

## **Biblical Theology**

### **Unit 1: Doctrine of Scripture – Lesson 2: Canonicity and Inspiration**

#### **Inspiration**

- Definition: A term referring to the fact that the words of Scripture are spoken by God.
- Alternative and Related Terminology:
  1. **God-breathed**: A more proper understanding of the biblical concept given the weak meaning of the word in contemporary vernacular.
  2. **Verbal Plenary Inspiration**: The Bible possesses a self attesting credibility that the actual words recorded in scriptures are Holy Spirit inspired (spoken by God) and that this inspiration extends to all parts of the bible.
  3. **Canon**: A list or collection of books deemed genuine and inspired.
- Scriptural Basis:
  - *2 Timothy 3:16-17* – “All scripture is inspired by God and is useful...”
  - *1 Peter 1:20-21* – “...men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.”

#### **Old Testament Canon**

- History of Old Testament Canon
  1. **39 Books written from 1445 BC. to 435 BC.**
    - From the time of Moses to the death of Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi
  2. **100 BC. Is earliest manuscript evidence**
    - Oldest Manuscripts prior to 1947 were the Masoretic text (900 AD.)
    - Dead Sea Scrolls found in 1947 included fragments from every Old Testament book dating back to 100 BC. – ALL identical to current copies.
- Criteria of Old Testament Canonicity
  1. **God's Personal Authorship**
    - Ten Commandments – First collection of God's words.
      - Written by finger of God (*Exodus 31:18*)
      - Deposited into the Ark of the Covenant (*Deuteronomy 10:5*) as terms of covenant between God and his people.
  2. **God's Prophetic Authorization**
    - Prophetic Voice – Spoke messages from God
      - Additional laws and narrative (*Deuteronomy 31:24*)
      - Many prophets wrote authorized messages from God (*1 Samuel 10:25, 1 Chronicles 29:29, Jeremiah 30:2*)
    - After the voice of the prophets ceased, so did the inclusion of books into the Hebrew Canon as stated and verified by:
      - Josephus (Jewish Historian, 95 AD.)
      - Talmud (Rabbinic Teachings, 200 AD.)
      - Mishnah (Collection of Hebrew Oral Teachings, 200 AD.)
      - Dead Sea Scrolls (Essenes' Scroll of Community Rule, 50 BC.)
    - Apocrypha never regarded as scripture by Jews, Jesus, or the rest of scripture.
      - Should be noted that the Apocrypha was not canonized by Roman Catholic Church until 1546 at the Council of Trent which was the Roman Catholic response to Martin Luther and the Reformation.

## New Testament Canon

- History of New Testament Canon
  1. **27 Books written from 49 AD. to 95 AD.**
  2. **2<sup>nd</sup> Century AD. Is earliest manuscript evidence**
    - 24,000 handwritten manuscripts of the New Testament exist.
- Criteria of New Testament Canonicity
  1. **Apostolic Authorship / Oversight**
    - Apostles held in same authoritative regard as prophets of old on basis of the indwelling Holy Spirit.
      - Written by Apostles:
        - Matthew, John, Pauline letters, James, 1 & 2 Peter, 1-3 John, Revelation.
      - Written under oversight of Apostles
        - Mark (Peter), Luke and Acts (Paul), and Jude (James)
      - Accepted on intrinsic qualities of apparent inspiration
        - Hebrews
  2. **Self Attesting and Harmony with Scripture**
    - Paul's Letters circulated among church in first century
      - *Colossians 4:16, 1 Thessalonians 5:27*
    - Matthew is quoted and referred to as scripture.
      - *1 Timothy 5:17-18*
    - All Scripture is God-breathed
      - *1 Timothy 3:16*
    - Paul's letters are regarded as scripture.
      - *2 Peter 3:14-16*
  3. **Continuous Usage**
    - 96 AD - Leader of church in Rome quotes many portions of New Testament
    - Early church leaders in 2<sup>nd</sup> century regularly quoted gospels.
    - Other historical documents indicate tradition had established NT canon by end of 2<sup>nd</sup> century.
    - 325 AD - Eusebius lists at Council of Nicea books being used by churches
    - 367 AD - Letter from Athanasius lists books widely accepted in churches
    - 393 AD - Canon is listed at Church Council of Hippo
    - 397 AD - Canon formally finalized at Church Council of Carthage

## Discussion Questions

1. Define the following term:
  - Inspiration:
2. Why is it important to know which writings are God's words and which are not?
3. Have you had doubts or questions about canonicity of any of the books of the Bible? Explain.
4. On what basis should the writings of Mormons and Jehovah's Witnesses be refuted?

## Reading Assignment

*Systematic Theology by Wayne Grudem – Chapter 5: Inerrancy of Scripture*