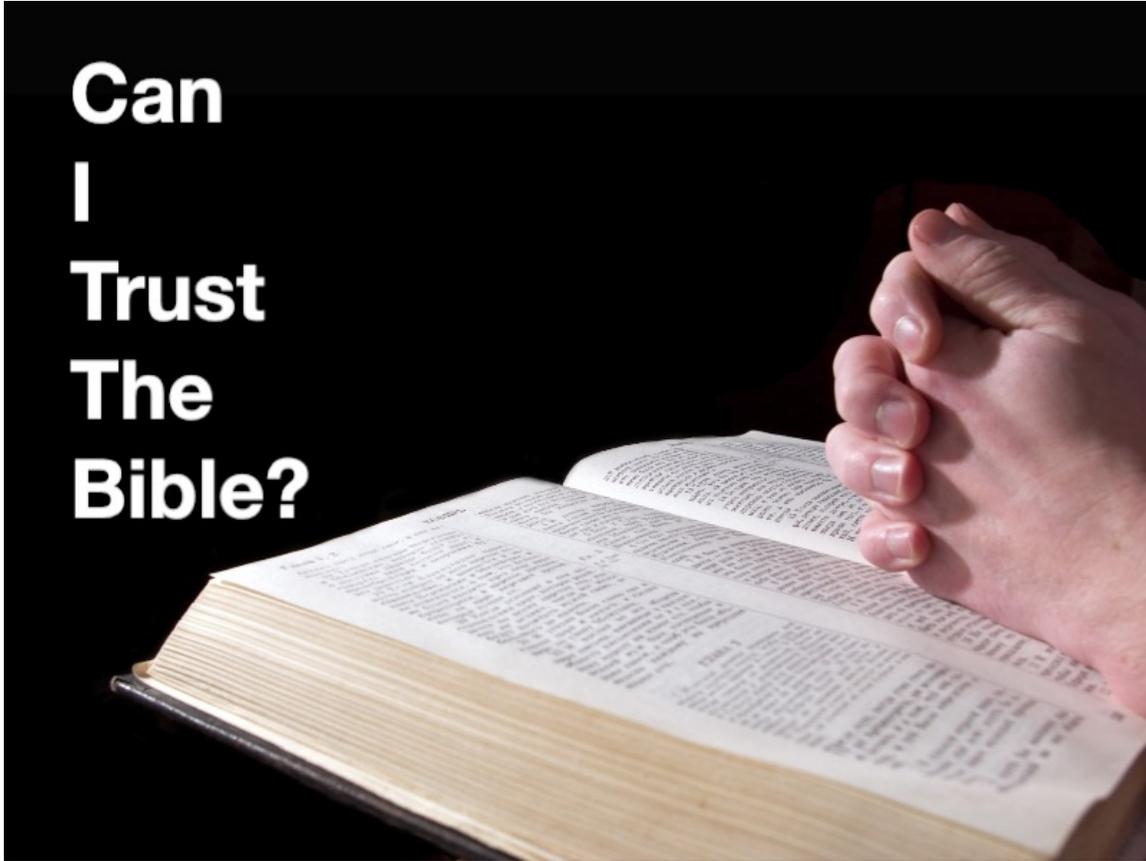


Can I Trust The Bible?



Part 4

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How Many Books In Your Bible?

How many Books do you have in your Bible? 24? 66? 73? 78? Why the difference in the numbers? The Hebrew Bible has 24 Books. The Protestant Bible has 66. The Catholic Bible has 73. The Eastern Orthodox Bible has 78. The Ethiopian Orthodox Bible has 81.

I believe that the Bible I study contains the Word of God. I've seen other Bibles that have more books than mine, but have not been convinced to add them to my Bible study. Many Christians do, so why won't I? I trust God to preserve and present His Word to the world in the exact compilation He planned from the beginning. I trust that even as He carefully inspired the writing of each Book that would become part of His Written Word, God was also involved in the formation and canonization of His Word.

The Canon ("reed, measuring stick" – rule or standard authority) of the Hebrew Bible (Old Testament) was settled soon after Malachi wrote the last prophetic book at the end of the 5th century BC. We know that the **Torah** (Genesis – Deuteronomy) was referenced by early prophets (as early as Joshua) and kings of Israel (as early as Saul and David). As for the writings of Israel's prophets and kings (Joshua – Malachi), the Talmud (ancient rabbinic instructions) states that the **Tanakh** (Canon of the Hebrew Bible) was compiled during the 5th century BC. Some scholars date the final version to the 2nd or 1st centuries BC. Jesus Christ read from the Tanakh and quoted

extensively from the three major divisions of the Hebrew Bible (Law, Prophets, Writings) early in the 1st century AD.

The Greek translation of the Old Testament (**Septuagint** – LXX) was compiled during the 3rd and 2nd centuries BC in Alexandria, Egypt. Philo of Alexandria, born in 20 BC, quoted from the Septuagint. The 1st century AD historian Josephus also quoted from the Septuagint. The Septuagint has been proven through the centuries to be a reliable translation from the Hebrew.

The **Masoretic Text** is a Hebrew version of the Old Testament copied by the Masoretes during the 7th, 8th, 9th, 10th, and 11th centuries AD. The Masoretes were Jewish scribes and scholars who painstakingly made sure that the Hebrew Bible was accurately preserved. While many scholars doubted and even mocked the Masoretic Text as being unreliable to the original Hebrew text, the discovery of the **Dead Sea Scrolls** in 1947 changed many minds about the accuracy of the Masoretic Text. More than 970 texts from the Hebrew Bible were discovered and include some of the oldest surviving copies of the Tanakh. The Dead Sea Scrolls contain manuscripts dating from the middle of the 2nd century BC to the time of the Roman destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD. Comparisons of the Masoretic Text to those in the Dead Sea Scrolls have confirmed that the Masoretes were excellent copyists.

“Then He said to them, ‘These are the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning Me.’ And He opened their understanding, that they might comprehend the Scriptures.”

Luke 24:44-45

Jesus made it clear from one of the last things He told His disciples before He ascended to Heaven that Hebrew Scripture contained the Law of Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalms. That’s the 24 Books of the Hebrew Bible and the 39 Books of the Protestant Old Testament (e.g. Book of Samuel is one Book in the Hebrew Bible, but two Books in the Protestant Old Testament; Kings is one Book in Hebrew Bible, but two Books in Protestant Old Testament, etc).

Our Lord gave no authority to any other writings as Holy Scripture than those in the Masoretic Text, but there are other “books” included in some copies of Bibles. The Catholic Bible also includes the books of Tobit, Judith, 1 Maccabees, 2 Maccabees, Wisdom of Solomon, Sirach, Baruch, Susanna, and Bel and the Dragon. The Greek Orthodox Bible includes those books plus five others including 3 Maccabees, 4 Maccabees, Prayer of Manasseh, and Letter of Jeremiah. Some Ethiopian Orthodox Churches also include 3 Baruch, 4 Baruch, 1 Enoch, Jubilees, 1 Meqabyan, 2 Meqabyan, and 3 Meqabyan in their canon of Scripture. The Syrian Orthodox Church also accepts 2 Baruch and Psalms 152-155 as Scripture. None of them are confirmed in Scripture to be Scripture, so what should

Christians do with them? Do we read them? Study them? Obey them? We'll look at that important question in the next part of our study.

What About The Deuterocanonical Books?

When Satan tested Jesus in the desert by saying, “If You are the Son of God, command this stone to become bread,” Jesus responded to him by saying, “It is written, ‘*Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God.*’” Think about that – the Son of God told the devil that people should live by every Word of God. So, since God has spoken and said every Word from Him should be our spiritual food, we need to make sure we have every Word of God available to us to read, study, memorize, and meditate. That is my primary motivation to knowing which Bible is the complete, finished Word of God.

In our last study, we saw that Jesus gave no authority to any other writings as Holy Scripture than those in the Masoretic Text. That includes the Law, the Prophets, and the Psalms or Writings. Even though other writings were available to quote from during the time Jesus ministered on earth, He did not quote from those writings. Some of them include the books of Tobit, Judith, 1 Maccabees, 2 Maccabees, 1 Esdras, 2 Esdras, Wisdom of Solomon, Sirach, Baruch, Epistle of Jeremiah, Susanna, Baruch, Prayer of Azariah (and the Three Young Men), Prayer of Manasseh, and Bel and the Dragon. These books were part of the Old Testament Apocrypha included in the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible. The question is whether any of the books should be included in the Biblical Canon as the actual Word of God – which Jesus said every human should live by.

The “protocanonical” (meaning “belonging to the first canon”) Books of the Old Testament are the ones you will find in the Hebrew Bible (Tanakh). The Hebrew Bible has 24 Books, while most English Bibles divide those into 39 Books. The Hebrew Bible has one Book for the 12 minor prophets, while the English Bible divides it into 12 individual Books (e.g. Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah). The Hebrew Bible has one Book for Samuel, one Book for Kings, one Book for Chronicles, and one Book for Ezra and Nehemiah. English Bibles have 1 and 2 Samuel, 1 and 2 Kings, 1 and 2 Chronicles, Ezra, and Nehemiah as separate Books.

The “deuterocanonical” (meaning “belonging to the second canon”) books of the Old Testament are those not included in the Hebrew Bible. The term, deuterocanonical, has been used since the 16th century AD by the Catholic and Eastern Orthodox Churches for those books that had been contested for centuries by Christians. Even though the apocryphal books were included in the original King James Version (1611 AD) of the Bible, those books were dropped from the KJV after 1666 AD. Most Protestant versions of the Bible today do not include the apocryphal books of the Old Testament, but Catholic and Eastern Orthodox versions of the Bible include the deuterocanonical books as part of the canon of Scripture.

So, we’re back to the original question. Should I, should we as Christians, include the deuterocanonical books as the Word of God that believers should use as spiritual food for life? It’s good to remember that when Jesus and His disciples talked about the

Scriptures they were referring to the Old Testament. It wasn't until the second half of the 1st century AD that the Holy Spirit began inspiring the Apostles to write Books of the New Testament. When Peter, James, John, Matthew and Paul quote from Scripture, it is the Books of the Old Testament. That's important to note because we can look to see if they quoted from the deuterocanonical books and referred to them as "Scripture." They did not. While there are some quotes from deuterocanonical books that use similar words to New Testament writings, Jesus and His Apostles did not quote directly from nor mention any of them by name.

One exception that some people will bring up is 1 Enoch. Jude, a half-brother of Jesus and author of a canonical New Testament Book, did not say he was quoting from the book of 1 Enoch, but the quotes are close.

"Now Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied about these men also, saying, 'Behold, the Lord comes with ten thousands of His saints, to execute judgment on all, to convict all who are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have committed in an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him.'" Jude 1:14-15

"And behold! He comes with ten thousand of His holy ones (saints) to execute judgment on all, and to destroy all the ungodly (wicked); and to convict all flesh of all the works of their ungodliness which they have ungodly committed, and of all the hard things which

ungodly sinners have spoken against Him.” 1 Enoch 1:9

My friend and fellow faith defender Joseph Lumpkin published *The First and Second Books of Enoch* in 2009. Here's what he wrote about 1 Enoch:

“Most scholars date the First Book of Enoch to sometime during the second century B.C. We do not know what earlier oral tradition, if any, the book contains. Enoch was considered inspired and authentic by certain Jewish sects of the first century B.C. and remained popular for at least five hundred years. The earliest Ethiopian text was apparently derived from a Greek manuscript of the Book of Enoch, which itself was a copy of an earlier text. The original was apparently written in the Semitic language, now thought to be Aramaic. (*The First and Second Books of Enoch*, pg. 11, Fifth Estate Publishing, 2009)

One of the questions one might ask about 1 and 2 Enoch is who wrote it. Fragments of Enoch manuscripts found among the Dead Sea Scrolls are dated to the 2nd century BC, but no name is attached to it as the human author. According to Genesis 5, Enoch walked with God and “he was not, for God took him.” Genesis 5:22 says that Enoch walked with God 300 years after he became the father of Methuselah. Enoch had a special closeness with God during those years and God blessed Enoch by taking him to Heaven early in his life. Enoch did not have to suffer old age, disease, or death.

Enoch was for real. God revealed to Moses the Book of Genesis and in that Book Enoch is highlighted as the 7th from Adam in the lineage of Seth. The Gospel of Luke mentions Enoch in the human lineage of Jesus (Luke 3:37). The Book of Hebrews says this about Enoch: “By faith Enoch was taken away so that he did not see death, *“and was not found, because God had taken him”*; for before he was taken he had this testimony, that he pleased God.” (Hebrews 11:5) No question about it, Enoch was for real.

The fact that Jude, being inspired by the Holy Spirit to write his letter, mentions the prophesy of Enoch demonstrates that Enoch said it because Jude presents it as a fact. It may be that Methuselah passed along the prophesy to his son Lamech and grandson Noah. Noah may have passed Enoch’s prophesy along to his children and grandchildren who passed it along to their children and grandchildren until it was finally written for people outside their families to read. Jude gave the prophesy credibility when he included it in his Letter in the context of past and future apostates. However, that does not mean the “Book of Enoch” is Scripture because an author of Scripture quoted from it.

Historically speaking, the Church has been divided about the issue of deuterocanonical books for centuries – long before the Protestant Reformation. However, the term “deuterocanonical” is relatively new (16th Century AD). Sixtus of Siena was a Jew who converted to Catholicism and used the word to describe writings the Catholic

Church considered canonical, but were not in the Hebrew Bible. The writings included:

- Tobit
- Judith
- Wisdom of Solomon
- Ecclesiasticus
- Baruch (including Letter of Jeremiah)
- 1 Maccabees
- 2 Maccabees
- Additions to Daniel (Prayer of Azariah and Song of the Three Holy Children, Bel and the Dragon, Susanna)
- Additions to Esther

The Eastern Orthodox Church includes these deuterocanonical books, plus 1 Esdras, 3 Maccabees, and Psalm 151. The Ethiopian Orthodox Church also adds 1 Enoch, the Book of Jubilees, and 1, 2 and 3 Maccabees to its deuterocanonical books.

People who identify themselves as Christians make up about one-third of the world's population (more than two billion). They are members of about 38,000 different denominational groups. That's a lot of divergence in a general belief in Jesus Christ as God, Lord and Savior. How many of those people believe that deuterocanonical books are God's Word? More than 1.3 billion. That means more than half of all people who call themselves Christians accept deuterocanonical books as Scripture – the Word of God – inspired by

the Holy Spirit. With that in mind, let's look at the deuterocanonical books and see why we should or should not accept them as God's Word.

First, a little history about how the Church has dealt with deuterocanonical books. As we've already seen in previous studies, Jesus and His Apostles did not quote from deuterocanonical books or call them "scripture." In 2 Timothy, the Apostle Paul mentioned Jannes and Jambres resisting Moses, but did not quote it as Scripture or as coming from the Book of Jannes and Jambre. Jude, the half brother of Jesus, mentioned Enoch's prophecy, but didn't quote it as Scripture or mention the Book of Enoch. We must look to those Christians who came after the Apostles to see what the early Church believed about deuterocanonical books.

1st and 2nd century Christians were familiar with the many apocryphal books available at the time. In addition to the ones already mentioned, here are some of the other books early believers considered:

1 Enoch, 2 Enoch, 3 Enoch, 2 Baruch, 3 Baruch, 4 Baruch, 3 Esdras, 4 Esdras, 5 Ezra, 6 Ezra, 3 Maccabees, 4 Maccabees, 5 Maccabees, 6 Maccabees, 7 Maccabees, 8 Maccabees, Adam Octipartite, Adjuration of Elijah, Apocalypse of Abraham, Apocalypse of Adam, Apocalypse of Elijah, Apocalypse of Ezekiel, Apocalypse of Sedrach, Apocalypse of the Seven

Heavens, Apocalypse of Zephaniah, Apocryphon of Ezekiel, Apocryphon of Jacob and Joseph, Apocryphon of Melchizedek, Apocryphon of the Ten Tribes, Ascension of Moses, Assumption of Moses, Book of Assaf, Book of Noah, Cave of Treasures, Coptic Apocryphon of Jeremiah, Eldad and Modad, Enochic Book of Giants, Epistle of Rehoboam, Greek Apocalypse of Daniel, Greek Apocalypse of Ezra, History of Joseph, History of the Rechabites, Jannes and Jambres, Joseph and Aseneth, Jubilees, Ladder of Jacob, Letter of Aristeas, Life of Adam and Eve, Lives of the Prophets, Manual of Discipline, Martyrdom and Ascension of Isaiah, Odes of Solomon, Prayer of Jacob, Prayer of Joseph, Psalms of Solomon, Questions of Ezra, Revelation of Ezra, Sibylline Oracles, Signs of the Judgement, Sword of Moses, Testament of Abraham, Testament of Adam, Testament of Isaac, Testament of Jacob, Testament of Job, Testament of Moses, Testament of Solomon, Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs, Treatise of Shem, Vision of Ezra, Visions of Heaven and Hell, and Words of Gad the Seer.

It's important to note that just because an early Christian writer quoted from an apocryphal book does not mean they believed it was Holy Scripture – and even if they did, that doesn't make a book "Scripture." Only the direct "inspiration" of the Holy Spirit makes any writing Scripture. That's what we're considering. However, it is helpful to know what early Christian evangelists, apologists, pastors, and teachers thought about any writing purported to be "Scripture."

Clement of Rome quoted some words from the Book of Wisdom and Judith, but used the quotes as examples to support a point, not as Scripture. The same with Polycarp and Irenaeus. Polycarp quoted from Tobit and Irenaeus from Bel and the Dragon, Susanna, and Baruch as examples to support theological arguments. Christians have quoted from other people's writings for centuries without meaning for them to be taken as Holy Scripture.

The methodology for studying the writings of early Christians leaders is often based on the Council of Nicaea (325 AD). The Roman Emperor Constantine 1 convened the council of Christian bishops in Nicaea in Bithynia. Constantine was hoping to find consensus among the Church leaders on important aspects of belief and practice.

Christian leaders are often known as Ante-Nicene (before Nicaea), Nicene (contemporary with Nicaea), or Post-Nicene (after Nicaea).

Those leaders who followed closely behind the Apostles (Ante-Nicene) included Clement, Polycarp, Ignatius, Irenaeus, Justin Martyr, Papias, and Clement of Rome.

Church leaders of the 2nd century AD included Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian, Theophilus of Antioch, Tatian, Hermas, and Athenagoras of Athens.

Church leaders of the 3rd century AD included Origen, Cyprian of Carthage, Hippolytus of Rome, Sextus Julius Africanus, Caius, Commodian, Gregory Thaumaturgus, Novatian, Dionysius, and Lactantius.

Church leaders contemporary with the Nicene Council included Eusebius of Caesarea, Athanasius of Alexandria, Alexander of Alexandria, Eustathius of Antioch, Macarius of Jerusalem, Paul of Neocaesarea, Hilary of Poitiers, Aphrahat, Eusebius of Nicomedia, Nicholas of Myra, Jacob of Nisibis, Achilleius of Larissa, and Leontius of Caesarea.

Church leaders after the Nicene Council (Post-Nicene) included Augustine of Hippo, Jerome, Cyril of Jerusalem, Gregory of Nazianzus, Basil of Caesarea, Aurelius Ambrosius, Sulpicius Severus, John Chrysostom, Vincent of Lérins, and John Cassian.

Where To Begin?

I did not have a Bible when I was saved, so I got a copy and started reading. It was a King James Version. I was introduced to the Word of God having 66 individual Books: 39 in the Old Testament and 27 in the New Testament. Every Christian I knew had Bibles with 66 Books. It was later that I learned some Bible versions had more than 66 books. That was 45 years ago and I'm still using a Bible with 66 Books. Have I been missing out on hearing from God all this time by not having the deuterocanonical books as part of my study and obedience?

We are now looking at how the early Church used the apocryphal books written between 200 BC and 70 AD. In the last part of our study, we looked at Church leaders during the first 350 years. They are often divided into three groups – Ante-Nicene, Nicene, and Post-Nicene – based on the Council of Nicaea, which met in Nicaea, Bithynia in 325 AD. Roman Emperor Constantine 1 convened the Council 12 years after Rome instituted religious tolerance throughout the Empire, ending the severe Roman persecution of Christians.

I had access to great libraries of Christian books during my first year as a Christian. I was introduced to some of the best writings of pastors, theologians and apologists from past centuries and read many creeds and faith statements. The earliest “creed” of the Church

is thought by many to be what Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 15:3-5:

“For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures, and that He was seen by Cephas, then by the twelve.”

As you can see, it was a simple creed addressing the doctrines of Christology and Soteriology. Later creeds of the Church addressed those and other doctrines. In our last study, we shared about the first Council of Nicaea in 325 AD. The purpose of the Nicene Council was to bring consensus about doctrine and practice to the Church. The Council of more than 300 bishops agreed upon a statement now known as the Nicene Creed:

“We believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of all things visible and invisible. And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, begotten of the Father, Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father; by whom all things were made; who for us men, and for our salvation, came down and was incarnate and was made man; he suffered, and the third day he rose again, ascended into heaven; from thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead. And in the Holy Ghost.” (Original Nicene Creed, AD 325)

What we don't find in this particular creed – though extremely important because of vital issues facing the Church at that time – is an answer to our question about which, if any, apocryphal books are Scripture. We will need to look to the history of the early Church to see what they believed about the inspired Word of God.

One of the earliest canons of Scripture was developed by Marcion of Sinope during the early part of the 2nd century AD. It included 10 Letters of Paul (excluding the Pastoral Epistles and adding epistles to the Alexandrians and the Laodiceans) and Marcion's own version of Luke's Gospel. Marcion rejected the entire Old Testament and writings of apostles other than Paul and preached a theology that disturbed many Christians of his time (a type of gnosticism), but his effort to determine the canon of Scripture seems to have led other Church leaders to develop a full canon of Scripture in response to his.

The Pauline Epistles and other Apostolic writings were circulating throughout the Church during the second half of the 1st century AD. Even though Marcion accepted only Luke's Gospel and 10 of Paul's Letters as Scripture, most Church leaders regarded the four Gospel accounts, the Book of Acts, and the Writings of Christ's Apostles as Scripture.

The Muratorian fragment (dating to the end of the 2nd century AD) demonstrates that the Church was using the 27 Books of the New Testament by that time, even though some of what Christians have in

their Bibles today was disputed for some time. Those Books were called *antilegomena*, which is Greek for written texts where there were questions of authenticity or value. *Homologoumena* were accepted texts. *Notha* were rejected texts. We'll look at those texts in more depth when we reach our study about how the Church canonized the New Testament.

The Chester Beatty Papyri, believed to date from the 3rd century AD (Ante-Nicene), contains 11 Greek manuscripts: portions of several Old Testament Books, 3 New Testament Books, and 1 with the Book of Enoch and a Christian homily. The Old Testament manuscripts are codices (texts in book form) and contained portions of Genesis, Numbers, Deuteronomy, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, Ecclesiastes, and Esther.

The Bryennios List, written in Koine Greek, is dated to the beginning of the 2nd century AD and includes Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Jesus Nave (Book of Joshua), Deuteronomy, Numbers, Judges, Ruth, Samuel and Kings, Chronicles, Esdras (Greek version of the Book of Ezra-Nehemiah), Esther, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs, Job, Minor Prophets, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel.

Bishop Melito of Sardis lived during the 2nd century AD and compiled an early Christian canon of the Old Testament after traveling to Palestine. Those Books included - Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, Ruth, Kings, Chronicles,

Psalms of David, Proverbs of Solomon (also called the Book of Wisdom), Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs, Job, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Daniel, Ezekiel, Minor Prophets (in one Book), and Esdras (Ezra-Nehemiah).

Origen of Alexandria was a Christian scholar and theologian of the early 3rd century AD (Ante-Nicene). He viewed the 22 Books of the Old Testament as Scripture. Bishop Eusebius of Caesarea was a leading Christian scholar and historian at the time of the Council of Nicaea (Nicene) and believed in the authenticity of 22 Books as making up the Old Testament. So did Jerome of Stridon who was a leading Christian scholar of the late 4th century AD (Post-Nicene). Jerome translated the Bible from Hebrew and Greek into Latin (Vulgate) and wanted to limit the Old Testament to the Hebrew 22. However, Bishop Damasus of Rome wanted all of the traditionally-used books, so the Vulgate has 46.

Other 4th century AD Christian leaders who cited the 22 Book Old Testament Canon included Hilary of Poitiers, Cyril of Jerusalem, Gregory of Nazianzus, and Athanasius. The Council of Laodicea in 364 AD restricted the readings in church meetings to only Books of the Old and New Testaments. The Council's canon of the Old Testament included – Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, Ruth, Esther, Kings, Chronicles, Esdras (Ezra-Nehemiah), Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs, The Twelve Prophets, Isaiah, Jeremiah-Baruch-Lamentations

and the Epistle, Ezekiel, and Daniel.

The views of Jerome and others of the 4th century AD were not held by all Christian leaders of that time. The Synod of Hippo (North Africa) in 393 AD approved an Old Testament canon that included deuterocanonical books. One of the leaders of that Synod was Augustine of Hippo. Augustine was a teacher of rhetoric in the late part of the 4th century AD. He taught at Thagaste, Carthage, Rome, and Milan. It was in Milan in 386 AD that Augustine converted to Christianity and was baptized by Bishop Ambrose. Augustine returned to Africa and was ordained to the ministry in 391 AD and became Bishop of Hippo in 395 AD. He served there until 430 AD. Augustine believed that the deuterocanonical books of the Greek Bible were Scripture and played a major role in the canonizing of the Septuagint.

The Synod of Hippo in 393 AD issued a canon of the Bible that included: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1-4 Kings, 1-2 Chronicles, Job, Tobias, Judith, 1-2 Maccabees, 1-2 Esdras, Psalms, Proverbs, Song of Solomon, Ecclesiastes, Wisdom, Sirach, Twelve Minor Prophets, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Daniel, and Ezekiel.

The Council of Carthage in 397 AD issued a canon of the Bible that included: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, Joshua son of Nun, Judges, Ruth, 4 books of Kingdoms, 2 books of Chronicles, Job, the Davidic Psalter, 5 books of Solomon, 12 books

of Prophets, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Daniel, Ezekiel, Tobias, Judith, Esther, 2 books of Ezra, and 2 books of Maccabees.

As you can see from this brief history of how the early Church viewed the Old Testament Canon, Christian leaders were concerned that all of God's Word was included in the life of the Church and believers. The disagreements about which Books were Scripture and which were not continued for centuries, leading to the many versions of the Bible used today by Christians around the world.

In the next part of our study, we will look at individual deuterocanonical books to determine what God wants us to do with them. This is not a question of which denominational affiliation you find yourself or how you were raised. The more important issue is what God wants us to do with them.

Other Books?

Christians are divided about whether the Apocrypha should be included in the Old Testament Canon. God is not divided about it. He knows which Books are His Word and which are not. Since Jesus said that His people are to live “by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God” (Matthew 4:4), we need to know if the Apocrypha is God’s Word.

First, let’s look at the fact that many legitimate books mentioned in the Bible are not addressed as God’s Word. Copies of these books have not been found yet, but they would be of great historical significance if they were discovered and authenticated. Some may have been included in Old Testament Books like Kings and Chronicles, though we don’t have proof of that.

The Book of Jasher – “So the sun stood still, And the moon stopped, Till the people had revenge Upon their enemies. *Is* this not written in the Book of Jasher? So the sun stood still in the midst of heaven, and did not hasten to go *down* for about a whole day.” Joshua 10:13 “Then David lamented with this lamentation over Saul and over Jonathan his son, and he told *them* to teach the children of Judah *the Song of the Bow*; indeed *it is* written in the Book of Jasher.” 2 Samuel 1:18

The Book of the Wars of the Lord – “Therefore it is said in the Book of the Wars of the Lord: ‘Waheb in Suphah, The brooks of the Arnon, And the slope of the brooks That reaches to the dwelling of Ar, And lies on the border of Moab.’” Numbers 21:14-15

The Annals of Jehu – “Now the rest of the acts of Jehoshaphat, first and last, indeed they *are* written in the book of Jehu the son of Hanani, which *is* mentioned in the book of the kings of Israel.” 2 Chronicles 20:34

The Annals of the Book of the Kings – “Now *concerning* his sons, and the many oracles about him, and the repairing of the house of God, indeed they *are* written in the annals of the book of the kings. Then Amaziah his son reigned in his place.” 2 Chronicles 24:27

The Book of the Records of the Chronicles – “And when an inquiry was made into the matter, it was confirmed, and both were hanged on a gallows; and it was written in the book of the chronicles in the presence of the king ... That night the king could not sleep. So one was commanded to bring the book of the records of the chronicles; and they were read before the king.” Esther 2:23; 6:1

The Annals of the Prophet Iddo – “Now the rest of the acts of Abijah, his ways, and his sayings *are* written in the annals of the prophet Iddo.” 2 Chronicles 13:22

The Acts of Solomon – “Now the rest of the acts of Solomon, all that he did, and his wisdom, *are* they not written in the book of the acts of Solomon?” 1 Kings 11:41

The Sayings of Hozai – “Also his prayer and *how God* received his entreaty, and all his sin and trespass, and the sites where he built high places and set up wooden images and carved images, before he was humbled, indeed they *are* written among the sayings of Hozai.” 2 Chronicles 33:19

The Chronicles of King David – “Joab the son of Zeruah began a census, but he did not finish, for wrath came upon Israel because of this census; nor was the number recorded in the account of the chronicles of King David.” 1 Chronicles 27:24

The Book of Samuel the Seer, The Book of Nathan the Prophet, The Book of Gad the Seer – “Now the acts of King David, first and last, indeed they *are* written in the book of Samuel the seer, in the book of Nathan the prophet, and in the book of Gad the seer.” 1 Chronicles 29:29

The Book of Nathan the Prophet, The Prophecy of Ahijah the Shilonite, The Visions of Iddo the Seer – “Now the rest of the acts of Solomon, first and last, *are* they not written in the book of Nathan the prophet, in the prophecy of Ahijah the Shilonite, and in the visions of Iddo the seer concerning Jeroboam the son of Nebat?” 2 Chronicles 9:29

Now let's look at those books included in many Bibles as the Word of God that have been in dispute for hundreds of years to see whether they are His Word. We'll begin with **1 Esdras**, which is included in the Septuagint. 1 Esdras is regarded as part of the canon of Scripture by many churches in the East and part of the Apocrypha by many churches in the West. What should we do with it?

1 Esdras- The material included in 1 Esdras parallels the last chapters of 2 Chronicles and the Books of Ezra and Nehemiah. It begins with Josiah – “And Josias held the feast of the passover in Jerusalem unto his Lord, and offered the passover the fourteenth day of the first month ...” (1 Esdras 1:1) and ends with Ezra reading the Law to Israel – “ Then took Esdras the book of the law before the multitude: for he sat honourably in the first place in the sight of them all. And when he opened the law, they stood all straight up. So Esdras blessed the Lord God most High, the God of hosts, Almighty.” (1 Esdras 9:45-46)

One addition in 1 Esdras not found in Ezra is 1 Esdras 3:1 – 5:3, also known as The Three Guardsmen Story. It details a competition among three of King Darius' guards about what was strongest. The winner of the contest asked Darius to remember his vow to rebuild Jerusalem and the Temple. According to 1 Esdras 4:47, “Then Darius the king stood up, and kissed him, and wrote letters for him unto all the treasurers and lieutenants and captains and governors, that they should safely convey on their way both him, and all those that go up

with him to build Jerusalem.”

A problem with that, in addition to the Book of Ezra saying nothing about the guardsmen’s competition, is that according to the Book of Ezra, King Darius issued his decree because of a letter sent to him by Tattenai who was a Persian governor in charge of Samaria and some areas of Judah. Zerubbabel and Jeshua were rebuilding the Temple in Jerusalem and Tattenai and his companions asked who had commanded them to build the Temple and finish the wall. This led to Tattenai writing a letter to King Darius asking him to see if in fact Persian King Cyrus had issued a decree to build the Temple in Jerusalem (Ezra 5). King Darius commanded a search of the royal archives and the decree of King Cyrus was found. That led King Darius to write back to Tattenai with this decree: “Now *therefore*, Tattenai, governor of *the region* beyond the River, and Shethar-Boznai, and your companions the Persians who *are* beyond the River, keep yourselves far from there. Let the work of this house of God alone; let the governor of the Jews and the elders of the Jews build this house of God on its site.” (Ezra 6:6-7) So, it was writings between Governor Tattenai and King Darius that led to the Darius decree, not because a guard requested it of Darius following a competition with other guardsmen.

Those discrepancies are a big concern because they disagree with the clear Word of God. I cannot accept 1 Esdras as Inspired by the Holy Spirit.

What About 2 Esdras?

In our last study, we saw reasons why 1 Esdras is not the Word of God. So, what about the rest of the Esdras writings? Are they the Word of God? Let's see what we can learn and what we should believe about them.

2 Esdras is sometimes called the Apocalyptic Esdras and is made up of different writings. 2 Esdras 1 – 2 is known as 5 Esdras and deals with God's displeasure with the sins of Israel, His rejection of Israel, and His turning to save the Gentile nations and give them His Name.

“Go thy way, and shew my people their sinful deeds, and their children their wickedness which they have done against me; that they may tell their children's children: Because the sins of their fathers are increased in them: for they have forgotten me, and have offered unto strange gods.” 2 Esdras 1:5-6

“What shall I do unto thee, O Jacob? thou, Juda, wouldest not obey me: I will turn me to other nations, and unto those will I give my name, that they may keep my statutes. Seeing ye have forsaken me, I will forsake you also; when ye desire me to be gracious unto you, I shall have no mercy upon you.” 2 Esdras 1:24-25

2 Esdras 2 prophesies the coming of a Savior, the Son of God, who will save the nations and establish a new people of God.

“And therefore I say unto you, O ye heathen, that hear and understand, look for your Shepherd, he shall give you everlasting rest; for he is nigh at hand, that shall come in the end of the world. Be ready to the reward of the kingdom, for the everlasting light shall shine upon you for evermore. Flee the shadow of this world, receive the joyfulness of your glory: I testify my Saviour openly. O receive the gift that is given you, and be glad, giving thanks unto him that hath led you to the heavenly kingdom. Arise up and stand, behold the number of those that be sealed in the feast of the Lord; Which are departed from the shadow of the world, and have received glorious garments of the Lord. Take thy number, O Sion, and shut up those of thine that are clothed in white, which have fulfilled the law of the Lord. The number of thy children, whom thou longedst for, is fulfilled: beseech the power of the Lord, that thy people, which have been called from the beginning, may be hallowed. I Esdras saw upon the mount Sion a great people, whom I could not number, and they all praised the Lord with songs. And in the midst of them there was a young man of a high stature, taller than all the rest, and upon every one of their heads he set crowns, and was more exalted; which I marvelled at greatly. So I asked the angel, and said, Sir, what are these? He answered and said unto me, These be they that have put off the mortal clothing, and put on the immortal, and have confessed the name of God: now are they crowned, and receive palms. Then said

I unto the angel, What young person is it that crowneth them, and giveth them palms in their hands? So he answered and said unto me, It is the Son of God, whom they have confessed in the world. Then began I greatly to commend them that stood so stiffly for the name of the Lord. Then the angel said unto me, Go thy way, and tell my people what manner of things, and how great wonders of the Lord thy God, thou hast seen.” 2 Esdras 2:34-48

The writing of 2 Esdras is obviously the work of someone after the time of the writings of the Apostles. As Paul wrote in his Letter to the Ephesians, the Dispensation of the Grace of God was a mystery God revealed to Paul, “which in other ages was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to His holy apostles and prophets: that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ through the gospel, of which I became a minister according to the gift of the grace of God given to me by the effective working of His power.” (Ephesians 3:5-7) God did not reveal the Gentile Church to Ezra or any other prophet before the 1st century AD.

The writing of 2 Esdras is not even remotely that of Ezra the priest and scribe. Ezra and Nehemiah were focused on one thing, restoring Israel as God’s chosen people and leading them to be obedient to God. There is no indication in the Books of Ezra or Nehemiah that God rejected Israel in favor of people from Gentile nations before the middle of the 1st century AD.

2 Esdras 3-14 is also known as 4 Esdras and appears to be the work of a Jewish writer toward the latter part of the 1st century AD. Here's why I believe that. The historical setting of 2 Esdras 3 is almost 30 years after Jerusalem fell to the Babylonian Army in the early part of the 6th century BC.

“In the thirtieth year after the ruin of the city I was in Babylon, and lay troubled upon my bed, and my thoughts came up over my heart: For I saw the desolation of Sion, and the wealth of them that dwelt at Babylon.” 2 Esdras 3:1-2

The problem with that is Ezra was not alive at that time. Jerusalem fell to Babylonian King Nebuchadnezzar in 586 BC. Ezra was born about 100 years later and was involved with the Persian King Artaxerxes. The king sent Ezra with a large group of Israelites from Babylon to Jerusalem in 458 BC (“in the seventh year of the king” – Ezra 7:8) to reestablish obedience to the Law of God (Ezra 7:10). The Esdras of 2 Esdras 3 cannot be the same person as Ezra of the Old Testament. 4 Esdras is disqualified from its first verse.

2 Esdras 3-14 contains nothing that is similar to the Book of Ezra. It introduces the reader to an angel of God named Uriel who is sent by God to Esdras to answer his questions. The only angels mentioned by name in the Hebrew and Christian Bible are Gabriel and Michael. We will learn the names of several additional angels in the Apocrypha, but it's important to note that only Gabriel and Michael are mentioned in the Old and New Testaments and are consistent in

their types of service to God in both. Stories of angels with names other than Gabriel and Michael are highly suspect.

Esdras has a series of visions that eventually leads him to comfort a woman who suddenly turns into a great city.

“Now therefore keep thy sorrow to thyself, and bear with a good courage that which hath befallen thee. For if thou shalt acknowledge the determination of God to be just, thou shalt both receive thy son in time, and shalt be commended among women. Go thy way then into the city to thine husband. And she said unto me, That till I not do: I will not go into the city, but here will I die. So I proceeded to speak further unto her, and said, Do not so, but be counselled. by me: for how many are the adversities of Sion? be comforted in regard of the sorrow of Jerusalem. For thou seest that our sanctuary is laid waste, our altar broken down, our temple destroyed; Our psaltery is laid on the ground, our song is put to silence, our rejoicing is at an end, the light of our candlestick is put out, the ark of our covenant is spoiled, our holy things are defiled, and the name that is called upon us is almost profaned: our children are put to shame, our priests are burnt, our Levites are gone into captivity, our virgins are defiled, and our wives ravished; our righteous men carried away, our little ones destroyed, our young men are brought in bondage, and our strong men are become weak; And, which is the greatest of all, the seal of Sion hath now lost her honour; for she is delivered into the hands

of them that hate us. And therefore shake off thy great heaviness, and put away the multitude of sorrows, that the Mighty may be merciful unto thee again, and the Highest shall give thee rest and ease from thy labour. And it came to pass while I was talking with her, behold, her face upon a sudden shined exceedingly, and her countenance glistened, so that I was afraid of her, and mused what it might be. And, behold, suddenly she made a great cry very fearful: so that the earth shook at the noise of the woman. And I looked, and, behold, the woman appeared unto me no more, but there was a city builded, and a large place shewed itself from the foundations: then was I afraid, and cried with a loud voice, and said, Where is Uriel the angel, who came unto me at the first? for he hath caused me to fall into many trances, and mine end is turned into corruption, and my prayer to rebuke.” 2 Esdras 10:15-28

This is obviously fictitious as nothing like this exists in the Hebrew Old Testament Book of Ezra. It's believed to be a Jewish writing from the end of the 1st century AD in response to the Roman destruction of Jerusalem. Jews were trying to make sense of the destruction of the Holy City in light of the prophecies of the Old Testament. They believed The Great Revolt (66-73 AD) was divinely inspired, so why did it lead to the destruction of Jerusalem? The Kito's War (115-117 AD) and the Bar Kokhba Revolt (132-135 AD) were Jewish attempts to throw off Roman rule and reestablish Jerusalem as the capitol of Israel, but they also failed. The vision of the eagle and lion in 2 Esdras 11-12 would also support the idea that Rome was in view.

The writing style reminds me of The Revelation of Jesus Christ and makes me wonder if the writer didn't get some of his or her apocalyptic ideas from reading the writings of the Apostle John.

Another issue with 2 Esdras 14 is that Esdras claims God spoke to him from a bush and asked Esdras to restore the Law that was lost.

“And it came to pass upon the third day, I sat under an oak, and, behold, there came a voice out of a bush over against me, and said, Esdras, Esdras. And I said, Here am I, Lord And I stood up upon my feet. Then said he unto me, In the bush I did manifestly reveal myself unto Moses, and talked with him, when my people served in Egypt: And I sent him and led my people out of Egypt, and brought him up to the mount of where I held him by me a long season, And told him many wondrous things, and shewed him the secrets of the times, and the end; and commanded him, saying, These words shalt thou declare, and these shalt thou hide. And now I say unto thee, That thou lay up in thy heart the signs that I have shewed, and the dreams that thou hast seen, and the interpretations which thou hast heard: For thou shalt be taken away from all, and from henceforth thou shalt remain with my Son, and with such as be like thee, until the times be ended.” 2 Esdras 14:1-9

Esdras asked God to send the Holy Spirit to him so he could write “all that hath been done in the world since the beginning” (2 Esdras

14:22). Esdras claims that God answered him by saying, “Go thy way, gather the people together, and say unto them, that they seek thee not for forty days” (2 Esdras 14:23). Here’s what Esdras says happened next.

“Let no man therefore come unto me now, nor seek after me these forty days. So I took the five men, as he commanded me, and we went into the field, and remained there. And the next day, behold, a voice called me, saying, Esdras, open thy mouth, and drink that I give thee to drink. Then opened I my mouth, and, behold, he reached me a full cup, which was full as it were with water, but the colour of it was like fire. And I took it, and drank: and when I had drunk of it, my heart uttered understanding, and wisdom grew in my breast, for my spirit strengthened my memory: And my mouth was opened, and shut no more. The Highest gave understanding unto the five men, and they wrote the wonderful visions of the night that were told, which they knew not: and they sat forty days, and they wrote in the day, and at night they ate bread. As for me. I spake in the day, and I held not my tongue by night. In forty days they wrote two hundred and four books. And it came to pass, when the forty days were filled, that the Highest spake, saying, The first that thou hast written publish openly, that the worthy and unworthy may read it: But keep the seventy last, that thou mayest deliver them only to such as be wise among the people: For in them is the spring of understanding, the fountain of wisdom, and the stream of knowledge. And I did so.” 2 Esdras 14:36-48

Other translations of 2 Esdras have a different count for the number of books – 24 that match the Tanakh and 70 that are the hidden books (Apocrypha).

“So during the forty days ninety-four books were written. And when the forty days were ended, the Most High spoke to me, saying, ‘Make public the twenty-four books that you wrote first and let the worthy and the unworthy read them; but keep the seventy that were written last, in order to give them to the wise among your people. For in them is the spring of understanding, the fountain of wisdom, and the river of knowledge.’ And I did so.” 2 Esdras 14:44-49 (RSV)

This does not correspond with the clear Word of God in Ezra or Nehemiah. The Law of Moses was known by the people of Israel centuries before Ezra was born.

“And when the seventh month had come, and the children of Israel were in the cities, the people gathered together as one man to Jerusalem. Then Jeshua the son of Jozadak and his brethren the priests, and Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel and his brethren, arose and built the altar of the God of Israel, to offer burnt offerings on it, as it is written in the Law of Moses the man of God. Though fear had come upon them because of the people of those countries, they set the altar on its bases; and they offered burnt offerings on it to the Lord, both the

morning and evening burnt offerings.” Ezra 3:1-3

Ezra was a skilled scribe in the “Law of Moses” when he left Babylon for Jerusalem (Ezra 7:6). Ezra had a copy of the Law of Moses when he left Babylon (Ezra 7:14) The idea that God would call Esdras from a bush to rewrite the Law He had given Moses because it was lost is preposterous. That is not supported anywhere in the Law, Prophets or Writings.

2 Esdras 15-16 is also known as 6 Esdras and contains prophecies of doom against God’s enemies: including Egypt, Syria, Babylon, and Asia. Some scholars believe 6 Esdras was the work of a writer in the late 3rd century AD based on the description of the “Arabian dragons” and the “Carmonians.” It should be obvious to students of God’s Word that 2 Esdras is not inspired by the Holy Spirit.

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