

N.T. CANON: WHICH BOOKS ARE SCRIPTURE AND WHY? — INTRO (VIDEO 7:22)**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

1. What are some of the questions you are hoping this course will answer about the New Testament canon?
2. What are some explanations that you have heard about of how the New Testament canon was formalized?
3. Why is it important that God communicates to mankind through the medium of the written word?
4. Read Hebrews 1:1–3. How does the fact that God spoke through his Son relate to the canon of the New Testament?
5. Why is it good that the canon of the New Testament has been closed since the end of the first century?
6. Have you ever encountered someone who believed that new Scripture could be added to the New Testament books? What was their reasoning for believing new Scripture could be added? How would you counter their arguments?
7. Why do some people try to add to Scripture? Why do some people claim that many books were excluded from the N.T. canon that should have been included? Why do some people claim that church councils arbitrarily picked which books they wanted in the N.T. canon?
8. Read 1 Thessalonians 2:13. According to this passage, how did Paul view his message?
9. Read Revelation 1:1–3. What does this passage claim about the testimony of John? What does this passage tell us about what John thought he was writing?
10. Read John 21:24–25. How does this passage relate to the above passage in Revelation 1:1–3?
11. How has the Word of God shaped you and changed your life?
12. What do you most appreciate about the Word of God?

ACTION POINTS:

- This week, read “Ancient Words, Ever True?” by Greg Koukl: <https://www.str.org/w/ancient-words-ever-true->

N.T. CANON: WHICH BOOKS ARE SCRIPTURE AND WHY? — EXPECTATIONS OF THE NEW COVENANT (VIDEO 9:59)

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. The protoevangelium: Read Genesis 3:15.
 - What promises does God make to the serpent and to the woman in this verse?
 - How does this covenant point to Jesus the Messiah?
2. The Noahic Covenant: Read Genesis 8:20–9:17.
 - What promises did God make to Noah, his family, and all people in this covenant?
 - What did God establish as the sign of the covenant?
 - Was this a conditional covenant or an unconditional covenant?
 - How does this covenant point to Jesus the Messiah?
3. The Abrahamic Covenant: Read Genesis 12:1–3 and Genesis 15:4–21.
 - What promises did God make to Abraham?
 - Is the Abrahamic covenant conditional or unconditional?
 - How does this covenant point to Jesus the Messiah?
4. The Mosaic Covenant: Read Exodus 19:1–25, 20:1–17, 23:20–21, and 24:1–7.
 - What promises did God make to Moses and the Israelites in this covenant?
 - Was this covenant conditional or unconditional?
 - How does this covenant point to Jesus the Messiah?
5. The Davidic Covenant: Read 2 Samuel 7:8–29, Psalm 89:4, and 2 Samuel 23:5.
 - What promises did God make to David and his house?
 - How does this covenant with David impact us today?
 - Is the Davidic covenant conditional or unconditional?
 - How does this covenant point to Jesus the Messiah?
6. The New Covenant: Read Jeremiah 31:31–34 and 1 Corinthians 11:24–25.
 - What promises did God make in this New Covenant?
 - Is the New Covenant conditional or unconditional?
 - How does this covenant point to Jesus the Messiah?
7. There are similar patterns seen in the Old Covenant and New Covenant documents. Read Deuteronomy 4:1–2 and Revelation 22:18–19. What do these passages warn against? Why is this warning important?

ACTION POINTS:

- This week, read “How Does the Old Testament Law Apply to Christians Today?” by Greg Koukl:
<https://www.str.org/w/how-does-the-old-testament-law-apply-to-christians-today->

N.T. CANON: WHICH BOOKS ARE SCRIPTURE AND WHY? — WHEN WAS THE N.T. CANON RECOGNIZED? (VIDEO 15:53)

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What passage of Scripture from the video was most convincing to you with regard to the idea that the New Testament authors were aware they were writing Scripture? Why? (1 Cor. 14:37–38; 2 Pet. 3:1–2, 3:15–16; 1 Tim. 5:17–18)
2. Read 1 Thessalonians 2:13. How does this passage show that Paul believed his teachings were not his own words, but God’s Word? Does this passage relate to the things Paul wrote or to the things that Paul spoke?
3. Why would the apostles command that their writings be read in the local church if they were not Scripture?
4. What qualified the apostles to write the New Testament text? What about them set them apart from others?
5. Why do you think that the early church fathers considered the writings of the apostles to be Scripture? What is the significance of Polycarp being a disciple of John and Clement being a disciple of Peter?
 - Read Philippians 4:1–3. Which early church father is mentioned in this passage?
6. Why are the early lists of the New Testament books important?
7. People often argue that the church made the New Testament books authoritative by putting them on a list. Why is this a faulty view of the New Testament’s authority? Why did the early church put these books on their lists?
8. Why were some books not included in the earliest lists of the New Testament (Hebrews, James, 1 Peter, 2 Peter, and 3 John)?
9. What evidence would you use to refute this statement: The New Testament Canon was chosen at the Council of Nicea in AD 325.
10. Why is it important to stress that the New Testament books were never chosen, but recognized to be the Word of God?

ACTION POINTS:

- This week, read “When Debating Biblical Inspiration, Let God Do the Heavy Lifting” by Greg Koukl:
<https://www.str.org/w/when-debating-biblical-inspiration-let-god-do-the-heavy-lifting>

N.T. CANON: WHICH BOOKS ARE SCRIPTURE AND WHY? — CRITERIA FOR N.T. CANON (VIDEO 12:39)

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Read the list of men that the resurrected Jesus appeared to in 1 Corinthians 15:5–9. Now, go through the 27 books of the New Testament and match up which of these men wrote which books.
 - Did you match up all 27 books with the list in 1 Corinthians 15:5–9? Where any books unaccounted for in this list? If yes, which ones? Who wrote the books that were unaccounted for?
2. Read Acts 9:1–19. What makes Paul's conversion to Christianity distinct from the 12 disciples' conversions? Why do you think Jesus appeared to Paul? If you were in Paul's situation, what would you be thinking after this encounter with the resurrected Jesus?
3. Read Acts 1:1–14. Make a list of all the people mentioned who Jesus appeared to in this passage. Who made up the "apostles whom He had chosen" in verse 2? Did Jesus appear to the people mentioned in verse 14? Why or why not?
4. Read 1 John 1:1–3. What does John claim his testimony is based on? What experience did John have that his readers did not have? Why is this important when it comes to apostolic authority?
5. Read 2 Peter 1:16–21. What does Peter claim his witness is based upon? What event is Peter talking about in verses 17–18 (see Matt. 17:1–13)?
 - Based on his authority, Peter claims what in verse 19?
 - Who is the "we" in verse 19?
 - Where does Peter claim this prophecy comes from in verses 20–21?
 - What does Peter believe about his writings?
6. Why is antiquity an important criterion for books of the New Testament? What does antiquity help to establish?
7. How does the criterion of antiquity help to eliminate other writings from being considered canon?
8. In your own words, explain what the criterion of orthodoxy is. How can a book be tested to know if it is orthodox?
9. Read James 2:14–26. Does this passage contradict what Paul says in Romans 4:1–5? Why not? How does this passage in James help us to understand why James wasn't in some of the early New Testament lists?
10. Because apostolic authority and antiquity were criteria for the New Testament, when was the New Testament canon closed?
11. How would you respond to this statement: "God continues to reveal new Scripture to his prophets, and we should be open to this new revelation."

ACTION POINTS:

- This week, read "A New Testament Passage That's Older than the New Testament" by Robby Lashua:
<https://www.str.org/w/a-new-testament-passage-that-s-older-than-the-new-testament>

N.T. CANON: WHICH BOOKS ARE SCRIPTURE AND WHY? —
HOW DO WE KNOW WE HAVE THE RIGHT BOOKS? (VIDEO 17:47)

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why were the 27 books of the New Testament accepted as Scripture?
2. Why didn't the early church recognize good books such as The Shepherd of Hermes or the Didache as Scripture?
3. What are the Gnostic Gospels?
4. Read Matthew 5:17–19. How does this passage show that Jesus accepted the Old Testament? What other New Testament passages show that Jesus and the apostles accepted the Old Testament?
5. Which criteria do the Gnostic Gospels not meet: apostolic authority, antiquity, or orthodoxy? Why?
6. Why do skeptics of Christianity argue that the Gnostic writings should have been included? What point are they trying to make?
7. How does this passage from the Gospel of Thomas go against orthodoxy?
 - Simon Peter said to him, 'Let Mary leave us, for women are not worthy of life.' Jesus said, 'I Myself shall lead her in order to make her male, so that she too may become a living spirit resembling you males. For every woman who will make herself male will enter the kingdom of heaven.'" (Gospel of Thomas 114)
 - What Old Testament Scriptures would you use to refute this teaching from the Gospel of Thomas?
 - What New Testament Scriptures would you use to refute this teaching from the Gospel of Thomas?
8. What is the Apocrypha?
9. Which reason did you find most convincing for why the Apocrypha is not Scripture?
10. Why did the Catholic Church make the Apocrypha authoritative?
11. Does the Catholic Church have the authority to add books to the Bible? Why or why not?
12. If the Apocrypha was Scripture, how would we know?
13. What things from this course impacted you the most?
14. After taking this course, how are you more prepared to defend why we have the 27 books of the New Testament canon?

ACTION POINTS:

- This week, listen to "Why the Apocrypha Is Not Part of the Canon" by Greg Koukl:
<https://www.str.org/w/why-the-apocrypha-is-not-part-of-the-cano>