

Which Books Belong in the Bible?

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Which OT books are Scripture?

- Christians recognized all 39 books of the Hebrew Bible as God-breathed Scripture.
- The Hebrew Bible never included the Apocrypha (some writings after Malachi and before New Testament times).
- Apocryphal books were included in the Septuagint (Greek translation of OT).
- Early Christians encouraged reading Apocrypha but most did not recognize those books as God-breathed Scripture.

Jesus confirmed OT books

- “The Scriptures ... bear witness about me.
(John 5:39)
- “Scripture cannot be broken.” (John 10:35)
- “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)
- ...appearing to them during forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God. (Acts 1:3)

Jesus promised NT books through Spirit-guided apostles

- “All this I have spoken while still with you. But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you. (John 14:25-26)
- “I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear. But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth.” (John 16:12-13)

Which NT books are Scripture?

Three main questions:

- ✓ Does it come from eyewitness apostle?
- ✓ Is it recognized and used in all churches?
- ✓ Is its content fully consistent with other books that are undoubtedly God's Word?

The four gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, John), Acts, and Paul's letters were treated as revelation of Jesus right away. They were read in worship and quoted by Christian authors as far back as we can go.

Which NT books are Scripture?

- A few books were used as Scripture by most but not all churches at first. Eventually these were recognized by all: Hebrews, James, 2 Peter, 2 & 3 John, Revelation
- A few books were used as Scripture by some but not by most. Eventually these were seen as helpful but not God-breathed: Shepherd of Hermas, Epistle of Barnabas, 1 & 2 Clement, Didache (Teaching), Gospel to the Hebrews

Early books not in Scripture

- **Sound teaching:** Epistle of Diognetus
- **Pious concoctions:** infancy gospels
- **Poisonous counterfeits:** Gospel of Mary Magdalene, Gospel of Judas
- **Heretical editors:** cut-and-paste selections of biblical material, omitting what editor disliked and adding his own heresies: Gospel of Thomas, Gospel of the Lord

Eyewitnesses

- **Matthew** was one of Jesus' chosen Twelve.
- **Mark** wrote Peter's account of Jesus.
- **Luke:** Many have undertaken to draw up an account of the things that have been fulfilled among us, just as they were handed down to us by those who from the first were eyewitnesses and servants of the word. (Luke 1:1-2)
- **John:** ...the disciple whom Jesus loved... This is the disciple who testifies to these things and who wrote them down. We know that his testimony is true. (John 21:24)

Eyewitnesses

- For we did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. (2 Peter 1:16)
- That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched—this we proclaim concerning the Word of life. (1 John 1:1)

Testimony from the Spirit through eyewitnesses

- Jesus appointed twelve—designating them apostles—that they might be with him and that he might send them out. (Mark 3:14)
- Jesus told apostles: “When the Counselor comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father, he will testify about me. And you also must testify, for you have been with me from the beginning.” (John 15:26-27)



A final eyewitness

“I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting... I have appeared to you to appoint you as a servant and as a witness of what you have seen of me and what I will show you.” (Acts 26:15-16)

A final eyewitness

- Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me. (1 Cor 15:8)
- The gospel that was preached by me is not man's gospel. For I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ... I did not immediately consult with anyone; nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me, but I went away into Arabia. (Galatians 1:11-12,16-17)

...caught up into paradise
—whether in the body or
out of the body I do not
know, God knows— and
heard things that cannot
be told, which man may
not utter. (2 Cor 12:3-4)



Gospel was complete and agreed upon

Fourteen years later, Paul met the Jerusalem apostles “to set before them... the gospel that I proclaim... [they] added nothing to me... when James and Cephas and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given to me, they gave the right hand of fellowship to Barnabas and me.” (Galatians 2:1-9)

Did Paul know that his letters had divine authority?

- Paul's letters often begin with: "Paul, an apostle by the will of God."
- The things I am writing to you are a command of the Lord. (1 Cor 14:37)
- Paul called for public reading of Scripture —including public reading of his letters.

Paul's letters recognized with "other Scriptures"

Our beloved brother Paul also wrote to you according to the wisdom given him, as he does in all his letters when he speaks in them of these matters. There are some things in them [Paul's letters] that are hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do the other Scriptures. (2 Peter 3:15-16)

Paul quoted from Luke's gospel as Scripture

Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in preaching and teaching. For the Scripture says, "You shall not muzzle an ox when it treads out the grain," [Deut 25:4] and, "The laborer deserves his wages." [Luke 10:7]

(1 Timothy 5:17-18)

God-breathed and profitable

¹⁴But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it ¹⁵and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. ¹⁶ All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, ¹⁷that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work. (2 Tim 3:14-17)