



So, Where Does the Bible Come From?

2 Timothy 3:16: (ASV) Every Scripture inspired of God is also profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction, which is in righteousness.



The Bible is not only an ancient book, it is also an incredibly unique book, for it was written over a period of about 1,500 years by many authors and in several languages. It covers history and prophecy, moral and legal guidance, family council, spiritual enlightenment and a firm pathway to finding and appreciating the God and Creator of the Universe and His Plan. The Bible is a book made up of 66 books. So, how do we know the collection of writings we have is the correct collection? How do we know if we are omitting some books that should belong while including others that should not belong? Who made these decisions? Answers and understanding coming right up!

Special Guests: Jim Parkinson and Len Griehs
(Commentary has been edited for brevity and clarity.)

RICK: Good morning, Jim. You have made a lifetime of studying Bible manuscripts.

JIM: Well, yes, that's true. It started when I was at the University of Michigan back in 1959.

RICK: And we have also with us Len Griehs. Good morning, Len.

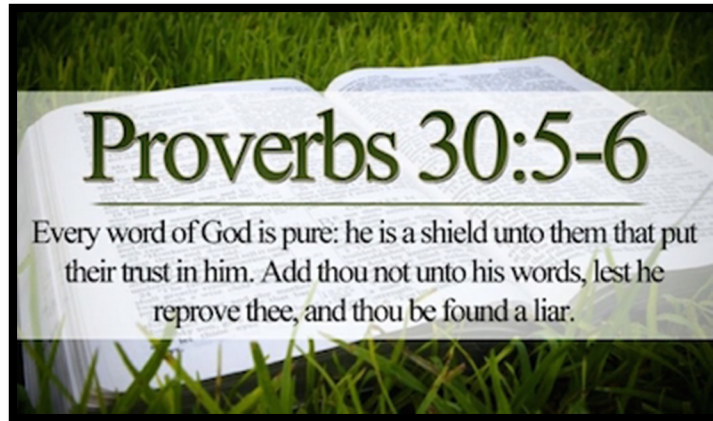
LEN: Jim and I go back a long way. We actually come from the same hometown, Jackson, Michigan, and Jim used to come over to our house all the time and we would discuss a lot of areas of Scripture. So, he was actually one of my early mentors and I appreciate all the work he has done. My interest in Bible manuscripts has been ever since we have had attacks on Scripture, starting back with the Da Vinci Code. I started taking a harder look at things, wanting to make sure I understood why things are such as they are. In this day of skepticism, it is very difficult to get people to reason and look at research. With the Internet available, you can pop up anything and take it as gospel. And that is the problem and the reality we have today.

RICK: So with Len and Jim here, we are going to take a hard look at how the Bible came to be the Bible. It is a fascinating story.





Who decided what went into the Bible?



RICK: I love that Scripture because it says every word of God is pure. What we want to establish on this program is: What is the word of God and how do we know it is the word of God?

 **Other gospels, Up to 50 books left out of the Bible**

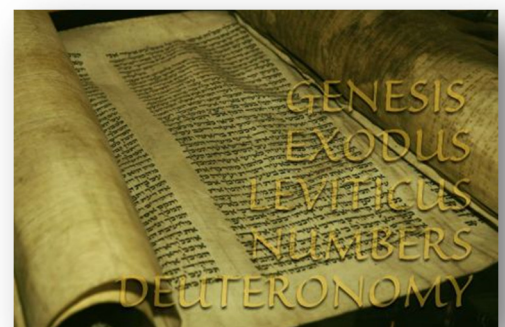
- *For nearly two thousand years, everything Christians knew about Jesus came from the gospels of the Christian Bible; accounts by Mathew, Mark, Luke, and John. Could this be an actual lost account of the life of Jesus written by Simon Peter, the handpicked leader of the apostles? The discovery set off shockwaves throughout the world of biblical scholarship, and that shockwave continues as new gospels, lost gospels, emerge from numerous archeological digs. The Gospel of Thomas, the Gospel of Mary Magdalene and even the Gospel of Judas.*

LEN: I must admit, Rick, I love to watch these programs. And most recently, they have had programs dramatizing the book of Acts, and that has been fun to watch because it fills in what you don't know - it does not matter whether it is fact or fiction.

RICK: And they have found legitimate manuscripts. Do these manuscripts fit in? Do they dovetail with the Scriptures that we know to be Scripture or do they just not belong? Let's look at the Old Testament first. How did the Old Testament come to be the Old Testament?

JIM: Well, we start out with the writings of Moses, the first five books of the Bible. And it says Moses wrote them. I think the evidence is pretty strong that he did write them, all except for the last five verses that describe his tomb.

RICK: All right. That makes perfect sense; so you start off with the five books. And then?





JIM: After that, we have the book of Joshua, which presumably Joshua wrote most of, and then we have the period of the Judges. We do not know specifically who wrote it, but it is a history. Then we have the books of the Psalms by David, and Proverbs by Solomon. Then we have the books of the prophets. The prophets were rejected by those who had charge of the Temple because the prophets were prophesying against them, but they were accepted by the Pharisees and the rest of the Jewish community.

RICK: Back in Old Testament times.

JIM: That's right.

RICK: When we look at that, you have the Major Prophets and then the Minor Prophets. How come a minor prophet doesn't get to become a major prophet?

JIM: Only because his writings were shorter.

RICK: Len, when we look at the Old Testament, is there a lot of controversy about the Old Testament itself, or is most of the controversy about the New Testament?

LEN: I think there is far more controversy about the New Testament only because that is where Christianity traditionally kind of focuses. We hear the term "New Testament Christians" a lot. Many Christians really do not even study the Old Testament. We take a different perspective - that the Old Testament certainly is the basis for belief as much as the New and that they ought to be studied together. But I think the fact that they were written mainly for the Jewish nation and it is the history of the Jewish nation, is why there is far more interest in discussing the New Testament amongst Christians than the Old Testament.

RICK: With the Old Testament, though, let's look at the importance. You are alluding to its importance here, but as we go back to the early Christian church, Jim, what did they study?

JIM: They studied the writings of the Hebrew Old Testament.

RICK: So, because the Christian church came out of a Jewish origin, they went back to Jewish history.

JIM: And the Christian claims to be fulfillment of Judaism. So, when they were studying the things of the Old Testament, we see particularly in Matthew how Scripture after Scripture of the prophecies is quoted to show that Jesus is fulfilling those prophecies.

RICK: There are several prophets mentioned by name in the New Testament from the Old Testament.

LEN: I think that is the sanction or key that Jesus did not ignore these. We ought to be looking at the same things he was looking at and especially, as Jim says, because of the fulfillment of prophecy that was there and him as the Messiah, and also many of those are testimonies upon which he built his own prophecies about the end times.



What does "canon" mean? Biblical canon is a list of books considered to be authoritative Scripture by a particular religious community. It comes from the Greek word meaning "rule" or "measuring stick."

RICK: So, Jesus spoke his own words of prophecy, but he spent a lot of time quoting words of prophecy from several prophets at several times, talking about Moses and Abraham. Within the New Testament we have very strong verification for much of what is talked about in the Old Testament.

LEN: I think, Rick, too, if you look at something like Psalm 22 written by David, we see that was fulfilled by Jesus. Jesus quoted from that Psalm extensively on the very last day of his life. So, if it was that important to him that he quoted it on the last day of his life, it certainly seems to be something we ought to study.

RICK: The first thing we look at here as we set the groundwork is the Old Testament books do not have a lot of controversy. Are there books in the Old Testament that are maybe less verifiable than other books of the Old Testament? Maybe we do not have as much proof of in terms of manuscript background and so forth?

JIM: We had the oldest manuscripts in Hebrew about a century ago back to maybe the order of 1000 AD. And that left some questions in people, especially the minds of those who do not believe it, as to what was actually verifiable and what was not...until we got to the Dead Sea Scrolls! In the Dead Sea Scrolls, we have parts of every one of the Old Testament books except Esther. This caused some people to say, "Well, we wonder why Esther was not canonical?" I think it was Frank Moore Cross, Jr. who pointed out that there is only a tiny fragment of a much larger book - Chronicles - that was discovered. He said, "I think if our worm were just a little hungrier, people would be questioning whether Chronicles was canonical."



Visitors to Qumran National Park (Israel) today see the caves where the Dead Sea Scrolls were preserved. In the summer of 1947, Bedouin shepherds were pasturing their flocks near the northwestern shore of the Dead Sea. While looking for a goat that had wandered off into the cliffs, they came across a curious rock crevice. When they threw a stone into a cave opening, they were surprised to hear a strange echo. They crawled inside and in the dimness they spied large whole jars standing on the floor. Inside the jars, they found folded pieces of leather, some of which were wrapped in cloth.

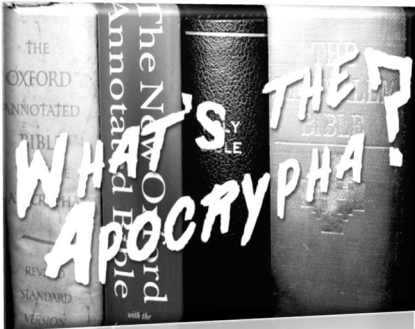




RICK: Because the manuscripts were not preserved in a way that the worms could not get them, is what you're saying.

LEN: If you think about it, those manuscripts being preserved is a miracle in itself. It helps key us in on who really wrote the Bible.

RICK: The books of the Old Testament of Jewish history are widely accepted, so we will move onto the New Testament. Some of our Catholic friends add a section of Bible that we do not have called the Apocrypha. What is the Apocrypha, and why is it not in the Bible that I use?



(Source: Christiancourier.com. "The Apocrypha: Inspired of God?" Wayne Jackson) ...The Apocrypha is a collection of documents, generally produced between the second century B.C. and the first century A.D., which were not a part of the original Old Testament canon. The names of these books are 1 Esdras, 2 Esdras, The Rest of Esther, Song of the Three Holy Children, History of Susanna, Bel and the Dragon, Prayer of Manasses, Tobit, Judith, Wisdom of Solomon, Ecclesiasticus, Baruch, 1 Maccabees, and 2 Maccabees. The last seven of these are incorporated into Roman Catholic editions of the Bible. The Catholic Council of Trent (1546) affirmed the canonicity of these books, as found in the Latin Vulgate and condemned those who rejected them...

RICK: So, Jim, there is a collection of writings that come under the heading of the Apocrypha. Give us your understanding of what they are and where they belong.

JIM: There were four books of Maccabees originally, the first two of which appear in the Roman Catholic Bible such as the Douay Version, but these were not found with originals in Greek, at least until the Dead Sea Scrolls were found.

RICK: When were the Dead Sea Scrolls found?

JIM: In 1947 the first ones were found, and then for a few years afterwards with archaeologists trying to compete with Arab Bedouins to find more scrolls - with the Arabs winning most of the battles. There have been fragments found of some of the apocryphal books in Hebrew. It is not quite as clear as to whether the Greek was translated from them or they were translated from the Greek. They were always held apart from the rest of the Bible as far as the Jews were concerned.

LEN: I think the apocryphal books were in addition to a lot of things that were floating around at the time. I just want to read you some of the books that were being circulated and now are being claimed that we ought to look at these as part of the Bible: The Gospel of Thomas, the Greek Fragments of Thomas, the Secret Book of James, the Dialogue of the Savior, the Gospel of Mary, the Infancy Gospel of Thomas, the Infancy Gospel of James, the Gospel of Peter, the Secret Gospel of Mark, the Gospel of the Hebrews, the Gospel of the Ebionites, the Gospel of the Nazarenes and others.

RICK: So are you saying, then, that the apocryphal writings are similar in scope to those gospels?

LEN: I wouldn't say that, would you, Jim? It is not really the same category. Those are what I consider kind of "made up" things. There are some historical



benefits that we get from the apocryphal because we have a good history of the Maccabees, for example.

RICK: And the apocryphal books were written before, for the most part, all of these other gospels, they were written before Christ.

JIM: We have a difference between the Apocrypha of the Old Testament and Apocrypha of the New Testament. The Apocrypha of the New Testament was discarded by virtually everyone, and when you read the Apocrypha of the New Testament, you can see why. They are of a totally different character than the rest of the New Testament.

RICK: So, they don't follow a pattern that we see in New Testament writings. Why is it, then, you say the Apocrypha of the Old Testament really does not belong with the New Testament writings? What would be your reason for saying that?

JIM: I would say a reason would be they were preserved only in the Greek, not in the Hebrew.

RICK: By being preserved only in the Greek, they did not have the same historical background that the Hebrew Scriptures and fragments that have been found have.

JIM: That's right.

LEN: We have a lot of material written that is historically verifiable in much of the older testament. We are finding archaeological finds all the time that verify so many of the characters that we know from the Old Testament, even the obscure characters.

RICK: So, history and archaeology are proving the existence and the genuine content of what we consider to be the Old Testament.

LEN: That is right. We have many more with each discovery. I mean the historical value of the explorations of places like Israel and other parts of the Middle East verifying the history of that land and the actions that are recorded in the Bible is very valuable evidence that it is true.

RICK: We have been talking a little bit about the Apocrypha, and how it is different in terms of its history and origin in relation to the Old Testament. What about the Septuagint? What is it and where does it fit in relation to Scripture?

JIM: The Septuagint was a translation from the Hebrew into the Greek. We think it was Ptolemy II that funded it on the part of the Jews in Alexandria.

RICK: When would the Septuagint have been written?

JIM: The first five books, the books of Moses, were the ones that were funded at that time somewhere around maybe 280 or 270 BC. The others were translated over a period of time over the next three centuries.

RICK: It is interesting in that it seems like the Apostles quote from the Septuagint. When you look at some of their quoting of the Old Testament, it



seems to follow some of the wording of this Greek translation of the Old Testament, which was kind of like a “Johnny come lately” for the Old Testament in terms of a writing. Does that make the Septuagint a viable translation that we should be looking at when reading of the Old Testament?

JIM: It may be worthy of consideration, but consider that not always do the quotes in the New Testament follow the Greek Septuagint. Sometimes they are according to the Hebrew. But we do the same thing in English. We know that the King James translation is imperfect, but usually we quote from it because of familiarity. And when it is grossly inaccurate, then we quote one of the more revised translations corrected according to the manuscripts.

LEN: I think you have to realize in that in Jesus' day, there was a great social intermix of people from various parts of the world. And you think about, for example, in Jerusalem, under Roman rule, we have three languages being spoken. We have certainly Hebrew and Latin being spoken. When Pilate is going to communicate, for example, with Jesus, what language do you think they spoke? Well, I think we have a clue because remember Pilate put that sign up over Jesus' head in three different languages; one of those was Greek. I think that was the common language. If you were meeting another person from a culture, most of those people probably spoke Greek. I think it is common we have the Septuagint in great use during that time because it is in the Greek language that all of those cultures would be able to understand.

RICK: So, the Septuagint then finds its value in having been written in the common language of the days of the New Testament. But it is not necessarily the most accurate translation of Old Testament writings.

JIM: Which is why there were other translations afterwards to correct the errors of the Septuagint.

RICK: Can you give me some examples of that?

JIM: Aquila gave a very literal translation into the Greek, a little rough reading at times, but nevertheless corrected according to the Hebrew text. And then there were the translations of Theodotion and Symmachus, which were looser translations to try to more or less get the idea across without the specific words. And afterwards, there were translations by Lucian and others. There are probably five, six, seven different translations, most of which have been lost over time through lack of interest.

RICK: So, the Septuagint then has a place, but it does not have the same authority, from what I'm hearing the both of you say, as the Hebrew writings of Old Testament.

JIM: I think that's fair.

LEN: Rick, I think it is important - Jim has done a whole lot of work on various translations and accuracy. Jim, how many translations would you say there are that are out now in English of the Old Testament and New Testament?

JIM: It is well over 100. I have had a chance to compare somewhere between 70 and 80 for accuracy.



RICK: For the rest of the program now, we are going to focus on the New Testament, because that is where most of the controversy comes from. Do we have what is supposed to be the real New Testament according to the word and will of God, or are we missing out on several other books? Or do we have books we are reading that we should not be reading because they are not really legitimate? How do we know? Who wrote the New Testament collection of books we accept today?

LEN: Well, I will give you a short answer. I think it was God. I don't mean to be facetious with that, but I think it was obvious that there were certain elements that had to be in there that were influenced by God. We can talk more about that, but I think there are some keys in the Scriptures that help us understand that.

RICK: You believe God is behind the writing of what we consider to be the New Testament.

LEN: I think that's right, yes.

JIM: I would accept that.

2 Peter 3:13-16: (NASB) ¹³But according to His promise we are looking for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells. ¹⁴Therefore, beloved, since you look for these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, spotless and blameless, ¹⁵and regard the patience of our Lord as salvation; just as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given him, wrote to you, ¹⁶as also in all his letters, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which the untaught and unstable distort, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures, to their own destruction.

RICK: One of the interesting things about that particular Scripture is it is the Apostle Peter writing and verifying the writings of the Apostle Paul in the same category as (having the same weight of authority as) Old Testament Scripture. That gives us a sense of the authenticity of the writings and the letters of the Apostle Paul through the words of Peter.

Who were the writers of the New Testament?

JIM: The writers of all of the books of the New Testament were the Apostles, with two exceptions - Mark and Luke, who were, of course, with the Apostles.

RICK: The amazing thing about all of this is that Jesus is the centerpiece of everything and he did not write a single word.

LEN: Some say the only place where any written words of his are recorded is in the incident with the woman they brought to him, accusing her of adultery. Jesus wrote in the sand, but I think Jim has concluded this is a highly suspect passage. So, we really don't have any recorded words of Jesus.

JIM: In that case manuscript testimony is enough that there are not any critical additions that include it.

In what languages was the Bible written?

RICK: Let's talk a little bit about language because, Len, you had mentioned in one of the earlier segments that when Jesus went before Pilate, you suggested



a really important question - what language did they speak? Because they understood each other. Jesus would have normally been speaking in what language?

JIM: Some people say Hebrew; some people say Aramaic. But it is not a big difference. It is like a difference in dialect. You find that in the Hebrew, the definite article is at the beginning of the word. In Aramaic, it is at the end of the word. To say "the son of," the Hebrew will say "ben" and Aramaic will say "bar." But basically the difference between Hebrew and Aramaic is about the difference between English and "Brooklish."

LEN: That's Brooklyn in case you don't know. And I *do* understand those people, Jim. I live on the East Coast. I can even speak that language.

RICK: Hebrew and Aramaic are like cousins in terms of a language. Greek, though, is very different.

JIM: That's right.

RICK: The New Testament is written in Greek, is that correct?

JIM: Yes, although the first book that was written appears to be the Gospel according to Matthew. Appian in the early second century said it was written in Hebrew.

LEN: The interesting thing we have in something like that is when you look at those who wrote - for example, we mentioned Luke. Luke was not Hebrew. Luke was Greek. And so did he write a gospel in Hebrew, or did he write a gospel in Greek? Which would you say, Jim?

JIM: Oh, I think all of the other gospels were written first in Greek. I'll suggest the most reasonable scenario is Matthew wrote in Hebrew for those who were in and around Jerusalem, and then Mark says, "Well, now, I've been going out with Paul and others to the various Greek-speaking churches. We need this in Greek." So he presents an abridged addition.

LEN: Jim raises a point that is an important difference in how we are looking at this. Some so-called scholars say Mark was written first. At one time I thought Mark was the first gospel because that is the popular opinion. But I think based on some of the research Jim had done in some of the gospels and some of the manuscripts, it seems evident that the order we have in the New Testament - Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John - is the correct order chronologically of how they were written.

RICK: And you would say Greek was the common language of the day?

JIM: Throughout the Empire.

RICK: So, a lot of those who spoke Hebrew would have spoken in Greek as well?

JIM: That's right.

RICK: I think that is an important distinction to make, because we look at it as two very different things, but it has a lot of overlap.



LEN: My grandfather lived in Poland before World War I. They lived in Krakow, which is kind of in the middle of Poland or south Poland. But what did they speak? He spoke not just Polish, but he also spoke Russian because they were under Russian domination and that was the common language. If you were going to speak with the government, you spoke Russian, and they were fluent in that. I think it was no different in those days. They were under this Roman domination with no evidence they communicated in Latin because that would have been submission to the Roman rule, which, as you know, was really not popular. Greek would have been acceptable because there were many Jews who lived outside of Israel that would have spoken Greek as well.

RICK: So, a very common occurrence. It is importance to establish that because Greek was the common language, to write in Greek wasn't anything extraordinary. It was what was expected.



A caller from Indiana suggests: How do you know these are the words of God? I think a fundamental issue is baptism and the receiving of the Helper, the Holy Spirit. This is crucial for the Christian believer, to be baptized and at an age where he understands the meaning of baptism, not out of the womb where you don't even know what's going on, but it is a decision to be made in obedience to God's word. That's where you receive the help, and that's just so fundamental.

RICK: What you are saying is, the doctrine of baptism brought out in the New Testament is one of those things you look at as a very basis of Christianity, and these are the writings that support that.

Len, you mentioned you wanted to read a Scripture from Luke to set the groundwork for where the New Testament came from and why we look at the books that we have as being the right books.

LEN: I think this is a much-overlooked passage but very instrumental in helping us understand this question.

Luke 1:1-4: (KJV) *¹Forasmuch as many have taken in hand to set forth in order a declaration of those things which are most surely believed among us, ²even as they delivered them unto us, which from the beginning were eyewitnesses, and ministers of the word; ³It seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write unto thee in order, most excellent Theophilus, ⁴that thou mightest know the certainty of those things, wherein thou hast been instructed.*

LEN: These words are the key: *inasmuch as many have undertaken*, not just two or three, but *many*. Luke says he wants to write this "so you may know the exact truth about the things you've been taught." Luke is adding his stamp saying, "I am going to be honest and use integrity in writing this, and you will know exactly what is there because many have tried to do this and I want to clarify."

RICK: Who was Luke that he could do that?

LEN: Luke was noted as the great physician, and he wrote not just this Gospel, but he also wrote the book of Acts. He accompanied the Apostles in those days. His activity particularly was very instrumental, as he was able to get a firsthand account.



RICK: That is important because the Luke verse indicates there was a lot of clamor going on around the establishment of Christianity. Luke is taking it upon himself to say, "Look, we have to put this in order and weed out all of the extraneous writings that are happening."

LEN: He says these were handed down from those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and servants. That is a pretty good verification, eyewitnesses.

JIM: And the thought has been suggested, also worthy of consideration, that it takes you down almost to the end of Paul's life, and so it may have been written by Luke as a legal defense brief for him.

RICK: What do you mean? Because that's an interesting thing that I don't think most of us have ever heard of, a legal defense.

JIM: In both Luke and Acts.

RICK: Written as a legal defense brief for the Apostle Paul? How so?

JIM: He was going to be sentenced to death and was tried twice. The first time he was let loose, and the second time he wasn't.

RICK: So, they were written to verify his activities.

JIM: That's right.

LEN: Luke goes on in that passage saying "they have investigated everything carefully from the beginning." Well, why do you investigate? To support something. And if he's supporting Paul and the legal defense of why Paul is going, that makes sense that he is saying he is investigating for that purpose.

RICK: And the interesting thing about Luke is because he was a doctor, he would have understood the depth and the necessity of a real proper investigation and study to make sure things were absolutely right.

Len, you mentioned there are three things that you look at in terms of finding authenticity in Scripture. What are those three things?

LEN: I think there are several phases, but the three basic criteria I would mention are:

1. Written by an apostolic figure, not necessarily by an Apostle, but an apostolic figure;
2. Citations in history by early leaders in the church (the early churches in the New Testament with which the Apostles established or had contact); and
3. The consensus of those churches. Is this right or not right? It wasn't the act of the church that gave them their status. It was decisions in saying "these things have intrinsic authority and the power of these writings from those people whom we know."

Why do we think we have the correct New Testament compilation?



LEN: Do we know how the early church worshipped? Do we know what they did in their meetings? We have some pretty good historical writings. One of them is from Justin Martyr who wrote around 150 AD. I want to quote something from his writings about how he worshipped: "On the day he called the day of the sun, all who lived in cities or in the country gathered together to one



place and the memoirs of the Apostles or the writings of the prophets are read as long as time permits. Then, when the reader has ceased, the president verbally instructs and exhorts to the invitation of these good things. Then all rise together and pray." Now, that is a pretty interesting commentary on how they worshipped. Let's key in on one thing they mentioned here. It says "the memoirs of the Apostles." Remember at this point the early church is almost all Jewish. At this time in history, they are starting to compile the memoirs of the Apostles, (I think they are talking about the Gospels) which were considered as important as the writings of the prophets of the older testament. At that point they are starting to integrate these two together. And when you think about the word "canon," which we use for Scripture, that word is derived from a Hebrew word used in [Ezekiel 30:5](#). It is the Hebrew word *kaneh* meaning a measuring reed. It was used in Ezekiel as a reed to measure, like a yardstick, in Ezekiel's vision of the temple.

The term was first applied to the biblical writings in the 4th century. How did these various writings get accepted? What made them say that these memoirs of the Apostles were as important as the writings of the prophets? Who were the various authorities at the time? Justin Martyr talks about the "president of the congregation." They did not have a paid ministry, obviously. Whoever was leading that congregation at the time was commenting on these things and reading these things. So, they got to be officially accepted as authoritative.

RICK: Things that you should be reading.

LEN: When I say "the church has accepted them," I am not talking about the church organizations we have today such as, the Lutheran Church, the Catholic Church and so on. I'm talking about those congregations described in the New Testament that had contact with the apostles. You have this interplay between historical and theological elements coming together, establishing the canonization of Scripture.

RICK: Things that should be measured as truth upon which to base your Christian belief.

You quoted from 150 AD which was long before Constantine existed. So, we see evidence already in the writings of early Christians that there were writings canonized (considered authoritative) before the era of Constantine.



JIM: Our earliest Greek manuscript is in the John Rylands Library in Manchester, England dating from around 130 AD, approximately, which is less than a half a century from when it was first penned. We have other substantial portions of the New Testament from closer to 200 AD, early 3rd Century.



A caller from Connecticut suggests that God's word was written for the sincere, for the humble to understand. Look at the Apostles. The Lord chose fishermen to reveal the mysteries of the kingdom, not the Pharisees. The intellectual of that day was the great Apostle Paul, and yet to the elite, the Greeks in Acts 17, they called him a "babblor" and thought he didn't know what he was talking about.

RICK: The truth that we know to be Scripture came through the hands, minds and lives of very humble individuals. They were not highly exalted in their time, and there is something beautiful about that because God's power and influence can work through an individual to do mighty works, but the individual cannot take credit because it is beyond them.

Len, let's look at the New Testament. How do we know that the books we have qualify?

LEN: We can divide up Scripture development into three phases. Phase 1 is really from the latter part of the 1st century. Jim mentioned some of those writings. Phase 2 goes to about the middle of the 2nd century; Phase 3 about from 190 AD to 400 AD. That is when we find the formulation of what we have today as the New Testament. Phase 1 was the creation of the documents.

RICK: So the first rule, then, is that it had to have been written at that time.

LEN: Right, and emanating from the Apostles or those who had some direct or indirect relation to them. And those writers, I think personally they had envisioned they were supposed to be preparing something that would be useful, not just for the believers in their day but the believers all down through the period of time that would read afterwards.

When we read earlier that passage in 2 Peter 3 where Paul's writings are defended, Peter is saying there are difficult things in Paul's letters which ignorant and unstable people explain falsely. He is defending Paul. As Jim said, it is in that defense of Paul by Luke we see the interplay going on in this first phase of establishing which writings were going to be authoritative.

That was a very important part as we create these documents - which ones existed at that time. Luke said there were a lot of things being written. You can imagine in our day when events happened, for example, President Kennedy and all the records we have about the conspiracies behind his death. So you say, what is right and what is not right? With conspiracy theories, why would that time be any different than in our day? So, I think a very key part in that Phase 1 was making sure the writings were from the Apostles or someone who



had either a direct or indirect relationship with them. This was one of the tests the early churches put on these writings.

RICK: So, Jim, as we look at that as a qualification, what are your thoughts on the importance of that? Is Len putting too high a value on that, or is there a real necessity to keep it that narrow?

JIM: I do not think it is a question of necessity to keep it that narrow. If we want to refer to the other writings, how many manuscripts do we have? For example, it wasn't that many years ago that the "Gospel of Judas" was discovered in a manuscript. It was only the second manuscript that had been discovered.

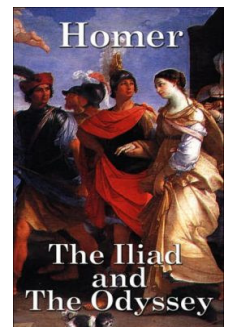
RICK: And that created a real stir.

JIM: It did, at least in the media, certainly not much in the scholarly world. We will make a comparison to the number of other manuscripts found. Peter Parsons, papyrologist (one who studies papyri or papyrus manuscripts) in Oxford, England, said the Greek New Testament is the second best attested work of ancient history. This leads to the next question - what is the best attested? Well, the Hebrew Old Testament, of course.

RICK: By saying it is the best attested work of ancient history, put the numbers to that.

JIM: For each of the four gospels, we have over 1,000 manuscripts. Compare that with two manuscripts for the "Gospel of Judas;" one, two or three for the "Gospel of Peter." There is just no comparison as to how well the early church preserved the four gospels that we have.

Let's compare the writings of the classical authors with the preservation of the New Testament manuscript. For most of the classical authors, you have one, maybe if you're lucky, you have two and the holes in them do not align. The most abundant writings are from Homer, who wrote The Odyssey and The Iliad. There are about 120-130 manuscripts of them. Compare that with the fact that every book of the New Testament is attested by more than that: the gospels by over 1,000 manuscripts each, Acts and the Epistles, 500. Even Revelation has 200 or so. When comparing the New Testament with the classical authors or anything else, it is just far more voluminous for those books and those books only, not for the other books of the New Testament Apocrypha that have been suggested.



RICK: Or any of those other missing books of the New Testament either. In many cases you find a manuscript or two and people get all bent out of shape like, wow, this is going to change everything, but you are looking at a volume of proof that is immensely on the side of what has already been established.

Did Constantine pull the people together to determine what would make up the New Testament?



325 AD, Up to 50 Books Left Out of the Bible

- *(Narrator) Constantine wanted to harness this new religion in order to unify a Roman Empire that was falling apart. At that time, Christianity was a loosely organized religion, a collection of churches with diverse beliefs and diverse Scriptures. The Emperor intended to change that. In 325 AD, Emperor Constantine convenes the Council of Nicaea to decide the basic tenants of Christianity. He brings together the most powerful church leaders from around the world to discuss legalizing a formal Christian religion.*
- *(Biblical scholar) One of the interesting things is it becomes clear that what he primarily becomes interested in is unity. He wants the Christian religion to provide the ideological basis for the Empire.*



RICK: That said, Christianity up to that point was a lot of loosely organized churches. "Church" back then did not mean what church means now.

LEN: "Church" really meant just the congregation, and there was a great independence among them. Obviously, from the writings we have, they were free to accept someone's service or not accept it. There was no central authority. That was the difference when Constantine came in. He wanted to implement a central authority. That is when all the problems started.

RICK: Christianity was growing along in a very small, independent way just fine, and I think that is the way Jesus intended it to be. That is a subject for another day. But in that last sound bite, they talked about having "diverse Scriptures." Let's take a look at the period before Constantine and see if we can determine if the Scriptures were, in fact, as diverse as they are implying. So, Len, let's talk about something called the Muratorian Fragment. What is that?

LEN: The Muratorian Fragment came along as the 2nd century ends - in the Phase 2 time period we discussed. Phase 2 was kind of this first attempt to define what should be included in Scripture, and a man named Marcion came along about the mid-2nd century. He was a Gnostic. The Gnostics were Greeks who came into Christianity because it became a very great platform for them to espouse their beliefs when Alexandria collapsed. They were able to come in and spread all kinds of different beliefs because the church was just being formed. There wasn't really an authority that said, "Okay, this is it." That is when you see the rejection coming in this period of time of the Hebrew Scriptures. That is when you start to see the questions of anti-Semitism come in and anything to do with Scripture.

At the end of the 2nd century, the Gnostics start to permeate through the church. Marcion accepted only the writings of Paul and all but the first two chapters of Luke about the birth of Jesus, because they wanted to push that aside. He was declared a heretic eventually, but at that time as the 2nd century ends, we start to see writings saying what we should be following.



(Source: earlychristianwritings.com) Marcion is often thought to have first established an explicit canon. Marcion's canon consisted of the *Euangelion*, or the Gospel of the Lord, and the *Apostolikon*, ten epistles of Paul, not including the pastorals. There is debate over whether Marcion truncated Luke and Paul or whether later orthodox scribes may have expanded them in some cases.

The Muratorian Fragment came up as a result of that.

(Source: bible-researcher.com) The Muratorian Fragment is the oldest known list of New Testament books. It was discovered by Ludovico Antonio Muratori in a manuscript in the Ambrosian Library in Milan, and published by him in 1740. It is called a fragment because the beginning of it is missing. Although the manuscript in which it appears was copied during the seventh century, the list itself is dated to about 170 because its author refers to the episcopate of Pius I of Rome (died 157) as recent. He mentions only two epistles of John, without describing them. The Apocalypse of Peter is mentioned as a book which "some of us will not allow to be read in church."



The Muratorian Fragment

The Muratorian Fragment (thought to be written around 170 AD because its author refers to Pius I, bishop of Rome [142-157] as recent) lists all the New Testament books except for Matthew, Mark, Hebrews, James, 1 and 2 Peter, and 3 John. Then it says "the third book of the Gospel According to Luke." Then it is torn. The fourth Gospel is by John, one of the disciples. And then another tear. The "Acts of the Apostles having been written in one book, addressing the most excellent Theosophus." Luke includes one by one the things done verifying Luke. And then there is a tear. Then it says, "It is necessary for us to give an argued account of all these since the blessed Apostle Paul himself -- there's a missing piece -- writes to seven churches in the following order: first to the Corinthians, second to the Ephesians, third to the Philippians, fourth to the Colossians, fifth to the Galatians, sixth to the Thessalonians, seventh to the Romans." John also writes to "seven churches in the Apocalypse, to Philemon, one to Titus and two to Timothy in love and affection, but the letter of Jude and the two superscribed with the name of John," and then it is missing. This is the first kind of documented thing of what should be included when we study this.

Matthew and Mark were missing, as we said, but that part was torn. We do not know what is missing in that tear. Muratori does refer to a third book of the Gospel but does not mention it by name. So, it is going to be one of those two certainly. He also says in that fragment "other books." But he says "clearly they were not received." In this 2nd century Phase 2, those early churches played an important role sorting out what was really from the Apostles or those that should have been directed by the Apostles, and what was not when he says, "they were not received."

RICK: You wonder if the fact that these other writings "were not received" is why you have very few of them coming up later on and you have only one or two manuscripts versus several hundred for the other books of the New Testament - because they were looked at as sort of rogue writings. They did



not belong with the sacred writings of Scripture. And so their popularity waned.

What else is important in this discussion in addition to the Fragment?



P. Chester Beatty I, (P⁴⁵) folio 13-14, containing portion of the Gospel of Luke

JIM: In the 1930s, the Chester Beatty Papyri were discovered, three of them. In international terms, they are called P45, P46 and P47. You'll see it in the critical editions that way. The P45 or Chester Beatty No. 1 contains pieces of all four Gospels and Acts; therefore, there was no room for any fifth gospel.

RICK: Let me just pause there because that's an important way to look at things. They were put in an order chronologically. So if you have four gospels and then Acts with no space in between, it gives a complete picture.

JIM: It appears that way. The Chester Beatty Papyrus No. 2 is most of the epistles of Paul. There are some leaves missing. Also, it has a little bit different order: Romans, Hebrews, 1st and 2nd Corinthians and so forth. I've had a chance to hold this fragment going from Romans to Hebrews directly. This was from around 200 AD. So, already at that time they understood that Hebrews was written by Paul.



A folio from P46 containing 2 Corinthians 11:33-12:9

RICK: How is it that you make that connection?

JIM: Because Hebrews is between Romans and 1st and 2nd Corinthians.

RICK: They are putting together the writings of the same author. If Hebrews is in the middle, then it follows that you have Paul as an author before and Paul after. The writing of the book of Hebrews is a subject of debate today. But you are saying that helps to really understand the authorship?

JIM: Yes. They already understood that around 200 AD. It just took scholars an additional 16 centuries to become ignorant of it.

RICK: (Laughter) What you are saying is early writings put things in order long before Constantine came on the scene.

We have Scripture establishing itself from the groundwork of the early church itself to those who were following right after. What we have today is what *they* were talking about, not necessarily what Constantine had to say. The question then remains, did Constantine do a good work or did he cause trouble within the Christian community?



1 Thessalonians 2:9-13: (NASB) *⁹For you recall, brethren, our labor and hardship, how working night and day so as not to be a burden to any of you, we proclaimed to you the gospel of God. ¹⁰You are witnesses, and so is God, how devoutly and uprightly and blamelessly we behaved toward you believers; ¹¹just as you know how we were exhorting and encouraging and imploring each one of you as a father would his own children, ¹²so that you would walk in a manner worthy of the God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory. ¹³For this reason we also constantly thank God that when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but for what it really is, the word of God, which also performs its work in you who believe.*

RICK: That is the core of the reason for having this conversation, receiving THE word of God unadulterated. How did that happen throughout history? When you look at the era of Constantine, do you look at his influence on Christianity, and do you say, "Yay!" or do you say, "Oh, man, what a mess!" What is your reaction?

LEN: Well, there was good and bad in Constantine. I think he did a work that was necessary, and I think in the end result, what we have in Scripture today is correct. So to the extent he did *that*, it is good, but he had some bad influences too that Jim can talk about.

JIM: The heathen priesthood was certainly oppressing the Christians, and so Constantine did not release the Christians from persecution, at least officially. However, practicing Christians were still oppressed but this time by other Christians.

RICK: We are going to start with 313 AD. What happened at that point in time, and then walk through a little bit of the history of Constantine's influence and what the church ended up looking like after versus what the church looked like before.

JIM: In 313, we already see Arius pleading for a restoration of primitive purity into an Alexandrian church gone worldly. Well, you know you can't fight back. If you are part of the worldly group, immoral people, you can't accuse a man of being too pious. That's not going to fly. It took about five more years and Athanasius accuses Arius of heresy. That will always work. That has worked even in the 20th and 21st centuries. In time they simply poisoned Arius to death, called it "the righteous judgment of God," and that institutionalized immorality into the professing Christian church.

RICK: That institutionalized immorality into the professing Christian church. That's a very strong statement.

JIM: The misbehaviors were distracted - the attention was distracted away from the misbehaviors of them by accusing the other of heresy. And that way you concentrate on salvation by knowledge, the knowledge of whatever is defined as truth. And never mind what is according to Scripture, but what is defined according to this council, or whatever. As a consequence, with people's attention away from immorality, it could propagate.

RICK: It is a diversionary tactic.

JIM: Exactly.



RICK: And you are getting away from that purity of what Scripture is supposed to stand for and supposed to teach us.

LEN: I think during that period of time and up to the closing of what I would call the Canon in 367 AD, this time when Athanasius writes a letter, his 39th pastoral letter, he lists all 27 books of the present day New Testament. That is after Constantine had gotten everyone together, but the point was that it was to define those revelations that were claimed by Gnosticism coming in, and it differentiated writings that were going around by some of the church historians, like Eusebius and some of the others. We do at least from that point on get a definition that these were the ones that would be verified. After 313 AD, we had a lot of problems start developing into the church.

If you go to the early 5th century in 405 AD, we had the first kind of papal declaration that this is the authority. Then things start to get lost. The focus was away from what the Scriptures are about - Jesus - to what should we believe and how should the church be organized? Well, the early church was never organized.

RICK: Outside of its own little congregations. They had an organization within those congregations. Before we get to the errors of Constantine, let's summarize the era. You have in that time frame not a proclamation of what is Scripture necessarily, but a confirmation of what is Scripture because that had already been established. Is that true?

JIM: Yes.

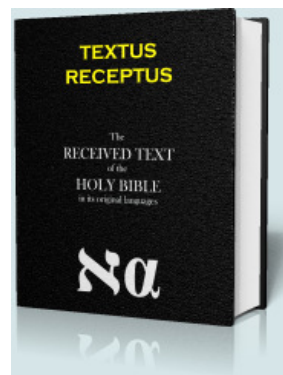
LEN: Yes, I think the church did not develop the canon of Scripture. As I said at the beginning, God did that by inspiring the writings that we have in the New Testament and then preserving these manuscripts. There are huge numbers of manuscripts preserved for each of those books we have. For those that were not part of the canon Scripture, we do not have nearly as much of a record. I think the experience and the discussions that were going on were overruled, I believe, by God, and He uses all means sometimes. It does not have to be perfect means to make sure these things were going to be preserved for our day.

RICK: That's another important point, because you have the preservation then of what had been established long before that time frame of the books and the writings that would be considered sacred. They were established long before, but God allowed, for lack of a better way to say it, a corrupted organization to do the work of preserving it. That doesn't sound like the way God would normally work. How could that be?

JIM: Fortunately, we have the manuscripts that testify what it was like in the early church. Our earliest portion of the Textus Receptus type text from which the King James was translated goes back to the 5th century. But we have roughly a hundred manuscripts as early or earlier, actually a hundred that are really earlier than that. And that is reflected in the critical editions of the Greek New Testament, and most of those critical editions are pretty good. None is perfect but very close. There's only a few texts like 1 Corinthians 15:51,52 or Revelation 20:5 where a little bit more work needs to be done.



(Source: Wikipedia) Textus Receptus (Latin: "received text") is the name given to the succession of printed Greek texts of the New Testament which constituted the translation base for the original German Luther Bible, the translation of the New Testament into English by William Tyndale, the King James Version, and most other Reformation-era New Testament translations throughout Western and Central Europe. The series originated with the first printed Greek New Testament published in 1516.



LEN: I think the consistency of the gospels that we have is an important element in understanding why they were preserved, because there's lights and shadows in there as we read them, and we have some very minor differences, but they all identify the same person. The Gospels make Jesus a unique figure, every one of them. And nowhere else do writers ever convey the same impression of something like they do there. It verifies anyone can read those Gospels and understand them. You don't have to be a scholar. We have been discussing the credibility, but when you read them, you have a credibility established from the fact that you do not have to have a tenured degree in order to understand what is in those Gospels.

They were written within a hundred years of the actual events, and that is what is important. I studied Latin for four years, and I did not want to be a priest or a doctor. But it was useful. We read the Aeneid and that was written within a hundred years of the Gospels, but you can't understand it today because you do not understand the culture. It is not true with the New Testament.

RICK: In summary, tell me the purpose of the New Testament.

LEN: The purpose of the New Testament is to help us understand one person, Jesus, and the role he played.

JIM: 2 Timothy 3:16,17: *Every Scripture inspired of God is also profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction which is in righteousness that the man of God may be complete furnished completely unto every good work.*

That is saying, with Scripture, you have the training and you have the tools.

RICK: The Scriptures, then, are about the individual Christian following after Christ. What happened after Constantine is the focus on the *individual Christian* went away and the focus on *organization* became the big thing. It took the very purpose of Scripture out of the way! It removed it, and you ended up having people then essentially for years and years blindly following an organization which was put in place for political gain.

LEN: Right. And until we had the wide publication of the Bible, as we have it today, which came much, much later, we did not understand that. We were a victim of that church organization, to a large degree, to tell us what we should believe and how we should act.



RICK: The Scriptures essentially initially were written to what people look at as a fragmented church, but we understand, by looking at the way the original church organization was, was a glorious church because you had individuals that would come together, and they would be able to participate and learn and grow as individuals in Christ, becoming part of a body.

JIM: If our connection is with the organization in heaven, then it is not obvious that there is an organization down on earth.

RICK: And the kind of organization within the true church is very, very loose. There's a lot of talk in Scripture about liberty, but do not use your liberty as a stumbling block for your brother. So, there's this great use, this great opportunity of liberty to grow in Christ. Are there any final words on this really amazing subject?

LEN: I would say, Rick, I think the Scriptures are important for us to understand as individuals. With our own due diligence and searching the Scriptures, we can have confidence they're true. The responsibility is on us to do the personal search and to internalize those Scriptures.

JIM: The accuracy, the history and the prophecies is ample enough validation for the Scriptures. They are for us to direct us how to live, because the character we develop is that which we're going to have in the Resurrection.

RICK: Well, Jim and Len, thank you so much for being with us this morning. We really appreciate your expertise, your patience with me and contributing to understanding something really important, that is, our Bible. So thank you both.

Folks, understand the importance of this subject and the importance of what you've heard for the last couple of hours. It is all about finding out the core values of God's plan by looking at His word through the pen of men preserved for our benefit so we can follow what is in Scripture to *study to show yourself approved of God*.

*So, where does the Bible come from?
For Jonathan and Rick and Christian Questions...
Think about it...!*

*And now even more to think about...
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Luke 24:44-48: (NASB) ⁴⁴Now he said to them, these are my words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things which are written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled. ⁴⁵Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, ⁴⁶and he said to them, thus it is written, that the Christ would suffer and rise again from the dead the third day, ⁴⁷and that repentance for forgiveness of sins would be proclaimed in his name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem. ⁴⁸You are witnesses of these things.

How did the early church worship?

When early Christians gathered for worship and instruction, in keeping with the customs of the Jewish synagogue, a portion of Old Testament Scripture would be read and explained. Meanwhile, the apostles, along with others, traveled from city to city and spoke to the local groups at their invitation.

As need arose, the apostles wrote letters to various churches. It was read with great excitement. Often the letter would be copied and shared with neighboring churches, which, in turn, would share it with still other churches. Some of the more inspiring letters were copied and shared more often.

Colossians 4:14-16: (NASB) ¹⁴Luke, the beloved physician, sends you his greetings, and also Demas. ¹⁵Greet the brethren who are in Laodicea and also Nympha and the church that is in her house. ¹⁶When this letter is read among you have it also read in the church of the Laodiceans; and you, for your part read my letter that is coming from Laodicea.

How We Got Our Bible - Notes from Jim Parkinson

Of 3,300 Greek New Testament manuscripts, over 40 are older than the earliest Textus-Receptus type of manuscript (5th century). Some date back to the 2nd or 3rd century.

English Bible Translations (over one hundred total):

J.B. Rotherham (3rd ed. 1902) [83½ number of manuscripts found]

New World Translation (NWT, 1960) [76+]

D. Stern, Complete Jewish Bible (1998) [75]

Tyndale (1525)

Coverdale (1535)

Matthew's (1537)

Great Bible (1539)

Bishops' Bible (1568)

Douay (RCC, 1609) [44½]

King James (Authorize) Version (1611, 1614, 1762, 1769) [9]

[British] Revised Version (1881-1885) [70½]

American Standard Version (1901) [74½]

Revised Standard Version (1952) [72]



New American Standard Bible (NASB, 1963) [75½]

New American Standard Bible - updated (NAS95, 1995) [70]

New Revised Standard Version (NRSV, 1989) [69]

English Standard Version (ESV, 2001) [75]

“Also-rans” include: Holman Christian Standard Bible [72], Amplified [68] New International Version [67½], Revised English Bible [64½], New Living Translation [61], Today’s English Version [60½], Jerusalem [59+], Jay Green diaglott [53], New King James Version [52½], Contemporary English Version [51], Living Bible [45], Lamsa [32+].

John 1:1 and 1 Timothy 6:10 (predicate nominative without a definite article should be translated consistently)

Either: In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. John 1:1-2 (KJV)

For the love of money is the root of all evil 1 Timothy 6:10 (KJV) [often appears inconsistent with experience]

Or: In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God; the Word also was a god. The same was in the beginning with God. John 1:1-2 (RVIC)

For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil 1 Timothy 6:10 (ASV, RVIC)