historical records of any reference to his writings. However, after A.D. 90 there are frequent references and “it is clear that by A.D. 100 Paul’s letters had been collected and were widely known and widely accepted.”

As to how this collection process took place is really anyone’s theory (educated guess). There are two such prominent theories:

Some hold that the letters were collected over a period of time, others that it was a specific historical occasion. Since the earliest New Testaments available have a different book order than ours, it seems more likely that this process was done over time, and perhaps in different locations. Paul encourages, for example, that the Colossians exchange letters with the Laodiceans (Col. 4:16). Perhaps churches, such as Corinth, Ephesus and Rome had procured letters Paul had written to other churches as well.

Those holding the other theory cannot agree on a what single event would have led to such a collection. Within this group are several different ideas. Some believe the churches immediately recognized the value of Paul’s letters and promptly collected them from other churches. Others hold that an individual took this task upon himself, such as Onesimus (how else, they argue, could Philemon have made it into the collection) or Timothy (who was charged by Paul to “commit to faithful men what you have heard” (2 Tim. 2:2).

The Gospels Collected

As stated before, there were other “Gospels” being recorded, although none have survived to date. Luke tells us that many have taken it upon themselves to “set in order a narrative of

those things which have been fulfilled among us” (1:1). How many such parallels existed cannot be known. The earliest we can probably date any of **the** Gospels is about AD 60.

By the end of the first century there is a historical reference in the interesting *Didache*, a manual of church discipline, to the Lord’s prayer as recorded in the gospels. There is a papyrus fragment as old as AD 130 found in the sands of Egypt which contains a piece of the Gospel of John, which means it was probably around by the end of the first century. In the early second century, there came to be references to multiple gospels, even mentioned by name. By AD 180 came the first reference and historical defense of a four-fold gospel account.

The Remaining Books

Acts was placed between the gospels and the epistles, because of its natural placement and value as a transitional account. It picks up with the account of Christ and continues on with the spread of this gospel. When reading the gospels, if we want to know what happened next, Acts tells us. When reading the epistles one can turn there to get the background of these letters. Because the book of Acts both provides this sequel of events **and** a setting for the Epistles, it easily found a secure place in the NT canon.

Recorded in the book of Acts are the works not only of Paul in establishing the early churches, but of Peter, John and the others. It is likely that the General Epistles and Revelation were more easily recognized as canonical because of the writings of Luke on the activities of these Apostles.

The early church, until 400, can be divided into 3 regions: West, East and Syriac (the Syriac church was not in Syria, but Mesopotamea, called Syriac because they spoke Syrian). Each of these regions, until 400, had a different set of NT books declared as canonical. Common among all three regions were the Gospels, Acts and the 14 books of Paul (although Hebrews did not enjoy total acceptance).

Regional Differences

Within each region, and over this 300 year period, beginning AD 100, were smaller variances. But suffice it to say, the following summarizes the general view of each region in the early church.

Western	Eastern	Syriac
22 Books:	22 Books:	22 Books:
4 Gospels	4 Gospels	4 Gospels
Acts	Acts	Acts
13 Pauline	14 Pauline	14 Pauline
(No Hebrews)	(Hebrews)	(Hebrews)
1 Peter	1 Peter	James
1 & 2 John	1 & 2 John	1 Peter
Revelation		1 John

Again, this is a summary of the many views of each region and time, in the early church. Throughout this period, however, the remaining books of our 27 were at times included, and at other times disputed. As we approach 400, however, the lists of the church fathers in all three regions, begins to more closely, and more often, resemble our list of 27 today. Hebrews eventually became accepted in the West and Revelation in the East. The remaining general epistles also joined their ranks.

While there remained an uneasiness about several of the books of our NT for some time, the Gospels and the Epistles of Paul were accepted by the end of the first century, and the majority of all writings were accepted by virtually all Christians by the middle of the second century AD.

Criteria for Canonicity

There are basically 6 criterion used to determine what books had the stamp of God.

Apostolic Authority

Its never quite the same to hear what someone else said about what someone else said about something as to hear it from the horses mouth, or at-least an eye-witness. So it is with the authenticity of the NT books. The books deemed as canonical were those written by Apostles. Men

who heard Jesus, men declared as authoritative, deemed as givers of truth.

This line of reasoning led to the difficulty of acceptance of some books. Hebrews, for example, because of its anonymity makes for difficulty. An early Eastern church leader, Dionysius had argued against the Johanon authorship of Revelation, which led to its lack of support in that region.

However, anonymous books, such as the Gospels and several of the epistles, are still considered authoritative because they were considered apostolic in content — content consistent with the known teaching of the apostles. Which of-course makes sense, because the Bible itself declares that all Scripture must agree. This is the second rule of authenticity.

The Canon of Truth

The Canon of Truth is a statement that simply means, “all Scripture must agree.” When accessing various texts, the rule was applied: if a passage clearly spoke contrary to the rest of the Bible, Old and New Testament, then it was deemed heretical.

For example, we are told of a second century bishop who visited a Syrian town, and found the local church divided over the authority of the *Gospel of Peter*. After studying the book, which itself claimed to be apostolic, he soon found it contained Docetic heresy (a belief that Jesus was not really a human), and rightly rejected it.

Catholicity

The word actually means universal, and as applied to canonicity refers to its universal acceptance. A book accepted only by a small sect of isolated believers is unlikely to win canonical status. Eventually all the church accepted all the NT books.

Time of Writing

The OT was closed 400 years before the birth of Christ, as foretold in Zechariah. Therefore, it is only fitting that the Bible continue, in a New Testament, which could only have rightly begun

with the birth of Christ. The church, as stated in Ephesians 2:20 is built on the foundation of the Apostles. Once they are gone, there is not more foundation building, and thus the end of the New Testament writings. Apostles could rightly appoint church leaders, but they never appoint new Apostles. Paul tells Timothy to “pass on what you have heard from me”, but does not tell him to pass on new information.

Quality of Writing

Remember, we’re trying to find books that have the stamp of God on them from the beginning. Such books would—while utilizing the dialects and personal distinctions of each author—retain a certain quality.

The true Word of God is living and powerful and sharper than any two-edged sword. Men write powerfully, but God writes books that truly change lives. Men can change peoples minds, get them to do things and convince them of needs, but God’s word can make eternal changes in a person.

Public Worship

The general public, until the time of Gutenberg, (and to some extent, beyond), had not real access to the written Word. Many were illiterate, most could not afford expensive books, and few were readily available to those who could. So, most heard the Word in the church.

While at times other books were read from in the hearing of the people, for the great part, those books we do not today consider as part of the NT were kept separate, not read aloud, or given certain restrictions. If it wasn’t accepted as good public reading material, it probably wasn’t canonical.



Conclusion

No one of these tests were conclusive, or exclusive, but combined they form a solid determination of the stamp of God’s Word.

Can we Trust this Book?

Points to remember:

We did not decide the books of the Bible, we determined what God had decided.

As nebulous as the process is, it is clear that God intended for us to have his written Word. He promised both to send his Holy Spirit to give it, and to protect it. If nothing else, 2000 years of provision regarding what we call the Bible is a testimony to its authenticity.

The Text of the New Testament

Up to the early 20th century (way back in the 1900s), the oldest NT manuscripts we had were from about AD 400. However, this century we have discovered some that go back to as early as AD 200. The oldest fragment we have dates to AD 125. However, we still do not have any of the originals.

Copies were not doubt first made only of necessity. We see that as Paul exhorts the church in Colosse to exchange letters between the churches, this must have taken place. And as early as AD 95, a fellow by the name of Clement, of Rome, in writing to the Corinthians invites them to pay close attention to the epistles of Paul. This indicates that he knew not only of the letter to the church in Rome, but also of the letter to the church at Corinth.

People ask why God did not preserve the originals. I'll ask Him when I get there, but I can take a guess. One need look no further than the furor over a supposed impression of Jesus in a tortilla or a tree to see how quickly we tend to idolize those things we hold as sacred — and I emphasize *things*. Things were not meant to be sacred, only the things they point to. We'd love to get Noah's Ark off Mt. Ararat, to prove the Bible, but God put it out of our reach because we don't rest our faith on stuff. Likewise, the Bible. Can you imagine how idolized it would be!

In this respect, it is fortunate that the early church did not see a need to preserve these early texts (even if they had a means to do so). There's good reason they were not disturbed by the decay or loss of their texts: there were plenty of good copies around.

Before the establishment of monasteries, wherein the copying would be done by professional scribes, much of the work was done by individuals. This did lead to errors creeping into the texts, but as discussed in our conclusion, you can see the overall insignificance of these errors.

We have nearly 24,000 NT manuscript copies, some partial and some complete. This does not include the 86,000 quotes of the NT by early church fathers, nor does it include the thousands of copies of translations made into various languages from the Greek NT throughout early church history.

Compare these numbers with what is available in ancient non-biblical books. Ceasear's *Gallic War* (ca. 54 BC) is found in only 10 good manuscripts, the oldest some 900 years after it was written. Of Livey's 142 books of Roman History (49BC - AD 17), only 35 have survived, none older than AD 400. Of the writings of Plato, the earliest manuscript is 1300 years after his death, and of Demostheneses 1200 years.

Still, the 150,000 variants seems overwhelming.

What of all these variations?

First off, literally 99% of these hold absolutely no significance. Things like the reversal of word order, "Jesus Christ" vs. "Christ Jesus." Or take variant spellings (remember, there was no standard dictionary back then). There was the occasional drop of a letter, or repeat of a word from the line above. In fact, if you were to list all variants with any significance, you would arrive at about 50 or so. Of these 50, not one impinges on the meaning of Scripture in matters of the tenets of the faith, or mandates of life.

Variation is the spice of life, at least for those in the business of *Textual Criticism*, the art and science of determining the correct text by making a comparison of all the available texts; applying various, prescribed principles along the way.

This leads us to our discussion of *translations*, the *Textus Receptus* and the *Majority Text*.

Modern Greek Texts & Translations

The printing press would do for standardizing the texts of the Bible, what the various Church fathers did for canonizing the books. With the invention (in the West) of the printing press by Gutenberg the usefulness of scribes was diminishing and would soon make them altogether obsolete. As such, a “standard” text would be made.

Erasmus, a Dutch, entered a monastery early in life. However, monastic life did not agree with him and they let him out of his obligations. His exposure to copying no doubt gave way to his impetus to design a better way of doing thing, and thus he was the first to publish a Greek NT in 1515. Actually, a fellow by the name of Ximenes was first to produce a Greek print NT, but the church authorities held up the publication of the text because they felt the Latin was God’s language and there was no need for a Greek version (sound’s as ignorant as the King James only argument, doesn’t it?).

Anyhow, a race was underway by Erasmus to get his published before Ximenes and as a result he was a little too hurried. Because of the rate he was working, he made a few blunders: 1) His copy of Revelation was missing the last page, so he had to take the Latin Vulgate version he had and translate it backwards, into Greek. 2) This happened a couple of other places where his text was missing, or he didn’t care for it...for example, in Acts 9:6 he inserted the question “Lord, what will you have me to do”, which is found in Acts 22:10, but is not a part of the Greek text. 3) The printing itself had various errors because the type was set very quickly, with not enough proof-reading.

These blunders would not have been so bad, except his version eventually became the standard, or received text, or in Latin, the *Textus Receptus*, that is still used today to make up the King James (and yes, even Paul’s translation, the New Kings James). Granted, a few revisions have been made, so that no one is using the original Erasmus text, but still various errors

remain, such as the one in Acts 9:6 mentioned above.

Textus Receptus

For hundreds of years, the *Textus Receptus*, was **the text** for translators of the Bible. However, it is generally regarded today (except for the King James only buffs) as a text with more flaws than the two other texts below. Please keep in mind, however, that even with the numerous errors in this text, it is still a wholly reliable text. It still holds true, that even this text is only flawed in minor areas of agreement, and in nothing of significant doctrine. This is the text of the RSV, KJV, and NJKV.

Critical Text

The critical text is a conglomeration of texts which best represents the Alexandrian or Egyptian groups of texts. It is referred to as the *NU* text in the NKJV notes. Much of the weight in choosing these texts goes to their age. The oldest text is often given preference over the younger. This is the text of the NIV and the NAS.

Majority Texts

The majority text (M-Text in the NKJV notes) refers to a tradition wherein the text is chosen for its greatest support. Given a variance reading, then the one with the most agreement is accepted, regardless of age.