

“Introduction to The Bible – Part I” The Formation of the Old Testament

Basic Facts:

1. There are _____ books of the Bible with two accepted divisions:
 - The _____ contains _____ books
 - The _____ contains _____ books
2. Miscellaneous information worth noting:
 - The Bible was written by approximately _____ different men from all walks of life:
 - 1) Peter was a _____
 - 2) Solomon was a _____
 - 3) Paul was a _____
 - The Bible was written over a period of _____ years from many different locations.
 - 1) It was written on three different continents - _____, _____, and _____.
 - 2) It was written in three different languages - _____, _____, and _____.

- **In spite of this great diversity of literature, authorship, time and location, there is a unified message which is centered on the Lordship of Jesus Christ, and there is a unified theme which is centered on the redemption of mankind by God through Jesus Christ.**
- **Canon**—comes from a Semitic word meaning “reed” which was used as a measuring rod. The word refers to a “rule” or a “standard” or a “norm” ...a standard by which everything else is judged. *The Canon of Scripture is the officially accepted list of inspired books that belong in the Bible, and therefore constitute those normative books for Christian faith and practice.*
- **Autograph**—a Manuscript written in the author’s hand (we do not have any of these)

How the Old Testament was formed/canonized:

1. The compilation of the Old Testament was not something done in a whimsical manner; for just as the words were inspired by the Holy Spirit (II Peter 1:16-21), we believe the process of compiling the Old Testament record was guided by Him as well.
2. Both _____ and _____ accept the Old Testament as the authoritative Word of God.
3. Before the O.T. was written down it was transmitted orally...thus the present O.T. is the result of a process of accumulation—Law, Psalms, Proverbs, etc. Generally, whenever the Jews were scattered they always came together to determine, and therefore preserve those books which constituted, for them, the authoritative Word of God. The final scattering took place in A.D. 70 when the temple in Jerusalem was destroyed. Not long after this, the Jews had decided on their canon.
4. We have many writings of Israel that were not canonized (although some of these writings may be incorporated into our existing O.T. Canon):
 - Book of the Wars of the Lord (Num 21:14)
 - Book of Jashar (Joshua 10:13)
 - Book of the Annals of Solomon (1 Kings 11:41)
 - Book of the Annals of Kings of Israel (1 Kings 14:19)
 - Book of the Annals of Kings of Judah (1 Kings 14:29)
5. Naturally, this begs the question “How did certain books become canonized?”—**Canonization did not happen overnight; rather, canonization was a process.**

6. The process by which this took place was guided by the Holy Spirit.
- **Passage of _____**; *which is seen through the accumulation of reverence for certain books*. The people knew which books were the inspired books. Canonization does not mean that certain Jews determined what would be Scripture, this was already determined by general consensus; rather, **canonization served the purpose of collecting and preserving those already accepted books.**
 - **Internal _____** produced a need for an **Authoritative** body of religious literature caused by the Babylonian Exile and Destruction of the Temple in 586 B.C.
 - **External _____** which were rapidly impacting the “Jewish” way of life. One of those threats came from the Greeks during the period of “**Hellenization**” (Greeks banned possession of Hebrew Religious writings under penalty of death...So Jews had to decide which writings to keep (**What are they willing to die for?**) which was one of many reasons to protect the Holy Scriptures.

7. How the Old Testament is divided:

- Jewish Division of the Old Testament
 - 1) **Torah (Law)**—Genesis, Exodus...Deut.
 - 2) **Prophetic (*Nebe'im*)**—1) “Former Prophets”—Joshua, Judges, 1 & 2 Samuel, 1 & 2 Kings...2) “Latter Prophets”—Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, 12 Minor Prophets.
 - 3) **Writings (*Ketubim*)**—1) “Poetical Books”—Psalms, Job, Proverbs; 2) “Scrolls” “Five Rolls (read in conjunction with 5 Jewish festivals)” —Ruth (Weeks), Song/Songs (Passover), Ecclesiastes (Tabernacles), Lamentations (commemoration of destruction of temple on 9th of Ab), Esther (Purim); 3) “Prophetic” - Daniel; 4) “Historical” - Ezra, Nehemiah, 1 & 2 Chronicles

- **Although Christians have the same O.T. canon, the number of books differs because we divide Samuel, Kings and Chronicles into 2 books...the Jews also consider the “Minor Prophets” 1 book.**
- **Greek Division of OT (this is our O.T.)**
 - 1) _____ (**Pentateuch**; Genesis - Deuteronomy)
 - 2) _____ (Joshua – Esther)
 - 3) _____ (Psalms - Song of Songs)
 - 4) _____ (Major; Is.- Dan.) (Minor; Hosea. – Mal.)

8. Collections of what was canonical (for O.T.) varied:

- **Septuagint (LXX)** - 3rd Century B.C. was a translation of the Hebrew Scriptures into Greek by 70 scholars in Alexandria Egypt - it is the most quoted version of the O.T. in the N.T.
- Eventually Jewish controversies with Christians led to the limiting of the canon for the Jews. A group of Hebrew Scholars meeting in Jamnia (in Palestine) around A.D. 100 fixed the O.T. as we have it today.
- Did a church council determine the O.T. Canon? - **No**:
 - 1) Christ referenced the O.T. Canon (e.g. Lk. 24:44—3-fold division; Luke 11:51—Abel=Genesis; Zechariah= 2 Chronicles 24:21 which was the last book in the Hebrew canon).
 - 2) **Ecclesiasticus** (c. 130 B.C.) refers to a three-fold division “The Law and the Prophets and the books of the Fathers.”

- 3) **Josephus** (1st century A.D.) referred to the O.T. as those books which contain “divine doctrines” and were esteemed from peoples early birth so that they were “willing to die for them”

9. The Language of the O.T. is _____.

- Consists of 22 letters, no vowels or punctuation, read right to left.
- The original manuscripts (MSS) were written on _____ (Animal Skins), then on _____ (Paper made from woven fibers of Egyptian Reed) and later (400 A.D. and on) written in book form (**Codex**)
- The O. T. text to which all others are compared is the **Masoretic Text**.
 - 1) **Masoretic Text** - the Masoretes (Men of Masora = “**Men of the Fence**”) – Hence this equals a fence around scriptures to protect them from corruption.
 - 2) These men started doing this in the beginning of the Christian era...7-9th century A.D.: They added vowels and accents to the text to standardize it...they also counted and recorded # of words in each section to assure nothing was added or lost.
 - 3) The oldest complete text of O.T. that we have dates from around 1008 A.D.
 - 4) The Masoretic text is the source from which modern translations into English are made. While the oldest complete manuscripts of the Septuagint date from the fourth century, the oldest complete Hebrew Old Testament, the Leningrad Codex, was copied in ~ 1008 A.D. Modern English translations of the Old Testament rely primarily on the Leningrad Codex as published in the Hebraica Stuttgartensia.

- **Dead Sea Scrolls** (? B.C. According to carbon dating, textual analysis, and handwriting analysis the documents were written at various times between the middle of the 2nd century BC and the 1st century AD.)
 - 1) The Dead Sea scrolls comprise roughly 825-870 documents, including texts from the Hebrew Bible, discovered between 1947 and 1956 in eleven caves in and around the Wadi Qumran (near the ruins of the ancient settlement of Khirbet Qumran, on the northwest shore of the Dead Sea).
 - 2) The texts are of great religious and historical significance, as they are practically the only known surviving Biblical documents written before AD 100. They contain Isaiah and portions of every book except Esther.

Concluding Remarks:

1. We have no “original manuscripts” and thus the Scriptures that we have today are “copies” of copies etc.
2. Does this mean they cannot be trusted to be true and accurate?
3. How do we defend our statement that the Scriptures are inherent (without error) when we don’t have any original manuscripts?
4. Does knowing that we do not have any “original manuscripts” change anything for you as far as your faith in Jesus Christ is concerned?