

Canon: Old and New Testaments & the Apocrypha
A Bible Overview Information Paper

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Canon: “cane” or “measuring rod”- books recognized as genuine, inspired, authoritative, “rule” of faith. It’s God’s medium of His revelation of Himself to man.

OLD TESTAMENT (OT) - written in Hebrew

- Jewish tradition has it that Ezra, upon return from exile, reassembled the scattered books and completed the group of books that are in the Hebrew Scriptures.
- Josephus (a historian) considered the OT Canon fixed around time of Ezra.
- In Jesus’ day, it was called “The Scriptures” and Jesus referred to it as God’s Word.
- In NT there are about 300 quotations from these “Scriptures.” And no book outside them is quoted in the NT except for words of Enoch in Jude.
- Remember: between the Testaments, there was 400 years of silence when no prophet of God spoke. During that time Greek became the language of the world and the Hebrew Scriptures were translated into Greek & this was called the "Septuagint". (because of 70 skillful linguists who did the translating).

Apocrypha- The "Apocrypha" were 14 books written during the 400 years of silence or between the timeframe of the OT and NT.

- These books were added to the "Septuagint".
- Since they were written during a time of no divine revelation, they were not recognized as Hebrew Scriptures.
- Authorship of these books is uncertain.
- Neither Jesus nor the apostles quoted from these books in NT.
- Not recognized by early church as having canonical authority.
- So it was later, in the late 300’s AD- when the Bible was translated into Latin from the Septuagint and not the Hebrew OT Scriptures- that the Apocrypha carried over into the Latin Bible (called "The Vulgate"). The Vulgate became the common version in Western Europe until the time of the Reformation at which time the Protestants rejected the Apocrypha just as the Jews had.
- When the Catholic church tried to stop the Protestant movement in 1546 at what’s called the Council of Trent, the Catholic church declared the Apocrypha to be canonical.

NEW TESTAMENT (NT) - written in Greek

- Our 27 books were generally recognized by the early church as original authentic writings of apostolic authority.
- As writings of the Apostles appeared, they were added to the “Scriptures.”
- The Apostles claimed their writings as inspired and to be part of the "Scriptures".
- All the books of the NT existed before 100 AD. They were written in many parts of the world.
- Due to persecution of believers who were now spread out in different places, slow communication over the vast Roman empire, no chance for churches to get together, and slow travel, it took some time to gather church leaders who could make a reasonable effort to agree on what books were of genuine apostolic authorship.
- Constantine started the process of forming what was NT Scriptures. He assigned his chief religious advisor, Eusebius, to get 50 Bibles prepared. He acknowledged the 27 books we now have as the ones accepted by the early church.
- It was in 397- at the Council of Carthage- that the 27 books-which now constitute the NT- were formally accepted.