



# Canon: Which Books Belong?

## Lesson Seven: The Old Testament Canon

### A SHORT HISTORY OF THE OLD TESTAMENT CANON

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- A study of the OT Canon reveals that the 39 books enjoy a long history of general acceptance as canonical. Some of the books were met with opposition.
  - The Jewish rabbis disputed the inspiration of 5 books (Ezekiel, Proverbs, Song of Solomon, Ecclesiastes, and Esther).
  - Today there is general agreement that the OT Canon consists of the books included by the Hebrew Bible.
  - The canonicity of the OT writings is established by the authority they present (Exodus 24:7; 2 Kings 22-23; 2 Chronicles 34; Nehemiah 8:9, 14-17; 10:28-39; 13:1-3).
- The OT Canon existed because of the literary processes in Israel (Exodus 17:14; 24:4; 34:27; Numbers 33:2; Deuteronomy 28:58; 29:20-27; 1 Samuel 10:25; 1 Chronicles 29:29).
- A chain of verses in Chronicles gives us the tradition of a series of writing prophets in Israel.
  - 1 Chronicles 29:29—David's history was written in the books of the prophets Samuel, Nathan, and Gad.
  - 2 Chronicles 9:29—Solomon's history was written by the prophets Nathan, Ahijah, and Iddo.
  - 2 Chronicles 12:15; 13:22; 20:34; 32:32; 33:19; 35:27—Histories of other Kings were recorded.
- There is a long chain of writing prophets that reaches prior to David until the end of the Kingdom of Judah. The writings of these prophets would be given the same authority as their spoken word (Jeremiah 26:18).

### THE WRITING OF GOD'S REVELATION CAN BE ATTRIBUTED TO—

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- The universality of the message (Jeremiah 29:1; 36:1-8; 51:60; 2 Chronicles 21:12).
- To preserve it for the future (Exodus 17:14)
- To be a witness (Deuteronomy 31:24-26)
- To counter the unreliability of oral transmission

### THE OLD TESTAMENT'S STRUCTURE DEVELOPED OVER A LONG PERIOD OF TIME.

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- Books were considered "God-breathed" while being gathered (Deuteronomy 31:24-26).
- Prophetic succession added volumes to the Canon (Deuteronomy 4:2; 12:32).
- Inspiration enabled the writings to be canonized (2 Samuel 23:1-3; 1 Chronicles 25:1; Ecclesiastes 12:11ff; Job 38:1; 40:6).

**ONLY FIVE BOOKS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT WERE EVER QUESTIONED:**

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- Esther does not mention God's name.
- Ecclesiastes was thought too pessimistic.
- The Song of Solomon was thought too sensual.
- Proverbs was questioned because it appeared to contradict itself (26:4-5).
- Ezekiel's vision of the Temple (chaps. 40-48) was never built.

**ASSURANCE OF THE OLD TESTAMENT CANON IS FOUNDED UPON TWO STRONG FACTS**

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- The transmission of the text by the copyists assured its integrity
- The overruling power of Providence assures us of the text's validity

**THE APOCRYPHAL BOOKS WERE NOT CONSIDERED INSPIRED**

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- "Apocrypha" is the name given to Jewish religious books of obscure origin
- Except for interesting historical information and a few beautiful moral thoughts, these books contain absurd legends, historical, geographical, and chronological errors, as well as heretical doctrines.
- These Books were never accepted in the Hebrew Bible, by Jesus Christ, by the Apostles, or by the Early Church, but they were canonized by Rome and Constantinople at the Council of Trent in 1546 to justify unscriptural practices

**APOCRYPHAL BOOKS HAVE BEEN REJECTED FROM CANON BECAUSE OF VALID REASONS**

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- Were composed *after* the period when prophecy was recognized to have ceased in Israel.
- They are anonymous except for two.
- Some claim NO inspiration; no prophetic authorship.
- The scenes of some of the books contain obvious errors.
- The books were never accepted by Christ and His Apostles.
- The books have been discredited by historians.

**CONCLUDING POINTS ABOUT THE REJECTION OF THE APOCRYPHAL BOOKS FOR THE CANON**

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- The basic principle of Canon—"Was this a literary work for God's spokesman?"
- The Canon of the Old Testament was the product of Inspiration guiding the record of God's revelation to man.

Modern theories may attempt to cast doubt and discredit the Old Testament Canon, yet they will fail as have their kindred in past centuries. How can a modern theory eliminate the unanimous testimony given by history, the Jewish synagogue, Christ, the Apostles, and the Church?