

God Wrote a Book: The Canonization of the Hebrew Scriptures

Opening Discussion

1. How tall are you? How do you know?
2. What is an inch? How is that determined?
3. Why are standards of measurement important, and how do we use them?
4. What standards of measurement should we use to determine which books are God-breathed Scripture?

Well before the first century, the 39 books of the Bible that we call the Old Testament were established as authoritative, God-breathed Scripture.

Review:

1. How did the individual books of the Bible come to be written down?

No prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation. For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

2 Peter 1:20-21

The Verbal Plenary Theory: The Holy Spirit breathed Scripture through human authors chosen by God for that task. Divine inspiration occurred using the writer's personality, writing styles, and experiences. The writers were not merely passive stenographers recording what was dictated to them by God. Exactly how this process occurred is a mystery that God does not explain.

All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness. **2 Timothy 3:16**

2. How were the individual books compiled into the Bible?

God's people did not determine which books would become Scripture, they recognized the books that were already Scripture.

A. The Hebrew Scriptures

- The Old Testament Canon of Scripture was established before the 1st Century: the LXX was translated sometime around 250 BC and following; the prologue to The Wisdom of Sirach (written around 130 BC) refers to the Law and the Prophets that were handed down.

"We have twenty-two books: which contain the records of all the past times: which are justly believed to be divine. And of them five belong to Moses: which contain his laws, and the traditions of the origin of mankind, till his death. But as to the time from the death of Moses, till the reign of Artaxerxes, King of Persia, who reigned after Xerxes, the Prophets, who were after Moses, wrote down what was done in their times, in thirteen books. The remaining four books contain hymns to God; and precepts for the conduct of human life. 'Tis true, our history hath been written since Artaxerxes very particularly; but hath not been esteemed of the like authority with the former by our forefathers; because there hath not been an exact succession of Prophets since that time. And how firmly we have given credit to these books of our own nation, is evident by what we do. For during so many ages as have already passed, no one has been so bold, as either to add any thing to them; to take any thing from them; or to make any change in them. But it is become natural to all Jews, immediately, and from their very birth, to esteem these books to contain divine doctrines; and to persist in them: and, if occasion be, willingly to die for them." **Josephus, Against Arion, 8**

- The Jewish council of Jamnia met in 90 AD and affirmed the existing books as Scripture.
- By the time of Jesus, the Old Testament as we know it was considered Scripture:

He said to them, “O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?” And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself. **Luke 24:25-27**

He said to them, “These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.” Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures. **Luke 24:44-45**

This was to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet: “I will open my mouth in parables; I will utter what has been hidden since the foundation of the world.” **Matthew 13:35, quoting Asaph from Psalm 78:2**

Do you not know what the Scripture says of Elijah, how he appeals to God against Israel? “Lord, they have killed your prophets, they have demolished your altars, and I alone am left, and they seek my life.” **Romans 11:2-3 citing 1 Kings 19:10, 14**

For it is written, “He catches the wise in their craftiness,” **1 Corinthians 3:19 citing Job 5:13**

39, 24, or 22? Why are there different numbers of books in the Old Testament?

	New Testament Labels	The 22 Books of Josephus	Modern Old Testaments
The Law or Moses	Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy (5)	Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy (5)	Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy (5)
The Prophets	Joshua, Judges, Samuel, Kings, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, The book of Twelve (8)	Joshua, Judges/Ruth, Samuel, Kings, Isaiah, Jeremiah/Lamentations, Ezekiel, The book of Twelve (8)	Joshua, Judges, 1 st Samuel, 2 nd Samuel, 1 st Kings, 2 nd Kings, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi (21)
The Writings	Psalms, Proverbs, Job, Song of Solomon, Ruth, Lamentations, Esther, Ecclesiastes, Daniel, Ezra/Nehemiah, Chronicles (11)	Psalms, Proverbs, Job, Song of Solomon, Esther, Ecclesiastes, Daniel, Ezra/Nehemiah, Chronicles (9)	Psalms, Proverbs, Job, Song of Solomon, Esther, Ecclesiastes, Daniel, Ezra/Nehemiah, Chronicles (9)

B. The Greek Scriptures: Next Session