



# Canon: Which Books Belong?

Lesson One: Inspiration—The Divine Assurance (2 Timothy 3:16, 17)

1. ☞ The significance of this study is readily seen.
  - a. ☞ There has to be a normative standard by which man can know the Divine will.
  - b. The consequences of Scriptural inspiration are dramatic—IF Scriptures are God-given then they are authoritative! IF Scriptures are not God-given, then our ☞ faith rests upon uncertainty. IF Scriptures are only partially inspired, then we are left perplexed without an acceptable way to know what is the Divine will (or even if there is a “divine will”!).
  - c. If there is no normative standard in religion, then there will be chaos. This chaos will testify ☞ against the God we know from the Scriptures. Thus, the very existence of the God of the Bible is impacted by this topic!
  - d. ☞ Sincere hearts will be the target of this issue. Some accept only 66 Books as inspired, others accept more, and others accept less—who is right? We must do all we can to determine which books are from God (John 12:48).
  - e. In essence this study series focuses attention upon ☞ *the most significant* doctrine in the Christian’s faith.
2. ☞ 2 Timothy 3:16-17 offers us the Divine assurance concerning the trustworthiness of God’s Scripture.
  - a. The passage analyzed and discussed.
    - 1) This is known as the “classic text” for biblical inspiration.
    - 2) “All Scripture is inspired of God”—The ☞ Greek word *THEOPNEUSTOS* (θεοπνευστος), or “inspired,” literally means “breathed-out of God.” This term means that ☞ the Scriptures that are “inspired” had their origin with God, coming directly from Him. Thus, ☞ only those writings that are “inspired” come from God!
    - 3) “Every” or “all” according to the context refers to the Old Testament writings. However, that which is affirmed specifically for the Old Testament is valid in principle for the New Testament!
    - 4) God assures us that the writings (the words of the Scriptures) are inspired!
    - 5) Because these writings originate with God, they are ☞ “profitable.”
      - a) Every part has value for the reader!
      - b) *For teaching*—It provides a foundation of divine Truth (Deuteronomy 4:36; Psalm 94:12).
      - c) *For reproof*—God’s Word is able to produce conviction, refute error which exists because of ignorance (Jeremiah 23:29; Hebrews 4:12).

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- d) *For correction*—It is able to lead the erring back to the right way.
  - e) *For instruction*—It is able to build up and establish the believer by giving spiritual instruction (Psalm 119:98-99, 130; 2 Timothy 3:15).
  - f) *For completeness*—It brings salvation to man by giving one the knowledge of the Lord that is necessary to find forgiveness of sins (James 1:4).
- b. This passage makes a significant point regarding the writings of God to man—☞ Any communication from God to man is “profitable”! The text specifically applies to the Old Testament, but its principle applies to ALL communications from God to man!
- c. ☞ The query that looms large—“How are we to know which writings are inspired and which are not?”
3. ☞ 2 Peter 1:19-21 offers us insight into the process of inspiration.
- a. Examination of this passage.
    - 1) Peter’s words explain the ☞ process of inspiration (1 Peter 1:10-12; 2 Peter 1:19-21).
    - 2) Christ was destined to become the Author of our salvation (1 Peter 1:10).
    - 3) The salvation authored by Christ was explained by the Holy Spirit telling man. ☞ The Spirit communicated with the prophets, revealing to them the time and circumstances of the Messiah’s coming (1 Peter 1:10).
    - 4) As the Holy Spirit revealed these facts, He “superintended” (“moved”) the prophets in such a manner that they ☞ spoke or wrote what God desired to have communicated (2 Peter 1:21). Thus, mortals announced the unknown plans of God through their words and writings (1 Peter 1:12).
    - 5) The messages of the early prophets are identical—they all follow one thesis and no contradictions are found. This is because they were speaking and writing the “inspired” things of God! (1 Peter 1:12; 1 Thessalonians 1:5).
  - b. Peter’s words clearly support the thrust of 2 Timothy 3:16-17—☞ The Holy Spirit directly guided those who were to write down God’s communication with mortals. This divine superintending assured man that God’s Word would be revealed in an infallible manner.
  - c. ☞ Once again the nagging query arises—“How do we know what is the product of the Holy Spirit’s superintendence? Do we rely upon the writing’s self claim? Tradition? Council decrees?”
4. The determining factor deciding which literature is “inspired” and which is not inspired, focuses upon the “Canon of the Bible.”
- a. ☞ The question of Canon asks, “How were the books of Scripture, those that were truly inspired by God, collected? What criteria were used to decide which were inspired? Why were some accepted while others rejected?”
  - b. As we begin this study we need to emphasize terms and meanings:
    - 1) ☞ **CANON** (κανον)—Refers to a rule, which serves as a measure. It is used in the

New Testament in 2 Corinthians 10:13, 15-16; Galatians 6:16.










2) **APOCRYPHA**—These are writings omitted from the Hebrew canon but included in the Septuagint. It comes from a Greek term meaning “secret; hidden.” These were officially accepted by the Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox at the Council of Trent (1546). They were dropped from Protestant Bibles in the 16th century. This category often adds eleven books to the Old Testament (three more are found in some Episcopalian and Lutheran Bibles) and a number of writings to the New Testament. (A good discussion of these books is found in Neil R. Lightfoot, *How we got the Bible*, Baker Book House, 1963, 88-95)

a) The Old Testament Apocryphal Books include fourteen or fifteen books depending on how they are counted. Three of these are not considered canonical by the Roman Catholic Church. Since several of the apocryphal books are combined by the Roman Catholic Church in its Bible they count forty-six books in the Old Testament. Non-Catholic editions of the English Bible, since 1535, separate the apocryphal books from the thirty-nine canonical books, or omit them from the contents.

Why were the Old Testament apocryphal books rejected?

- They were never included in the Hebrew canon of the Old Testament. The Hebrew Old Testament was historically limited to only twenty-two books and these correspond exactly to the thirty-nine in the English Bible.
- They were never accepted as canonical by Jesus Christ or His Apostles. The New Testament writers quote from practically all of the Old Testament books, but nowhere quote from the Apocrypha as “Scripture.”
- These books were not accepted as Scripture by the Jewish writers of the first century (Philo, Josephus), or by the Jewish Councils, or by eminent Christian writers (Origen and Jerome). Interestingly, the Roman Catholic Bible used Jerome’s translation as the basis of its Bible but Jerome strongly maintained that these books were “apocryphal” and were not to be included in the canon of Scripture.
- These books do not evidence intrinsic qualities of inspiration. Most are legends and fiction. They have historical, chronological, and geographical errors. They contain statements that contradict books recognized as canon. In Baruch 3:4 it is claimed that God hears the prayers of the dead.
- These books have always been suspect and not universally accepted.

b) The New Testament Apocryphal writings include a variety of literary types: Gospels, Acts, Epistles, and Apocalypses. These were written under assumed names of the Apostles. They contain fanciful stories about Jesus and the Apostles. The Apocryphal Gospels often deal with the early years of Jesus and record nonsense.

- 3)  **PSEUDEPIGRAPHA**—This term literally means, “things falsely ascribed” and are writings not permitted in any collection of Scriptures. These books are falsely attributed to influential biblical characters (Noah, Enoch, etc.) These were written from 200 B.C. to 200 A.D. These writings target the unrevealed topics of Scripture and were favorite readings in the first century. These writings were read publicly for edification and were often included in the codex volumes with inspired Scriptures.
- c.  God has specified that the collection known as “Scripture” include only those writings that are “inspired” (2 Timothy 3:16-17).
- d. The judgment of “inspiration” thus depended upon the “canon” which measured the nature of the literary work. Hence, the “canon” became a powerful instrument!
5.  The application of the “canon” to religious writings is a critical study.
- Since the issue of inspiration has such a great impact upon our religious beliefs and practices, it is not surprising to find that the “canonicity” of writings was a debated issue.
- a. Those claiming that canon is not relevant seek to evade Scriptural authority by claiming that many books of the  Bible are “lost.” The Holy Bible mentions books that are not included in the 66 books in our Bible (see Numbers 21:14, 15; 2 Samuel 1:18; 1 Kings 11:41; 1 Chronicles 29:29; 2 Chronicles 9:29; 1 Corinthians 5:9; Colossians 4:16). As these “missing books” are identified there arises the query: “What happened to these lost books? How will we know if they are ever found?” Those seeking to evade biblical authority will try to argue that we do not have “all revealed truth” so we should not be so dogmatic.
- b.  Those claiming that “additional” revelations have been given to mortals and these “latter-day revelations” are “inspired” (such as the Book of Mormon).
- c.  Those claiming that religious writing of other worldviews are just are “inspired” as the Christian’s Bible (such as the Koran; Sacred books of Hindus; Talmud; Confucius; Buddha; etc.).
6. It is suggested by some that man can never know what material is truly inspired and which is not. This dilemma can be  resolved so that man’s perplexity is removed and faith is concretely settled.
- a. The question of Canon is historically reliable and proven trustworthy.
- b.  God does not want us to remain uncertain—His assurance stands today!
- c. The issue of  Canon will help seekers find God’s Word even when they are living in the midst of a pluralistic society!

# **WHICH BOOKS DO BELONG IN THE BIBLE?**



*This query is far reaching!*

**There must be a normative standard!**

**This impacts the solidity of our faith!**

**The existence of God is affected!**

**This is an issue asked in sincerity!**

**This is THE MOST SIGNIFICANT doctrine!**

Transparency 1/1

# **The Divine Assurance**

## **2 Timothy 3:16-17**

**θεοπνευστος – *THEOPNEUSTOS***

### **SUMMARY –**

**Any communication from God to man is “profitable”! The text specifically applies to the Old Testament, but its principles apply to ALL communications from God to man (especially written communications)!**

### **Question –**

**How are we to know which writings are inspired and which ones are not?**

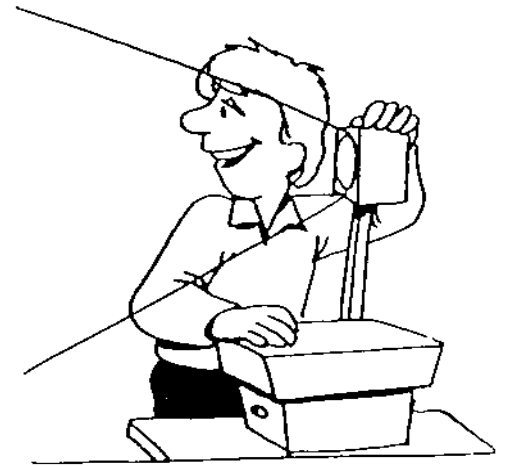
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# THE DIVINE PROCESS

## 2 Peter 1:19-21

Writers were “moved” by the Holy Spirit as they wrote the divine revelation.

**Summary –**  
The Holy Spirit directly guided those who were to write down God’s communication with man. This divine superintending assured man that God’s Word would be revealed infallibly.



**Question –**  
How do we know what is the product of the Holy Spirit’s superintendence?

# The Entrance Of "CANON"!



**The Question Asked:**  
How were the holy books  
measured?

**The Measurement Standard:**  
κΑΝΟΝ (2 Co 10:13, 15, 16; Gal 6:16)

**The Questionable Books:**  
The Apocrypha  
The Pseudepigrapha

**The Divine Assurance:**  
Only the "inspired" are profitable.

# THE APPLICATION OF CANON

**How does it apply to the “lost books” of the Bible?**

**How does it apply to “latter-day” revelations?**

**How does it apply to religious writings from other world views?**



Transparency 1/5

# **THE PERPLEXITY RESOLVED!**



**Canon is historically reliable!**

**God wants us to be sure!**

**Canon enables us to identify the  
“inspired” Word of God!**

**Transparency 1/6**