

How we got the Bible

“For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man,
but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.”
2nd Peter 1:21

Some important facts:

The Bible is a total of 66 books written over 1,600 years by more than 40 different authors, most of whom didn't even know each other. There are 39 books in the Old Testament, and 27 books in the New Testament. The timespan includes 1500 BC through 100 AD. The authors ranged from generals to shepherds; so some authors were widely known, and others were not. However, the Bible's story is seamless from start to finish. Genesis is 'Paradise Lost'; Revelation is 'Paradise Regained'... The Bible is the story of us!

So why, exactly, are these 66 books included in the Bible...?:

Canon is a Greek word that means “measuring rod”.

Canonization is how the books of the Bible were selected to be in the Bible.

Three Steps to Canonization:

1. Inspiration by God

This is when God inspires certain people to write something.

2. Recognition by the people of God. Once God inspired someone to write a 'book', men of God recognized it as a prophetic utterance from God. This recognition immediately followed a message's publication. There is no evidence that any particular book of the Bible existed among the ancient Jews for many years before it was recognized as canonical.

a) Moses' writings were received immediately in his day.

Deuteronomy 31:26

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Three Steps to Canonization (continued):

- b) Joshua's book was immediately added to the canon.

Joshua 24:26

- c) Paul's books were immediately recognized.

2nd Peter 3:15-16

- d) As we're studying the New Testament, we'll see what specific steps people took to recognize if a book was from God.

The fact that a book had been accepted hundreds of years earlier didn't *guarantee* that succeeding generations would never raise questions about it, since they didn't have access to the *original* evidence of its prophetic credentials... This happened with the book of *Esther*, whose author was unknown to subsequent generations.

3. Collection and preservation by the

people of God. Once they recognized it was from God, ancient Jews went to great lengths to collect and preserve it. And I do mean incredibly GREAT lengths...

The Old Testament canon was in existence by about 400 BC. So *inspiration* produced the canonical books, and *recognition / collection* preserved them. (See my handout chart on 'History of the Old Testament Canon')

Lesson 1